

Performative Politics:
Artworks, Festival Praxis and Nationalism
with reference to the
Ganapati *Utsava* in Western India

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Abstract

This study explores regionally based perspectives on the broader nation-wide phenomena of the politicisation of Hinduism (Hindutva) in historical and contemporary times (van der Veer 1987; Basu et al 1993; Pandey 1993; Jaffrelot 1996). However, in contrast to these works, my focus is on the extent to which an annual religious festival, the Ganapati *utsava*, has been effected by the wider socio-political terrain in the cities of Mumbai and Pune, Maharashtra. The Ganapati *utsava* is a discursive arena for mutually reliant activities of a devotional, artistic, entertaining, and socio-political nature. The intertwining of the various constituent elements sustain and accentuate each other in the performative milieux of the festival, yet also lie outside of totalising political schemas. I note that the festival has become a site for the hegemonic strategies of several political parties, and sponsored media competitions who all vie for supremacy in the festive context. As a result, the festival represents an uneven field of consent and contestation (Laclau and Mouffe 1985).

The history, and contemporary praxis of the festival necessitates a consideration of the movement of nationalism(s) for which the festival played a significant part, particularly under the auspices of Bal Gangadhar Tilak since the 1890s. I propose that the efficacy of nationalism as a hegemonic strategy relies as much on public performative events, as on constitutional politics and social structures (eg. Gellner 1983), or on the print media, such as newspapers and novels (eg. Anderson 1983). By integrating Habermas' views on the 'public sphere' (Habermas 1991) and perspectives on public rituals or 'public arenas' (Freitag 1989), the study notes the interactive potency of both collective gatherings and media forms as sites for variant nationalist strategies. *Mandap* (shrine) tableaux, in particular, are considered as performative loci for socio-political variables, particularly in their audio-taped narratives and visualisation of versions of the nation.

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Notes on Transliteration

Marathi, the official language of the region of study, Maharashtra, is cognate with Hindi, and is written in the Devanagari script. Standard transliterations are used in the Roman. However, for terms containing the sound *s* and *ś*, I have used *sh* in the main body of the text. *Ch* in Marathi and/or Hindi is used to correspond to the aspirated sound. The fluid vowel *a*, if terminal in Marathi and/or Hindi words, is only included if indigenously pronounced. For plurals of Marathi and/or Hindi terms, I have added an English *s*. Terms such as *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana*, *Samna*, *Girnar-Loksatta*, *mandal*, *mandap*, *murti* and *murtikar* are written without diacritical marks in the main text. The glossary includes accurate written forms of main Marathi and/or Hindi words used in the thesis.

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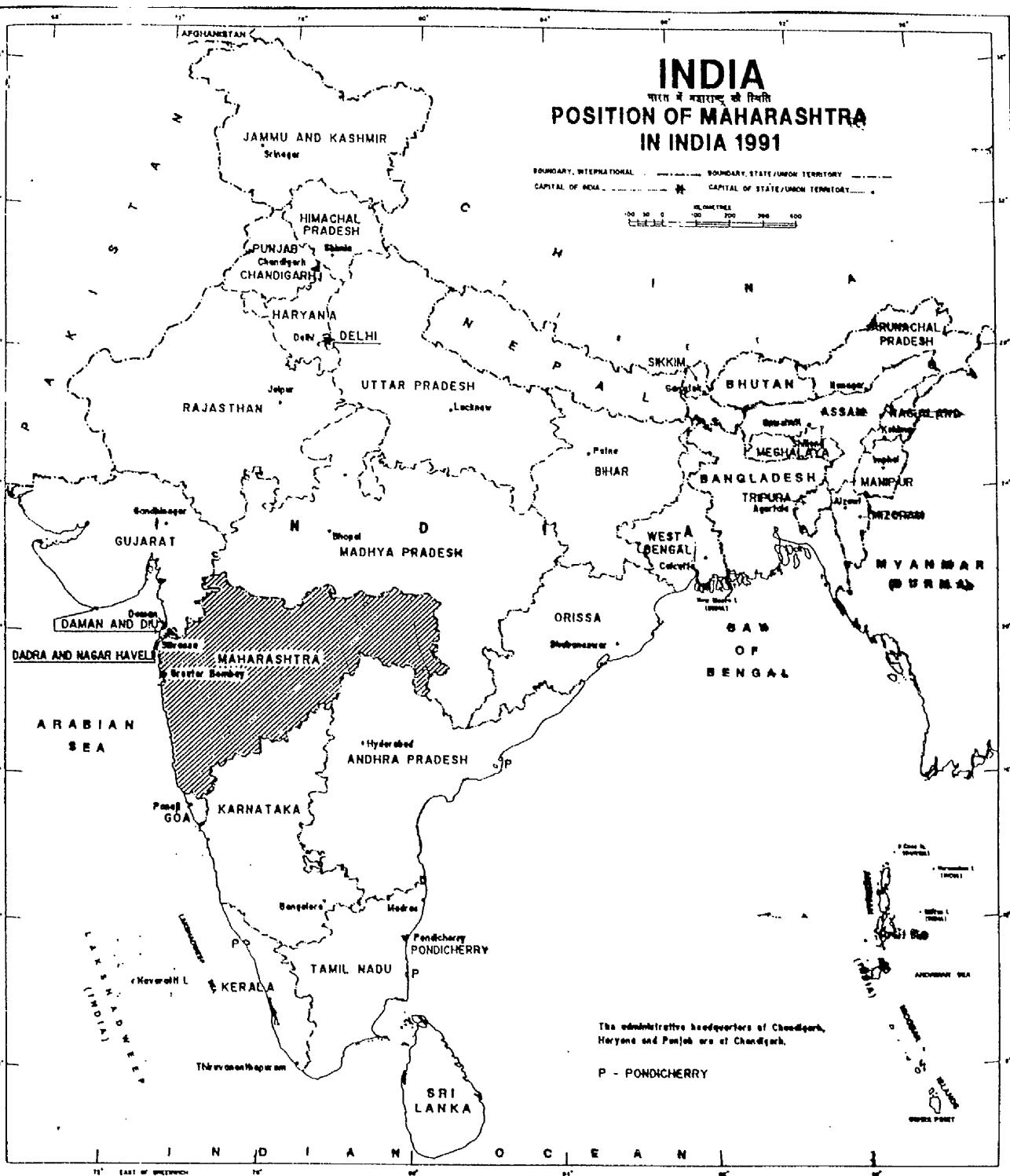
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INDIA
 WITH STATE/UNION TERRITORIES
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IN INDIA 1991

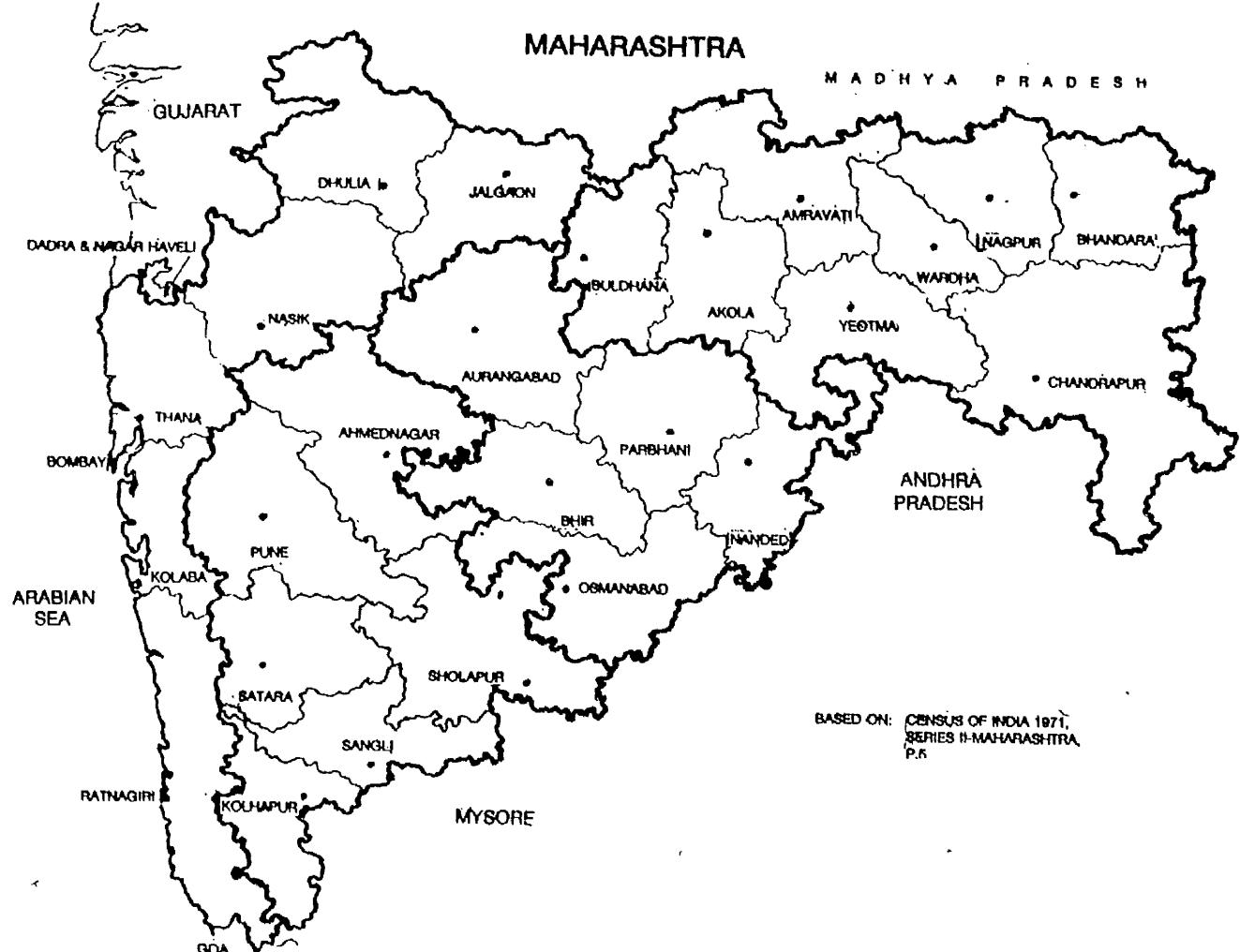
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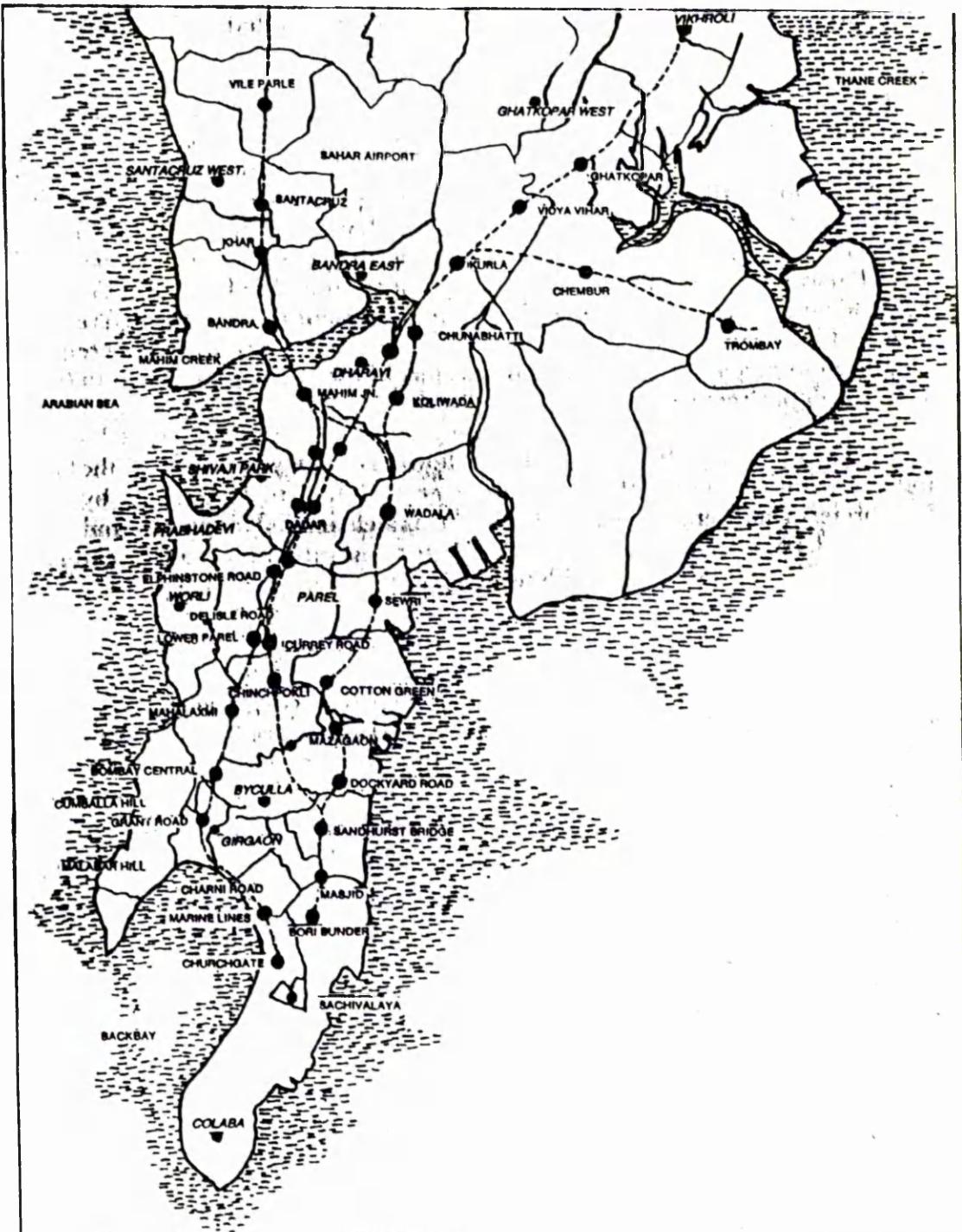
I

MAHARASHTRA



BASED ON: CENSUS OF INDIA 1971,
SERIES II-MAHARASHTRA,
P.K

II



Chapter One

Introduction

Struck by the illustrative *mandap* (shrine) tableaux designs in Ganapati *utsavas* (festivals) in which I had fortuitously participated in my visits to Maharashtra from 1991, I later decided to undertake research into their production, content and significance as an investigation into the relations between politics and aesthetics.¹ Vignettes of Harshad Mehta and his part in the Mumbai Stock Exchange scam of 1993, jostled with models of spacecraft and the first Indian astronaut's, Rakesh Sharma's, journeys into space; or were placed alongside devious portrayals of the underworld gangster don, Dawood Ibrahim, and sorry-looking models of the Bollywood film star, Sanjay Dutt, in jail for his alleged part in the series of bomb blasts throughout the city of Mumbai in March 1993.² Scenes like these were constructed and placed in front of splendid representations of Ganapati *murtis* - *vighnaharta* (the 'remover of obstacles'), *sukhakarta* (one who makes happiness and peace), *dukhaharta* (one who removes pain and sadness), the scribe of the *Mahabharata*, a deity embodying wisdom yet mischief, considered fearful and warrior-like yet benign and beneficent - an ambivalent god ideally thought of as lying on the threshold of the divine and mundane realms by Hindu devotees (Courtright 1988: 84-5).

During the fieldwork period of sixteen months from August 1994, it soon became clear that it was not enough to concentrate on the artworks alone. It was necessary to consider the performative milieu of the festival, if not changes in socio-political terrain of society at large. Nation-wide, forces of the Hindutva brigade were ascendant in their political hijacking of religio-cultural icons, sites and events for a militant Hindu nationalism (van der Veer 1987; Basu et al 1993; Pandey 1993).³ This contingency included a fraternity of Hindu Right-wing organisations consisting of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh (RSS - National Volunteer Organisation), the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP - World Hindu Council), the Bajrang Dal (Bajrang Army) and, more recently the Mumbai-based party, the Shiv

Sena (Shivaji's Army). Of these organisations, only the BJP and Shiv Sena are electoral parties (see Chapter Eight). The RSS is a cadre-based organisation preferring to work in a 'cultural' manner, the VHP is an international Hindu revivalist organisation backed by finances of the Indian diaspora, particularly in America, and the Bajrang Dal is a para-military organisation (Basu et al 1993). Evidently, politics is inextricably mingled with religio-cultural praxis, a dynamic complex which I refer to as the socio-political terrain. Hindu militancy invariably had its repercussions on the Ganapati *utsava* in Maharashtra, particularly through the involvement of the Shiv Sena in the region. Consequently, due to the public nature of the festive context, the festival was increasingly used to propagate ideas conducive to the Hindutva project. Topical matters of the type that I have described above were often filtered through Hindutva influenced narratives in *mandap* tableaux. Such street displays constituted a mode of asserting artistic, economic and political power, where the streets could be used as a conduit for various agendas. The festival also acted as a site of contestation for other political proponents, namely the Congress-I party, and some variations to *mandap* narrative generalisations were evident (see Chapter Eight).⁴

The artworks, despite their topical and religious importance, are transient, being only displayed for the eleven day period of the festival, after which the Ganapati *murti* is immersed. Religious and entertaining aspects of the festival are also paramount such that the festival is a discursive arena - one of devotional, artistic, entertaining, and socio-political aspects. The occasion is influenced and characterised by the effects of organisations' hegemonising strategies (Gramsci 1971; Laclau and Mouffe 1985) which act to manage and monopolise festival praxis, particularly with regard to business-sponsored, media-run competitions and political parties with Hindutva or 'secular' nationalist agendas (see Chapter Three). As hegemonic strategies cannot ever be totalising phenomena, the festival constitutes an uneven field of consent and contestation between variant hegemonic articulations. Neither the hegemonic process, nor indeed nationalism, is a static, or monolithic condition, but describes a relations of forces which relies upon a process of negotiation, dissent and compromise contingent upon history. In the thesis, I use hegemony to describe strategies which are not necessarily consonant with political organisations, but also organisations which seek to manage and spread consent amongst festival participants

and activities, as with sponsored media-run competitions. Some of the organised competitions have obvious political alliances, as with the *M. R. Coffee-Samma Ganeshotsava* competition linked to the Shiv Sena.⁵ However, the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition, which I concentrate on in Chapter Seven, is not officially linked to any political party, and demonstrates more ‘secular’ evaluative schemas and strategies.

A history of the festival need also consider the movement of nationalism for which the festival played a constituent part, particularly under the auspices of Bal Gangadhar Tilak since the 1890s. Tilak and a number of others were instrumental in politicising the Ganapati *utsava* which, from the period the British had taken over Peshwas rule in Maharashtra in 1818, had been primarily a domestic religious occasion. From the 1890s, the celebrations were conducted on a grand scale over a period of eleven days along with ceremonies, lectures and debates on current issues. With the vehicle of the Ganapati *utsava*, Tilak was able to circumvent British colonial laws against political gatherings, and disseminate his views against the ills of society including colonialism (see Chapter Two). Due to the temporal contingencies of the balance and distribution of power, I note the way nationalism, as with hegemony, can at once be a dominant formation, acting in the interests of the nation’s citizens, operating in order to gain consent so as to become acceptable; and a creative formation operating against extant hegemonies as was the case in the colonial period this century. However, this is not to argue for a dichotomous set of relationships, but a field of consent and contestation involving a nexus of engagements, relationships, alliances, and antagonisms. This formulation is useful to consider the historical changes of the nationalism of India, correlate with festival praxis, from a colonised country to an independent nation-state this century (see Chapters Four and Five).

Tilak was responsible for mobilising another festival, the *Shivaji Jayanti*, in tribute to the seventeenth century Maratha ruler, Chatrapati Shivaji in the 1890s. It was not until the campaign to renovate his memorial in Raigad was given the vehicle of a public celebratory occasion that the campaign attained a degree of success. Govind Babaji Joshi (Vasaikar) began to collect funds for the memorial in the mid-1880s to limited success, and was later picked up by Tilak with additional moves to hold an annual Shivaji festival across the region (Kulkarni 1984). With the onset of

celebration of Shivaji festivals in the region and the leadership qualities exemplified by Tilak at a particular socio-political juncture, the populace at large took note of the poor state of the memorial site. This parallels the effects of revitalising a popular and public festival in tribute to the deity, Ganapati. It appears that the self-sustenance and public momentum of issues was enhanced with the mobilisation of festivals into public, and consequently political, arenas in several places across western India. As Kulkarni states, it was Tilak who managed to:

'...pull up the issue out of the narrow confines of academic debate, romantic fiction or nostalgic tourism and to shape it into a national movement on a grand scale thus inevitably making it a part of India's struggle for independence' (Kulkarni 1984: 63-4).

I argue that the national project in India was effected as much by public performative events and campaigns, as it is argued to be dependent on constitutional politics and social structures (Gellner 1983) or a consideration of the print media, such as newspapers and novels (Anderson 1983, Bhabha 1990). I take heed of Kaviraj's comments that 'politics in colonial society is a world of performatives' (Kaviraj 1992: 10). However, diverging from his account on utterances, I concentrate on the case of a festival's multi-perspectival angles ranging from religious devotion, entertainment and political instrumentality. The 'performative' in the festival context pertains to a milieu of words (written and spoken), religious rituals, artworks, dramas, political strategies, processions and other public displays. As Singer elaborates, cultural performances in India are not just about plays and concerts, but also events to do with religion such as prayers, rites and festivals (Singer 1972: 71). I widen his notion of cultural performances to incorporate the political strategies which performative occasions have accentuated as well as informed.

My interests in the performative is the public and political aspects and potentials of the event as exemplified by the Ganapati *utsava*. I use the phrase, performative politics, to describe the arena of devotion, entertainment and pleasure, which can support the hegemonic project - that is, it is a phrase to describe public events that have more than one face, not strictly religious or entertaining, but also exercising various other political agendas. It alludes to the effects of political agendas as entailed

in public events, rather than to the character and analysis of political agendas based on their electoral, or constitutional inscriptions. It appears that the performative element is crucial to the success of nationalist politics, particularly in a place like India where illiteracy was and continues to be widespread. Thus my thesis constitutes a move away from an anaemic focus on socio-political structures and written words as an analysis of political cultures alone, to the public articulations, expressions and performances which are constituted by, and constitute, political cultures. The work forms an enquiry into how performance, alongside media, can expand an understanding of the workings of nationalist imaginings. My focus on the Ganapati *utsava* is one particular performative event amongst many others with which I investigate the dynamics of (re)producing versions of a national culture. Although conscious of the variegated and dynamic complex under the rubric of ‘culture’, the homogenising and hegemonising aspirations of nationalist projects seem to uphold a cohesive, coherent, and one could argue, simplistic notion of ‘culture’. The flux between diffuse and more reified notions of national culture are explored through a consideration of the workings of hegemonic processes in festival praxis.

However, my intention in focusing on the performative is also to problematise the notion that this depends upon an essentialist arena of action. Rather the performative and the ‘mediated’ act in a symbiotic relationship, in relation to which hegemonic strategies are evident. As I explore in subsequent chapters, media forms, or the mediated, are an intrinsic part of the festive context - both informing, complementing and augmenting the potential and limits of each component of expressive forms in public space. Effectively, performative politics encompass hegemonic strategies and sites of collective gatherings intricately entwined with media disseminations. I take festival praxis to refer to a set of practices associated with the preparation and processes of the public festival, including rites, artistic work, *mandal* members’ activities, financial gains and expenditure, spectators’ visits and comments, organised competitions, media coverage, political appropriations of *mandals*, and processions. The main artworks I consider are *mandap* (shrine) tableaux, noting also their interconnections with other artistic works in the festive context.

Freitag (1995) too makes a similar argument in her critique of Anderson's formulation, in the fact that 'few historians have looked beyond the printed text', seeing it as indicative of the 'scholarly fetishising of the printed text' (Freitag 1995: 5-6). Her solution to this is to consider the centrality of 'seeing' and the image in India, particularly in its visualisation of the nation (Freitag 1995: 7). Although in agreement with her general comments, I contend that these texts - whether they be written or pictorial - and cultural practices of 'seeing' cannot be disentangled from their performative milieu and theorised as if they were disembodied from sound, narration, song, performance, bodily involvement and so forth; but are *activated* and thus need to be theorised in their multi-sensory contexts.

In view of Freitag's critique, it may seem ironic that more written texts on the subject are being produced. These are obvious shortcomings. However, as I argue, the performative arena is integral to this project. Whereas Freitag seems to be saying that concentrating on the image or vision might provide another theoretical framework to negotiate the problems raised, there is a problem of her fetishising the image and notion of vision itself. With works such as Babb (1981) and Eck (1985) on the religious act of seeing, *darshan*, it may be contended that an indigenous discourse already exists as to the primacy of vision. But it is too easily overlooked that *darshan* is constitutive of a larger context of religious worship, and cannot be uncritically adopted for all case scenarios. The images I present in this thesis are with the understanding that they were produced for a particular performative event, and only have due significance once they are experienced in their festival context. The transience of the *mandap* tableaux - being constructed for the duration of the eleven day festival, then dismantled - is further testimony to their in situ value. The same way newspapers, *Ganeshotsava mandals* and households begin to accrue photographs of former years' activities and *mandap* tableaux for their archives and albums, this thesis too is a record of *mandap* tableaux seen or collated within the years 1990-1996, but with the added academic remit to attempt to account for the performative contexts for which they were originally created.⁶

Curiously, in her other work on 'public arenas' in colonial north India, Freitag (1989) does account for performative strategies and contexts. Nonetheless, due perhaps to the period of her study, there is little focus on the part media plays in

instantiating a sense of community. By integrating Habermas' views on the 'public sphere' (Habermas 1990) and Freitag's perspectives on ritual or 'public arenas', this study notes the interactive potency of both collective gatherings and media forms as sites of hegemonic articulations for the heightening of community or national sensibilities. This is exemplified by the two-prong strategy of Tilak's journalistic writings and participation in the mobilised *sarvajanik* (public) Ganapati *utsava*. In particular, it is also demonstrated by my focus on the performative and visualised contents and reception of *mandap* tableaux, and their coverage by media-run competitions during the festival period (see Chapter Seven). Notably, both the performative event and media networks form sites of hegemonic contestation, and are explored in their interactions throughout the thesis: in sum, this research constitutes a study of hegemonic strategies on performative and mediated sites in relation to the Ganapati *utsava*.

Research Methodology

My research methodology during fieldwork was primarily participant-observation with residents of Mumbai and Pune. I also conducted several formal and informal discussions with festival participants, *mandal* members, artists, competition organisers and judges amongst others. For more general information and during times of festival activities, I conducted several questionnaire-based investigations with the help of research assistants. Findings of the questionnaires and related discussions have been included in Chapter Six. Surveys and notes of three *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition were made from 1994-1996. The results of the 1996 competition are accounted in Chapter Seven and Appendix I-III. My own records of festival artworks and praxis, including historical perspectives, are also incorporated into the thesis.

Photography was crucial to the entire project, some of which have been reproduced in the thesis. In addition to the ones I had collected, several acquaintances also kept a collection of photos to which I was allowed access. The artist, Chandrashekhar Surye's collection of photographs along with records kept by the Chinchpokli Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal provided a valuable resource on

changes of topical and religio-mythological scenes since the 1930s. Other useful sources were newspaper and magazine coverage (see Chapter Five).

Video recordings of festival praxis and *mandap* tableaux narratives allowed for detailed analysis at a later date. They were particularly useful to record *pujas* (religious worship) in front of the Ganapati *murti*, and sound and light scenes at particular *pandals* (*mandap* enclosures) for detailed study later on.⁷ The latter were like mini-shows around a central image of Ganapati along with narration, music, and moving scenes on various topical matters; at the end of which the *murti* of Ganapati used to be highlighted as the saviour and remover of corrupt and evil activities considered to have besieged India. Due to restrictions of space, I have only provided English translations of the Marathi tableaux narratives. Marathi is used in the thesis to highlight key concepts and phrases, or for the sake of original references in the case of awkward translations into the English. *Mandap* tableaux narratives are included in Chapter Eight for a consideration of their socio-political character as an integral part of my argument; and Appendix I-III for supplementary material to Chapter Seven to illustrate the character of *mandals* and their displays, and processes of evaluations in the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition. Appendix I-III are also useful to provide further illustrations of features noted in my arguments in Chapters Eight and Nine. The translations have been guided by Vyankatesh Kulkarni, a Sanskrit scholar whose mother tongue is Marathi.

As an informant commented in Mumbai, ‘you have to strike when the iron is hot’ to conduct research - that is during the time of the festival when people were most eager to share their thoughts and had more free time away from their daily work duties. That is why I have made return trips to Maharashtra for the festival after the period of fieldwork in 1994-1995. The period leading up to, and the festival itself, were quite understandably, the most demanding, yet enjoyable. I ventured to record as many of the *mandap* displays and activities I could, alongside with detailed studies of audience reception at some of the *mandals*. The rest of the time was spent reviewing the material gained, with follow-up interviews and research on historical and political contexts. Many informants made time for me after the festival was over to review and discuss various issues about the Ganapati *utsava*. One recurrent problem in doing fieldwork, particularly in a large and busy city like Mumbai, was that there was

considerable time constraints on respondents due to the demands of a working week and tiresome commuting periods. This drawback was compensated by the fact that enthusiasm for the god, Ganapati, and my research on its celebrations was often encountered despite people's busy schedules. In addition, respondents in Pune provided further perspectives. There was an element of pride attached to the fact that they were talking about their god, their festival or their *Ganeshotsava mandal* to an interested student from London.

I noted that it was not possible to consider the festival's current characteristics without accounting for its recent history in the public realm, since at least the 1890s when Tilak mobilised the festival. In many cases, the festival became an annual means of reviving (invented) traditions and histories of the nation and Hinduism. I found that *mandals* who had, or were about to celebrate their centennial year were the more historically conversant, particularly in Pune and Girgaum, Mumbai. The Chinchpokli Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, in Lalbaug, Mumbai had organised a photographic exhibition of *pandal* displays since the 1930s. This too proved a very illuminating means of finding out about the local history and opinions in the area (see Chapter Five). Thus, my approach required a two-prong strategy of coming to terms with contemporary praxis with an understanding of its historical background, as well as the processes of retrospective history-making and revivalism in contemporary times.

My thesis is circumscribed by a temporal scope of the festival period and its history, rather than spatially located in a particular part of the city. Although I do concentrate on significant sites for the festival, primarily in the cities of Mumbai and Pune, I am more interested in the months of preparation for the festival, the interconnected spheres of artists, *mandal* members, householders, temples, media organs and organised competitions all dealing with this intensified moment of festivities, than I am in the ethnography of the cities or set areas in the city as a whole. It was important to remain mobile and flexible in order to follow a particular set of relationships, and pursue activities that I was involved with in the cities. This was due to several reasons. First, there existed a network of organisers, *murtikars* (*murti* makers), art directors, political figureheads, *pujaris*, participants, commentators, journalists and judges located in various parts of the city who I had to see. Second,

many *mandal* members would discuss, and compare their *mandal* with others making a broad knowledge of *Ganeshotsava mandals* in the cities imperative. My participation in the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition's team of judges led me to all areas of Greater Mumbai. Some of the issues that emerged from this excursion were sometimes more instructive to my theoretical questions than the *pandals* visited in Lalbaug or Girgaum in south-central Mumbai. Therefore, a cobweb of relations existed across the city to which the researcher on the festival ought to have some degree of familiarity.

Although throughout this thesis, much of my focus is on Mumbai, I have also gathered material from frequent visits to Pune, which is situated 190 kilometres from Mumbai. There were several reasons for this cross-comparative outlook. Not only is Pune at the centre of the Asthavinayaka complex famed for its *svyambhu* (self-made) Ganapatis, but also, as Preston reports, data confirms that Pune and neighbouring Satara districts contain the highest concentration of Ganapati *utsavas* in Maharashtra (Preston 1980: 110-1). Historically, Pune was the central place for agitations against British colonial rule in which the Ganapati *utsava* played a significant part, an activity which fast spread across the region. The city is important for it being the site of the first *sarvajanik* Ganapati *utsava* mobilised by Tilak and his coterie of sympathisers. Pune provides significant historical evidence on political aesthetics, particularly in the representations of warrior-like Ganapatis slaying demons emblematic of British rule. Many of these earlier *murtis* exist to this day due to the *mandal* practice of immersing a second smaller Ganapati in the shallow River Mula-Mutha which runs through the city (see Chapter Five). Furthermore, Pune is as renowned as Mumbai is for extravagant Ganapati celebrations and immersion processions.

A comparison between the two major centres of Ganapati celebrations in Maharashtra served to further delineate the character of Mumbai's political culture, and vice versa. *Ganeshotsava* displays and activities were reflective as well as constitutive of the city's respective political cultures. Despite the Shiv Sena's rise to State Legislative Assembly power in alliance with the BJP in 1995, Congress strength persists in Pune, which is reflected in the amount of *Ganeshotsava mandals* co-opted by the respective powers in the two cities (Guru 1995; Palshikar 1996; Hansen 1996a;

see Chapter Eight). Therefore, whilst basing myself in Mumbai, I divided my time during the eleven day festival between the two cities as well as making frequent other trips for follow-up research or archival work.

An overview of the festival landscape was important, but it was difficult to get thorough surveys due to the vast number of *mandals* in the region, estimated by newspaper sources at around twenty five thousand for the state, nine thousand of which are in Mumbai, and three thousand in Pune (*The Metropolis on Saturday*, September 11, 1994). Although proper statistical data was shortcoming, my research was helped by data collected by other bodies such as the Brihanmumbai Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samanvay Samiti (Greater Mumbai Public Ganapati Festival Co-ordination Committee or BSGSS) for Mumbai who had made a directory of some of the main *mandals* in Mumbai (Silim 1991), and the *Kesari* newspaper publications which listed organisational facts and features about most of the main *mandals* in Pune (Karandikar 1956; Ghorpade 1992).

As a publisher from the Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha in Girgaum commented, to date, there has been no study of the *mandap* tableaux in the Ganapati *utsava*: it has always been a topic of discussion and media coverage during the festival, but serious study had not yet been undertaken. So most of my resource material for earlier *mandap* displays were culled from trying to retrieve such conversational memories, photograph collections, and newspaper or magazine coverage. The feedback I received from attempting a survey of a broad range of people proved very 'thin'; whereas detailed and informed discussions were more instructive. In a study primarily about changing aesthetics and socio-political contexts, questions I devised for questionnaire-based research seem to 'force' an answer, so a quantitative-based methodology did not provide the basis for my research. Further, in a cities as large as Mumbai or Pune, the findings of my investigations could not, of course, aim to be representational, but only hope to touch upon key points of relevance to the subject and my research interests.

My account of the performative politics of the festival does not focus at length on the question of caste for both methodological and ethnographic reasons. As Inden (1986, 1990) has written, most anthropological accounts, amongst others, have ended up privileging particular tropes with which to view India. This includes caste, village,

and religion. Inden provides an illustration of what Fardon (1990) has called 'localising strategies', whereby areas of the world are already marked out as sites for particular local concerns of anthropologists. Ethnographic work in the regions continue to refer their work to questions asked by former monographs on the area. Inden comments:

'Castes themselves are overdetermined social groups, proliferating by the hundred and thousand for no good reason, while at the same time becoming more rigid and impermeable. Caste is, furthermore, displaced in this discourse, onto every area of India life...Caste...is assumed to be the essence of India civilisation' (Inden 1986: 428).

This is not to exclude the fact that colonial as well as anthropological accounts in a peculiar way have entrenched these categories of socialisation as a way of life (see Chapter Two). It is also reflected to some extent on the historical accounts that I have consulted. Of all the chapters, Chapter Two which relates the background of the emergence of the *sarvajanik utsava* reflects considerations of caste the most. Albeit retaining an arguably predominant factor in social life, my observations led me to note that caste factors took a back-seat in festival proceedings in the contemporary urban context. Furthermore, direct questions as to the caste affiliations of respondents in Mumbai and Pune were generally considered rude. Oftentimes, questions of identity were dressed up in regional reference points - such as Maharashtrian, Panjabi, Gujarati, Tamil and so forth. This was of particular pertinence to Mumbai, often described as 'cosmopolitan' or a 'city of migrants' (see Chapters Two and Seven). Indeed, regional qualifications were more often encountered than self-description in terms of caste. Caste factors seemed to operate as 'silenced articulations' in the public realm, even though it was evident from people's sir names, evident from some, but not all residential patterns, and significant for particular ritual occasions, such as leading *pujas* or marriage arrangements. However, this might be so, some political parties continue to focus on caste as a means of capitalising upon these 'silenced articulations' for definable group interests and gains, particularly around the signifiers of Brahman, Maratha and Dalits. From these perspectives, anthropological precedents

are not too different to political parties in their caste dependency with regards to mapping and identifying Indian social groupings.

The politics of the party monopolising *Ganeshotsava mandals*, particularly in Mumbai, is the Shiv Sena - a populist organisation which has availed itself of the Hindutva mantle since the 1980s (see Chapter Eight). Even though factors of class and authority are significant in the party's constituency, Hansen notes:

'The entire history and dynamism in Shiv Sena is exactly premised on this populist programme of bestowing self-respect on common people, regardless of their caste' (Hansen 1995: 28).

Furthermore, the festive context, particularly in tribute to a god worshipped by all castes, is not conducive to a caste-based study. As Courtright also concurs for his investigations of the Ganapati *utsava* in Ahmadnagar:

'Caste does not play a visible part in the festival, and the *mandal* organisation reflects caste organisation only to the degree that the neighbourhood from which the *mandal* membership is drawn reflects caste exclusiveness' (Courtright 1988: 88).

Although noting the prevalence of caste reference points where I feel is necessary or where it is requisite as a reflection of extant literature or historical reviews, my ethnographic research does not dwell upon their articulations as reified categories. This is not only due to a critique of former precedents, but, moreover, because it was of less relevance than the public nature of the festival, the culture of revivalism, expressions of national integration or Hindu nationalism, and political motivations of *Ganeshotsava mandals*. It is these themes with which this thesis is primarily concerned in its study of contemporary praxis within the festival.

My focus on religion is in so much as it forms a part of artworks, festival praxis and political strategies. Whilst Chapter Two provides background to historical religious movements, and contextual information about the deity, Ganapati, the nature of the study does not call for delimiting a reified or essentialist sphere of religion, but the manifestations and utilisation of religious practices in historical and contemporary life. In this thesis, I concentrate on the way religion is intricately entwined with themes to do with aesthetics, the political economy, the public realm, and nationalism.

Finally, I am conscious of the fact of attributing essentialist characteristics to the categories of Hindu and Muslim in my use of the terms in the thesis. Whereas it is arguably the case that these terms of identification are discursive categories which mask several other points of reference such as those contingent on dynamic variables of gender, age, caste, regional affiliations, language and so forth, space precludes my exploration of them. I use the religious terms of identification in a relational way as shorthand to pursue my main questions. Further, in increasingly communalised circumstances as one finds in contemporary India, the religious terms of identification tend to be prioritised in public praxis. Religious identities are increasingly essentialised as an inflection of indigenous socio-political processes. My continuing use of the terms, Hindu and Muslim, is to explore the manifestations of this in relation to a public celebration. They are used with the implicit proviso that the terms of identification are abbreviated reflections of complex political processes, where Orientalist precedents and contemporary political culture in India seem to converge (see Chapter Two).

Thesis Outline

Chapter Two provides background and contextual information on the region under consideration. Recent histories of Mumbai and Pune are noted as are the key religious sites and sects in the area and the significance of the deity of Ganapati in Maharashtra. After a consideration of the implications of colonial administration, and their effects on nineteenth century Hindu socio-religious movements, a brief history of the beginnings of the public festival in colonial India and Bal Gangadhar Tilak's motivations for mobilising the Ganapati *utsava* into the public domain are provided.

As the festival contributed to campaigns for Hindu and nationalist revivals in historical and contemporary India, I concentrate on the terms of the debate in Chapter Three. Arguments of nationalism, cultural revivalism or anti-colonialism, with their corollaries of communalism (or Hindutva) and secularism for the Indian context are elaborated. I discuss nationalism as a hegemonic articulation, and describe the various manifestations of nationalist characteristics as the rubric of nationalism.

Whereas the preceding chapter concentrates on political strategies relevant to the Ganapati *utsava*, Chapter Four concentrates on the public sites of the festival - namely the interconnections between performative and mediated spaces. I look at relevant literature on ritual, carnival and festival, and then the 'public sphere' (Habermas 1990) and 'public arena' (Freitag 1989), before making an argument for their integration in what I have termed the public field. I argue that the Ganapati *utsava* is a discursive arena which imbues vitality to various agendas, including those of a nationalist nature. I examine this processual and dynamic phenomena as an example of performative politics played out in the public field, which can be utilised for nationalist projects.

Chapter Five considers the performative aesthetics of the festival in colonial and contemporary periods. Dynamics of nationalism are discussed in relation to *murti* (statue) imagery and *mandap* tableaux throughout this period. Their interactions with other performative and mediated visual and auditory practices are accounted in the 'inter-ocular' (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988) public field as it pertains to the Ganapati *utsava*. The chapter provides contextual background for the development of types of contemporary *mandap* tableaux.

Chapter Six concentrates on the discursive arena of the festival, and considers how the rubric of nationalism manifests itself in some of the festival praxis and participants' opinions. I note the activation of the *murti*, participants' views of the festival and displays, characteristics of the multi-sensory event, and the processes of the festival period. I describe how the public nature and processions of the festival might lend themselves to the strategies of aggressive militant nationalism to 'hijack' Hindu religious events.

Chapter Seven describes how commodity culture and mass-mediated images fuel different strands of nationalist discourse especially Hindutva strategies. I consider the rules, regulations, procedures and processes of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition, as an example of the management of values articulate in the festival. I concentrate on the dynamics and debates of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition as a means of integrated performative and mediated realms, and as a public space of resistance to the instrumental and Hindutva use of the devotional, artistic, community-oriented and nationalist practices of the festival.

Chapter Eight considers examples of explicit political co-option of *utsava mandals* and proceedings in Mumbai, namely by the regionalist party now in state power in alliance with the BJP, the Shiv Sena, and also the Congress party. I describe how this has led to hegemonic spheres of influence, contestation, as well as discrepant readings by spectators. I consider this complex next to a visually-oriented analysis with a consideration of variant gradations of nationalisms in articulation in contemporary western India. This ranges from ‘secular’ nationalism of the Congressite *Hindu-Mussalman bhai-bhai* kind (Hindu-Muslim brotherhood), regionalist Maharashtrian nationalism preferred by the Shiv Sena, and militant Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) as has been the general trend in the rest of India since the political mobilisation and manipulation of key Hindu religious sites and icons by the BJP-RSS-VHP combine from the 1980s. Thus the festival as a whole is not co-opted as if it was a reified object; however, some of the festival constituencies blatantly use the occasion to propagate support for their party cause.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis with an analysis of the features of nationalist artworks and performance which revisit many of the threads that run throughout the study. I provide an overview of nationalist (*rashtriya*) *mandap* tableaux from 1993-1996 in Mumbai and Pune, and present an analysis of recurrent themes as manifest in their iconography and narratives. I note their key features and how media and the performative events are crucial to their dissemination as an example of their hegemonic authority in Ganapati *utsava* praxis.

¹Ganapati - literally ‘Lord of the hordes’ - is the most frequently cited name for Ganesha in Maharashtra. Sometimes the names are used interchangeably. The god is also known as Vinayaka, Gajanan, Mangalmurti, amongst other regional terms of appellation in the subcontinent.

²Bollywood is the colloquial name for Mumbai’s film industry.

³Michael describes Hindutva as ‘devotion to Hinduism’ (Michael 1984: 241). More commonly, Hindutva describes the phenomena of Hindu militant nationalism since the 1980s, which has had communalist precedents in historical times. See Chapter Three for debates on terms of reference in the thesis.

⁴After several party splits, the main Congress body is known as the Indian National Congress-I, hereon referred to as Congress.

⁵The terms, Ganapati *utsava*, when together, are also written *Ganeshotsava*.

⁶*Mandals* are generally particular to residences - such as a building, complex or compound - or work places.

⁷Sometimes the terms *mandap* and *pandal* are used interchangeably. In this thesis, I refer to the shrine with the *murti* of Ganapati and surrounding decorations and vignettes as the *mandap*, and *pandal* as its enclosure. The latter are of variable sizes, and usually consist of a bamboo frame covered with tarpaulin or corrugated iron.

Chapter Two

Regional and Historical Contexts of the Ganapati *Utsava* in Maharashtra

This chapter provides a contextual account with which to situate the emergence of the Ganapati *utsava* as a public celebration. I concentrate on the area of Maharashtra and its principle towns, Mumbai and Pune, pointing out key figures and events that have shaped their developments throughout recent history which have relevance for the subject of the thesis. By noting important deities and shrines which are a vital part of Hindu religious praxis in Maharashtra, the religious landscape of the area is then considered. This allows for a contextual understanding of the rise in popularity of the deity, Ganapati, in the region, and the emergence of the mobilised festival in the colonial public domain. These themes provide the basis with which to pursue the question of why Bal Gangadhar Tilak publicised the Ganapati *utsava* as the festival with which to campaign against colonial injustices in the public domain.

Histories are as much formed in the present as they are about particular pasts. People like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and the seventeenth century Maratha warrior-king, Chatrapati Shivaji, are as much a part of contemporary consciousness as they are historical figures. This is demonstrated by the numerous displays and iconic representations of the Maharashtrian figureheads during festival celebrations. Thus this chapter also lays the ground for contemporary expressions of historical constructions displayed by several Ganapati *utsava mandap* tableaux in their annual designs, which I explore in subsequent chapters.

Regional Background

As its name implies, Maharashtra is the area inhabited by Marathi-speaking people.¹ Maharashtra broadly indicates the region in western India, the north centre of Peninsular India, bordered by the Arabian Sea to its west and settled on the plateau ridges of the Sahyadri mountain range to the hinterlands. Its western area is known as the Konkan, a narrow coastal land which alternates between steep-sided valleys and low laterite plateaus. The Satpuda hills along the northern border and the Bhamragad-Chiroli-Gaikhuri Ranges on the eastern border act as natural barriers to the contours of the state.

Under the leadership of the seventeenth century warrior ruler, Chatrapati Shivaji, the area was amalgamated into what is more or less the present-day area of Maharashtra. With the Peshwas rule from the eighteenth century until 1817-18, the

region expanded and contracted with their successes and defeats. The region was amalgamated into the Bombay Presidency by the British colonial authorities and officially declared as Maharashtra on May 1, 1960, thirteen years after India's independence (Kosambi 1995: 4). The latter occurred as a result of agitation for a Samyukta Maharashtra and the linguistic reorganisation of the states of India. All contiguous Marathi-speaking areas that were previously under four different administrative control were brought together to cover an area of about 3.08 lakh square kilometres. This included the region between Daman and Goa that formed part of the British Bombay Province (Presidency); five districts in the north and west of the Nizam's dominion of Hyderabad; eight districts in the south of the Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh) and several native-ruled state enclaves lying within the above areas (Arunachalam 1985: 15).²

Today, Maharashtra is the third largest state in India with a population of 78,937,187 according to the 1991 Census. Mumbai is the most congested city. Nearly thirteen percent of the state's population live in Greater Mumbai (9,925,891) at a density of 16,461 per square mile.³ This compares with approximately seven percent of the state's population (5,532,532), a density of 354 per square mile who live in Pune district. Maharashtra's population is predominantly Hindu - 81% of the total population with over twenty per cent of this figure belonging to Scheduled Castes and Tribes. The total Muslim population in the state is 10% of the total population. Greater Mumbai's population is 68% Hindu and 17% Muslim, which compares with 86% Hindu and 6% Muslim for Pune district.⁴ These figures have implications for several issues which characterise Mumbai's political culture as distinct from Pune's. They include the exorbitant rise of land prices and housing scarcities, the politics of parochialism, and communalist tensions and rioting - factors which are more virulent in Mumbai than they are in Pune (see Chapter Eight).

Brahmans and Marathas are the dominant castes in the region. Whereas Brahman traditionally refers to the priestly or educated classes, Maratha has had a changing constituency. Starting off as people who did service to rulers as distinct from ordinary cultivators, revenue, martial training and hunting, and other lifestyle associations, led to a distinct sector of society and redefined genealogies for Marathas - a pattern not too different to the precedent set by Rajput rulers (Gordon 1993: 16). Nowadays, the term, Maratha, refers to a combination of castes. Their emblematic figure is the seventeenth century Maratha warrior-king, Chatrapati Shivaji.

Despite the importance of Maharashtra to the economic livelihood of India, towns and cities in the region were more political-administrative or religious centres. Unlike Gujarat, a sizeable trading population was not prevalent in Maharashtra, but was produced through in-migration, particularly by Gujaratis and Marwaris. This

situation has resulted in the growth of regionalism with those indigenous to Maharashtra. In contrast to other regions, the absence of a large propertied class where Dalits also held land rights has mitigated oppositions based on land grievances. This has been the consequence of a history of anti-Brahman movements of Dalits from the 1870s, particularly with Jotiba Phule and the founding of the Satya Shodhak Samaj (O'Hanlon 1985; Sunthanikar 1993). From the 1920s, the Dalits were largely organised under Dr. Ambedkar (Basu et al 1993: 10). Despite the persistence of caste tensions, social cohesion amongst indigenous Maharashtrians as against outsiders to the state has laid the basis for a 'development of a common set of symbols contained in a regional consciousness' (Gokhale-Turner 1980: 94). Regional consciousness has resulted in parochial political manoeuvring, of which the issue of language and the populist politics of parties such as the Mumbai-based Shiv Sena, have risen to notable proportions (see Chapter Eight).

In contemporary times, the Ganapati *utsava* has become synonymous with the cities of Mumbai and Pune. Greater Mumbai contains the greater number of *mandals* than any other region in India, 2,421 of which are registered with the all-Mumbai organisation for *Ganeshotsava mandals*, the Brihanmumbai Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samanvay Samiti (Greater Mumbai Public Ganapati Festival Co-ordination Committee), as accounted for in their special edition journal, *Ganeshotsava Margdarshika* (Silim 1991). Even though, it is Pune that stands out as the more prominent city for its religious and historical associations with Ganapati, particularly as the city was the residence of the Peshwas court and was situated at the apex of the Asthavinayaka sites (see below), in this century Mumbai has rose to rival the city for its widespread and extravagant Ganapati celebrations.

Historical Background to Mumbai

Mumbai is the Marathi name of the city after the patron goddess of its original inhabitants, Mumba Devi. The name of the city was officially reinstated in 1995 under the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance State Legislative Assembly Government. In earlier times, Mumbai was corrupted to the Portuguese 'Bombaim' and changed to the city's former name, Bombay, by the British in the nineteenth century. The moves to reinstate the city's name of Mumbai by the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance was fuelled by a Hindu revivalist movement, which also resulted in the change of name of several streets, squares and institutions in the city.⁵ Sceptics however see it as a political 'ego-exercise' or a matter of expediency by the newly elected state government, rather than as part of their drive to erase the legacy of the British Raj (*The Sunday Times of India*, February 19, 1995).

Since the development of Mumbai from a series of islands with small fishing villages into a powerful commercial and industrial centre under British rule, migration into the city has been at a steady rate. People from various backgrounds have migrated into the city, bringing along their distinct cultural practices and lifestyles. Mumbai continues to be one of the most, if not *the* most, culturally diverse cities in India. Starting off as an outpost to the English East India Company in the eighteenth century, in the nineteenth century it had developed into a powerful base for British colonial rule in western India. After the defeat of the indigenous rule of the Peshwas from Pune in 1817-18, the British shifted the power base in order to capitalise on Mumbai's natural harbour and facilitate the naval-commercial nexus between Surat as Gujarat's main port. This shift in cities also served to disorientate the strength and confidence of elite Brahmins concentrated in Pune.

By the 1850s, the Industrial Revolution in the west had its effects in India. Many centres of textile export in India lost out to the mills of Manchester such that, on the one hand, they became exporters of raw cotton, and on the other, importers of mill-made cloth. However, the cotton trade thrived in Mumbai due to its distinctive position as a crossroads between east and west, earning it the title of the 'Manchester of India'. In the nineteenth century, a small cluster of British and other Europeans at the top of the socio-political hierarchy, jostled with the mercantile populations. The latter were drawn from Gujarat, and included Parsis, Hindu and Jain Banias, Bohra and Khoja Muslims, and Maharashtrian Hindus, predominately Brahmins. The latter, through achievement in western education, entered into clerical jobs and other professions, with other caste Hindus working in the mills, docks, as labourers, domestic servants, artisans and cultivators (Kosambi 1995: 7).

Maharashtrian residents in Mumbai to this day have close links with their ancestral villages, some of them travelling back to their village during Ganapati *utsava* and other such important occasions. For instance, the forefathers of many residents in Girgaum came from Alibaug, which lies to the south of the Mumbai peninsula in Maharashtra. With the predominance of Konkan culture in historical Mumbai and the close maintenance of ancestral links between many families and their Konkan ancestries, Konkan culture flourishes in its varied mutated forms through several settlements in Mumbai, particularly in the older areas of the city such as Girgaum, Mazgaon, Tardeo, Godapdeo, Matunga and Dadar.⁶

There are a number of factors as to why Mumbai shows the greatest *mandal* concentration in contemporary times. Mumbai has a high population density, the highest in Maharashtra. Historically, migrants from the Konkan region brought in their traditions of Ganapati celebrations and decorations, traces of which can be seen in the older parts of the city's working population especially in the central and south areas

around the mills in the Dadar and Girgaum areas of Mumbai, and further east around the ports in the Byculla region (see Chapter Five). The extent and extravagance of Ganapati celebrations are an index of the economic conditions of the city; thus Mumbai with its greater commercial environment has a larger number of sponsors, donations, collections and *mandals* for the festival. Further, there are a far greater number of competitions with substantial prizes in Mumbai than there are in Pune which act as a considerable incentive on the growth and participation of new *mandals* in competitions (see Chapter Seven). Finally, due to the economic, population and unemployment difficulties, the city also reveals a large degree of regional chauvinism, and politicisation; hence the large number of Shiv Sena *shakhas* (branches) which play an active part in the development and maintenance of a large majority of *mandals* (see Chapter Eight).

The oldest *sarvajanik Ganeshotsava mandal* in Mumbai is the Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samstha, in Girgaum which was established in 1893. The areas that are renowned for Ganapati *utsava* celebrations in Mumbai include Girgaum, Lalbaug (especially Ganesh Galli and Chinchpokli Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandals), Dadar, and newer *mandals* in the suburbs such as in Marol, Kandivali and Vikhroli due to festival competition recognition and extravagant displays as a result of Shiv Sena activities. Chembur in the eastern suburbs is particularly renowned for being home to the Sahyadri Krida Sangh which has expensive and extravagant displays due to its underworld connections of anything from Rs 50 lakhs to 1 crore (*The Metropolis on Saturday*, September 11, 1994).⁷

Mumbai's image of a cosmopolitan city has been marred by several riots - the first Hindu-Muslim riot being in 1893, the latest in 1992-3. However, despite these ruptures the state capital has managed to attract people from all backgrounds, including refugees taking shelter here after Partition (Agnes 1994: 178). It is the more congested city compared to Pune, and as a result demonstrates fiercer battles for land, jobs, and resources. It is no surprise, then, that Mumbai is the site of most vehement politics of parochialism - a situation which has given birth to the politics of the Shiv Sena in 1968 (see Chapter Eight).

Historical Background to Pune

Situated at an altitude of 570 metres on the Sahyadri hills in western Maharashtra, and at the confluence of two rivers - the Mula and the Mutha - Pune has been a chief route for communication and trade as well as being seen as sacred.⁸ The rise of Pune began around 1635 after being under the sway of Muslim rule from 1340-1595, when Bahadur Nizam of Ahmednagar conferred a grant of villages of an adjoining territory

(*jagir*) upon Maloji Bhonsle, the grand-father of Chatrapati Shivaji. Maloji's son, Shahaji made Pune a place of residence at Pune and built a palace, Lal Mahal, for his wife, Jijabhai and their son, Shivaji (Parasnus 1921: 77-78). Shahaji entrusted to Jijabhai his fief, Dadoji Kondadev of Malthan, who with the reduction of land rents and encouragement of cultivation, turned Pune into a flourishing township (Kincaid in Parasnus 1921: iii). It is said that Jijabhai was responsible for the building of the Kasba Peth Mandir to Ganapati, now regarded as the guardian deity (*gramadevata*) of the city (Barnouw 1954: 80, illustration 1).

Pune was too exposed for the military ambitions of Shivaji, and in 1674, Shivaji moved the capital to Raigad where he was crowned. After the capture of Raigad by Aurangzeb in 1689, the capital was transferred to Satara by Rajaram, Shivaji's younger son (Kincaid in Parasnus 1921: iv). In the service of the Chatrapatis, a Chitpavan Brahman named Balaji Vishvanath rose from the lowest grades until he became Sarsubhedar of Pune (that is, Chief Minister or Peshwa).⁹ Balaji's son, Bajirao, moved the capital from Satara to Pune, and began to build a palace there - a grand structure present to this day and known as Shaniwarwada. Bajirao's successor, Madhavrao I, showed strongest support for the Ganapati *utsava* in the mid-eighteenth century. The Peshwas, in particular, Balaji and Madhavrao, adopted Ganapati as the family deity and also promoted the *utsava* in Pune (Preston 1980: 119). However by the time of the sixth and last Peshwa, Bajirao II, support for the Ganapati *utsava* had declined (Preston 1980: 122). The Ganapati *utsava* was not celebrated in a public manner until much later in the 1890s, under the clarion call of Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

Excepting the short period during which Shahistekhan, a commander of Aurangzeb, had occupied the city, Pune remained in the hands of the Marathas or Peshwas until 1817-1818 when the Maratha empire disintegrated under the British (Parasnus 1921: 77).¹⁰ Whereas the Chatrapatis represented a golden age in Maratha rule, the Peshwas are seen to represent a golden age of Brahman rule. Peshwas rule is intimately linked with the development of Pune, as it is with Brahmanic self-identity. This constitutes one of the reasons for Tilak's revival of the festival, himself a Chitpavan Brahman, as well as being a strategy of involving wider sectors of the populace in anti-colonial resistance (see below).

The British, realising the power of the Brahmins in Pune, moved their administrative centre to Mumbai, keeping Pune as a temporary residence for the hot months. Nonetheless, Pune proved to be a hive of activity - educationally, culturally and politically. Prominent among them was the leadership qualities and initiatives exemplified by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a member of the Indian National Congress, whose mobilisation of the Ganapati *utsava* in the 1890s is crucial to the scope of this research. Congress strength continues to persist in the city, despite the BJP-Shiv Sena

state power (Guru 1995; Palshikar 1996; Hansen 1996a). The city is the second most important city in Maharashtra, after Mumbai. Commuters regularly travel from Pune to Mumbai for work, whereas those resident in Mumbai frequent Pune for its pleasant climate and surroundings. This two-way traffic, along with other routes, is intensified during the Ganapati *utsava*, for both cities are renowned for their festival celebrations.

Pune is divided into the older half, where the localities have been named after the days of week, and the more modern and spacious Cantonment area. *Mandals* in Kasba Peth, Shukarwar Peth, and Budhwar Peth situated in the centre of the city are renowned for their historical importance for Ganapati celebrations. These *mandals*, as with the Girgaum area in Mumbai, have been celebrating the Ganapati *utsava* since Tilak's times. The Bhau Saheb Rangari Mandal (established 1893), despite its very modest size and membership, is the oldest *mandal* in Maharashtra and is situated in Budhwar Peth. The most famous and grandest place for Ganapati in Pune, indeed Maharashtra, is the Dagdu Seth Halvai Mandal in Budhwar Peth (illustrations 2-4). The Ganapati *murti* here is considered extremely auspicious, as it is believed to fulfil all one's wishes. The reasons for this lie in a combination of the age of the *murti* and the fact that the Ganapati *utsava* celebrations are done strictly according to Vedic rituals.

Religious Landmarks in Maharashtra

Religious shrines sacred to Hinduism are scattered about the state and frequently visited by devotees. Instead of being large monumental structures as one finds in the north of India, these structures are celebrated for traditions of egalitarian *bhakti* movements and associated festivals (see below). Pilgrimages are performed to the sites for obtaining blessings and the fulfilment of vows. Thus they are 'living' sites, and stand as testimony to the historical and contemporary religiosity of the area.

The most important pilgrimage sites are the Asthavinayaka, the Dagdu Seth Halvai Ganapati in Pune (illustrations 2-4), the deities, Vitthala of Pandarpur, Khandoba of Jejuri, Ambabhai of Kolhapur, Bhavani of Tuljapur and the Sai Baba shrine situated in Shirdi. The most important times for pilgrimages to the various centres is in the month of Ashadha (June-July), Bhadrapad (August-September) for Pune, Kartik and Magha (October-December) for Pandarpur, and Pausha (December-January) and Chaitra (March-April) for Jejuri. *Jatra* (fairs) at these times provide an arena for celebration and shopping where pilgrims purchase mementoes such as sweetmeats, flowers, toys, artefacts and numerous other items. As I show in Chapter Seven on competitions and commercialisation, business is not necessarily anathema to religious practices, but frequently is part and parcel of the occasion.

Bhakti saints have had a definitive influence on the social and religious character of the area. Although emerging in the Tamil country in the mid-tenth century as a reaction to the overly formal Vedic practices of the times, *bhakti* devotion spread quickly to other areas. It was a movement that stressed the egalitarian and vernacular language of the follower to the *deity*, usually Krishna (Gordon 1993: 18). Prominent poet-saints of medieval India in the region (*sants*) include Namadev, Jnyaneshvara, Eknath, and low-caste saints such as Chokhamela, Savatamali, and Tukaram. The *sants* perpetuated the tradition of *bhakti* and popularised pilgrimages to Pandarpur. The *bhakti* cult did not discriminate on the basis of caste or religion, and in fact, incorporated Sufi traditions and philosophies into its ethos. The *bhakti* cult even included Muslim poet-saints, such as Shah Muntoji Bahmani and Husain Ambarkhan - the latter who wrote a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* as well as being an ardent follower of Ganesha (Gordon 1993: 19-20).

However, the *bhakti* movement was not just a resistive force to social injustices, but 'in conflict and dialogue with the mainstream of Maharashtrian Hinduism, which was conservative in practice, temple-oriented and Brahman-dominated, used Sanskrit in ceremonies, and supported caste as a social form' (Gordon 1993: 20). Whilst Gordon argues that *bhakti* did not so much as deal with the secular, political or military world, as it did with making religious worship accessible to all on egalitarian principles, Gokhale-Turner emphasises the fusion of political and religious ideals (Gokhale-Turner 1980: 94). The ideology associated with the *bhakti* movement has been termed 'Maharashtra *dharma*'. It describes an agenda of political independence as well as religious freedom:

'As it was preached by [the poet-saint] Ramdas, Maharashtra *dharma* was an activist and aggressive Hinduism which emphasised the importance of worldly activity and the indispensability of work and action (as opposed to faith alone) for achieving one's individual goals as well as larger social and political goals' (Gokhale-Turner 1980: 95).

The politicisation of Hinduism anticipates political mobilisation of religious festivals in the nineteenth century under colonial rule, the prime example in Maharashtra being the Ganapati *utsava*. It is evident that in the nineteenth century, the mobilised festival continued various threads of the *bhakti* movement. The difference was that at the time of the inception of the *bhakti* movement, it was the Muslim Mughal rulers who were in control, which some scholars argue provided the basis on which Maharashtrians could unite (Gokhale-Turner 1980: 95). The counter-argument goes that the *bhakti* movement even included Muslim poet-saints, so did not represent a force against Islam (Gordon 1993: 20). The question to address is to what extent communal

consciousness had manifest itself in medieval India, or was this more an outcome of colonial administrative rule? Does the dressing up as historical narratives in communal categories show the inflections of contemporaneous political processes? I shall return to this debate below with the example of the Ganapati *utsava*.

Both viewpoints of the *bhakti* movement - whether it was more about religious reform or about political antagonism - converge on the point of ambiguity as to the actual subversive nature of the *bhakti* movement. This perspective could indeed represent interests of the dominant strata of society (Gokhale-Turner 1980: 95). Such ambivalence and disagreements also arise in latter-day assessments of revivalist movements in the nineteenth century - were they about internal reorganisation and justice, or addressed against outside rulers, and thus possibly, representative of a dominant indigenous viewpoint ? All that can be asserted is that movements such as these are not representative of a homogenous ideology, and can come to mean different things to different communities of interest.

Nowadays, there are five principle sects in Maharashtra (known as Panch-Sampradaya). The Varkari Sampradaya, the Mahanubhava Sampradaya, the Samarth Sampradaya, and the Datta Sampradaya, broadly correspond to *vaishnavite* traditions; and the Nath Sampradaya to *shaivite* (Talim 1985: 61). Worship of Ganapati is a state-wide phenomena, arising out of a history of Ganapati sects since the sixth or seventh century (Courtright 1988: 76). Religious devotion here is favoured by all castes and sects, and accommodates features of both *shaivite* and *vaishnavite* traditions (Michael 1984: 247). The physiognomic features of other prominent *sants* and deities concomitant with conceptual associations are frequently transposed on to Ganapati *murtis*. Throughout its public career, the festival has absorbed and modulated traditions of other forms of worship. As I account below, the ambivalent characteristics of the deity of Ganapati as being associated with both *vaishnavite* and *shaivite* traditions, has predisposed the festival to be celebrated by all. However, one fact remains, and that is the primacy of Ganapati in the festival. This is not, however, an expression of monotheism, but the assertion of Ganapati as the first and foremost god amongst a panoply of other gods and holy figures. As many informants in Mumbai and Pune cited, he was the god that everyone worshipped before all other gods.¹¹

Ganapati in Maharashtra

In contemporary times, Ganapati is arguably the most popular god in Maharashtra. Textually known as *vighnaharta*, 'remover of obstacles', stories in the *Puranas* recount Ganapati's birth stories (of which there are several versions), escapades with demons of all sorts, and stories that demonstrate his strength and prowess.¹² Many of these

stories form a part of popular consciousness, and provide a template for artistic imagination, as well as allegorical messages of a political nature (see Chapter Five).

Maharashtra is the site of the most well-known shrines dedicated to Ganapati. They include 'found' (*svyambhu*) murtis and man-made *murtis* placed in decorated shrines and temples. There are about eighty temples famed for their associations with Ganapati in Maharashtra (Gadgil 1967). Of these, the Phadke Mandir in Girgaum, Titvala Mandir in Thane and the Siddhi Vinayaka Mandir in Prabhadevi (illustration 5) are located in Greater Mumbai. Pune is famed for the Kasba Ganapati (Pune's *gramadevata*, illustration 1), Dagdu Seth Halvai Ganapati, and Sarasbagh Ganapati. The eight sites of Asthavinayaka, literally 'Eight Ganapatis', are scattered around Pune district, mainly concentrating around the city of Pune.¹³ These are Moregaon, Pali, Mahad, Lenyandri, Ojhar, Ranjangaon, Theur, and Siddhadtek - each of which have a particular founding myth to a *svyambhu* Ganapati. Although present well before Peshwas rule, these sites gained popularity with the devotion of the family of Cincvad, descendants of Moroba Gosavi and the Peshwas rulers' patronage of the god.¹⁴

Even though Vitthala, with his temple at Pandarpur, is also extremely popular, the site is still second to the most visited and highest earning *mandir* in Maharashtra, namely the Dagdu Seth Halvai Mandir in Pune which is dedicated to Ganapati (see Chapter Five). Ganapati's popularity is down to a history of successions of cults to his name since the sixth or seventh century. Cincvad became a popular site for Ganapati devotees in the seventeenth century due to the association of the town with Moroba Gosavi. Moroba was a Deshashta Brahman who, after many years of devotion to Ganapati, obtained a vision of the deity, and received widespread fame as an incarnation of Ganapati. He received the name of Dev due to his 'divinity' which lasted in his family line for about seven generations (Preston 1980: 112). Patronage of the god by the royal dynasty, the Brahman Peshwas, since the eighteenth century lent the god more publicity and prestige throughout the region. Finally, the political mobilisation of the festival associated with the deity by Bal Gangadhar Tilak since the nineteenth century have contributed to his popularity in Maharashtra (Courtright 1988: 76). Originally, a deity associated with the lower castes as it is written in the *Manusmrti* (*Laws of Manu*), Moroba's incarnation as Ganapati, and Peshwas patronage led to Brahmanic associations of the deity. The efforts of Tilak to communicate with the masses by mobilising the god's festival into the public resulted in a widespread acceptance of the deity by all castes.

Devotees consider Tuesdays as a particularly auspicious day to visit these shrines. The rate of attendance has been escalating in contemporary times. For instance, the Treasurer in the Siddhi Vinayaka Mandir in Mumbai recounted that whereas ten years ago there were about fifty thousand visitors on Tuesdays and one

thousand daily (estimated from the coconut offerings that they bring), in recent years there is around two hundred thousand visitors on a Tuesday and ten to fifteen thousand daily. It is apparent that faith in the deity has not been depreciating in present times, but has increased at a phenomenal rate. As the treasurer reflected, the *mandir* and faith in Ganapati has served as a kind of sanctuary in a troubled modern world; but I suggest is also testament to the phenomena of Hindu revivalism, whether it be through politicians or other community leaders since the 1980s (see Chapters Eight and Nine).

Shirgaonkar comments on the importance of the deity in the coastal areas of Konkan, Goa and Karva since recorded history (*Loksatta-Lokrang*, September 15, 1996). Patronage of the deity by the ruling Peshwas dynasty boosted the god from being a deity associated primarily with low-caste worship, to those of the Chitpavan Brahman nobility. This contributed to the Brahmanisation of the god, although it is contended that some of the above founding myths and stories might have been reformulated as a consequence of this process of sanskritization. As I have already accounted, the figure most associated with devotion to Ganapati is the first Peshwas ruler of the seventeenth century, Balaji Vishvanath, who had his headquarter in Janjir on the Konkan coast south of Mumbai. Balaji was a great devotee of the *sant*, Brahmradh Svami, a Shiv *bhakta*, who also used to celebrate the festival of Ganapati in the month of Bhadrapad. The *svami* used to live in the area of Goa, and on one of Balaji's visits, the *svami* gave him the blessings of Ganapati, and the god became the *kuladevata* of the Peshwas dynasty.

Subsequently, in 1727, Brahmradh Svami moved to Satara, encouraging the festivities of Ganapati there as well. Meanwhile, in their ambitions to conquer the area, the Peshwas rulers were in combat with people in the northern part of Maharashtra. The Peshwas fervently prayed to Ganapati to help them overcome all difficulties. With their success, the Peshwas attributed more and more service to the god. With the continued success of the Peshwas dynasty and the devotion of Ganapati, the popularity of the god, along with its Brahmanic associations, spread throughout the area. Today, it can be stated that:

'The Ganesh festival today is the largest Hindu public religious performance in Maharashtra and is regarded by Maharashtrian Hindus as particularly expressing their regional religious ethos' (Courtright 1988: 77).

As I comment below, Tilak's decision to mobilise the festival as a public site of collective resistance was fuelled by a wish to recall the era of Brahmanic rule to the

area, yet involve other castes as well in the celebration of a widely adored deity in the Hindu pantheon.

The British in India

In brief, Queen Elizabeth I's royal charter of 1600 laid the way clear for the establishment of the East India Company in Eastern India. Led by Robert Clive, this commercial power remained so until 1857 - a period which is generally described as the 'Company Raj'. After the defeat of the Peshwas rulers in 1817-8, the British began to consolidate their rule in western India. First of all, power was exercised in the guise of economic trade through the East India Company. After the uprising of 1857 where indigenous soldiers across the country revolted against their British rulers, stronger measures were made to control the Indian populace and a Crown territory with Queen Victoria as the ceremonial head was established.¹⁵ In the wake of such civil disturbances, major reforms were instituted in which the Governor General's responsibilities were expanded, who was held accountable towards the Secretary of State for India based in London.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, British India covered over two fifths of the subcontinent and ruled over three fifths of population. Its rule was centred in strategic areas such as Mumbai, Madras, Bengal, the northern province of Panjab and the whole of the Ganges plain from Calcutta to Delhi. There were an additional six hundred native states who continued to be ruled by native princes, effectively 'puppet leaders' to the British establishment (Embree 1976: 141). As Dirks states:

'a "theatre" state of India was created [where] little kings ..[were] created as colonial objects and given colonial scripts. They were maintained, altered and managed as part of a systematic, if awkwardly developing, set of colonial purposes and understandings' (Dirks 1987: 384).

British colonialism began insidiously and operated in large part, 'by disguising its own intervention, [and] creating masks that continue to deceive' (Dirks 1987: 404). Even though a brutal regime, it was able to operate for the large part of its early career in the manner of benign benevolence. Within bouts of extreme oppression, British colonial hegemony was bolstered by an extensive administrative system, and use of local intermediaries in their system of governance.¹⁶ Thus oftentimes, indigenous Indians would collaborate and interact with British figures, the presence of racially divided social clubs notwithstanding. This had implications for the nature of nationalist thought and public life throughout its rapidly changing course at the turn of the century:

'In one case, we observe the nationalist as collaborator, participating loyally in the Government that was to be overthrown. In the other, the nationalist as orthodox Hindu ambivalently pressing for changes that would not undermine his religious and social traditions' (Israel 1980: 10).

There were of course variations within these two poles of indigenous activities and associations throughout India's colonial history. Subtle and dramatic variations in the character of nationalism, which even though a discourse spearheaded by western history, began to take on very explicit characterisations specific to the case of Indian history (Chatterjee 1986; see Chapter Three). This arose due to a complex dialogue of accommodation and resistance between colonial government, and the colonised (Gramsci 1971; Laclau and Mouffe 1985; see Chapter Three).

Implications of British Colonial Administration

Colonial attempts to contain and regulate the Indian populace were initiated by regular census. As well as facilitating rule, its classificatory logic created units of identity, resulting in a self-reflexive populace conscious of other enumerated collectivities (Kaviraj 1992: 26). The practice of creating discourses of number, land, and language were interconnected pieces of a complex discursive formation. Furthermore, these colonial discourses were also '*productive* discourses, creating new kinds of knowledge, expression, political practice and subjectivity' (Breckenridge and van der Veer 1994: 6, their emphasis). This made for a socio-political milieu quite different from former times, which in turn created the conditions for new strategies and mobility, status politics, nation consciousness and, later, electoral struggle in India (Cohn 1987).¹⁷

The 'newness' of the political formations constitutes, in Foucauldian terms, a rupture from a previous discursive formation based more on a 'community sense being multiple and layered and fuzzy' (Kaviraj 1992: 26). Appadurai further investigates the effects of enumerating a population from the perspective of its proponents. He argues that there were at least two purposes which the role of numbers served. One was '*justificatory*' in that it 'facilitated learning, discovery, arguing in context of bureaucratic discursive practice between rulers and metropole'. The other was '*disciplinary*' in that the colonial state 'saw itself as part of the Indian body politic while it was simultaneously engaged in reinscribing the politics of the Indian body, especially in its involvement with sati, hook-swinging, possession rites and other forms of body manipulation' (Appadurai 1994: 319).¹⁸

As part of the 'new' types of mobilisations, socio-religious movements, in nineteenth century India anticipated the kind of politics one sees in more direct

political agitation in the early twentieth century. They represent a response to the *justificatory* aspects of colonial rule by reviving and relearning a reformed Hindu religion. They also present a reaction to the *disciplinary* aspects of colonial viewpoints in that they formed a response to the colonial state discourse on the perceived 'backwardness' of the Hindu religion. These movements include the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj. However, as I elaborate below, these arguments are only of limited relevance to the politicisation of the Ganapati *utsava*. In fact, the Ganapati *utsava* provided a 'messy' scenario and reaction to colonial governance. The arguments made above about enumerative and classificatory discourses were discursive articulations which had some, but not total, influence on performative milieux and religious praxis, such as festivals. Further, the fact that the festival was based on the popular worship of an elephant-headed god amongst 'unruly' crowds sent ripples of paranoia in colonial circles. From the mid-1890s, the festival was heavily regulated by colonial surveillance in an attempt to place it under control using measures consonant with the discursive practices to enumerate and classify the populace (Cashman 1975; see Chapter Four). However, in the festival's initial public mobilisation in 1893, at least, the veil of a religious pretext for the festival prevented extensive measures of colonial regulation or prohibition (see Chapter Five).

Despite their separate differences, such socio-religious movements set the precedent for directly political movements which used religion as their foundation stone. Later movements included the Hindu Sabha Movement formed between 1907 and 1909 by the Arya Samajists; the Hindu Mahasabha launched as an ideological pressure group from within the Congress party in 1922; the Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founded by Keshav Baliram Hedgevar in 1925; and, after India's independence, the organisation formed under the auspices of the RSS, the Vishva Hindu Parishad, in 1964 (Jaffrelot 1996). These earlier political parties were largely formed as an oppositional response to colonial rule, and the need to provide for a Hindu brotherhood. But they also emerged in reaction to the increased organisation of Muslim communities under the Muslim League founded in 1906, and the perceived bias of the state, particularly in its institution of separate electorates for Muslims throughout India (Jaffrelot 1993). It is evident that any discussion on religion in the Indian colonial context, as indeed of today, need consider the political and discursive formations effecting its public character. This is arguably the case for earlier movements including the *bhakti* movement.

Devotional Politics

Early western interest in India, aside from its commercially oriented motivations, was ostensibly more concerned with the 'spiritual' qualities that the country had to offer, blind to any other kinds of social practices in India. This systematic way of collecting and representing particular types of knowledge and associated praxis about the 'East' has come to be called Orientalism (Said 1978; Inden 1986, 1990).¹⁹ Westernised Indian intellectuals, particularly those in Bengal who had a much longer association with colonial powers, were propelled by Orientalist interests in the 'glories of their civilisation'. But they also began to incorporate western models of reasoning into their reinterpretations. Thus eastern spirituality was posited as superior to the construct of western materialism, yet incorporated certain premises of western rationale. This initiative has its apogee in the Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi's combination of Hindu spirituality and nationalism, very much informed by Orientalist viewpoints (van der Veer 1994: 41).

In brief, the Orientalists in India were prominent before 1830, after which, parliament and political economy began to make factual studies on the socio-cultural make-up of India and its populace (Ludden 1994: 251). This latter more 'utilitarian' view saw Indian civilisation as deteriorating, irrational and prone to superstition - a civilisation that was considered to be in need of education in western ways. By 1880, this imperial governance was merged with European social theories on scientific racism and, to the colonisers, seemed to justify colonial rule in South Asia amongst other colonised territories in the south (Ludden 1994: 251).

However limited state interference in religion was, colonial superiority complexes and the interest in Orientalist knowledge, had its wider repercussions amongst indigenous elite as well. With Christian criticisms of Hinduism as a 'backward' religion reliant on idol worship, polytheism and the caste system, native social reformers began to develop the Hindu religion alongside, yet critical of, Christian models (Jaffrelot 1993). 'Employing an inverted Orientalist thematic' (Hansen 1996b: 142), these movements provided a challenge to the influence of utilitarian reformism and Christian proselytising operating outside of direct state matters. This process of 'semiticisation' (Hansen 1996b: 141) of the Hindu religion was generally characterised by calls for the revival of a golden Vedic age of Hindu worship; monotheism; establishment of a central Book; a reform or reconception of the caste system; and congregational worship usually accompanied with proselytising.

Jaffrelot (1993) describes the process of revitalising Hindu religion with the use of Christian precepts and western rationalism for a particular purpose as 'strategic syncretism'. The aforementioned features were characteristics of a syncretic Hindu religion. Thapar calls the phenomena as the emergence of 'syndicated Hinduism' (in

Panikkar 1994: 34). However, as Bhabha reminds us, this is not to infer that what preceded the hybrid formations were not hybrid themselves (Bhabha 1994: 34).

Syncretic Hindu movements included the Brahmo Samaj which emerged in Calcutta in 1828 under the leadership of Rammohun Roy; and the Arya Samaj which was a more aggressive version founded by Swami Dayananda in Calcutta in the early 1870s (Jaffrelot 1993). As far as Tilak's mobilisation of the Ganapati *utsava* was concerned, the precedents set by the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj were incidental even though highly influential throughout the rest of India in general. Indeed, Naik argues that Tilak regarded the west-inspired socio-religious reform movements as 'alien to Indian religious tradition' (Naik 1992: 111). The characteristics of the mobilisation of the Ganapati *utsava* resemble precedents set by the *bhakti* movement in the militant use of Hinduism, rejection of Vedic traditions of worship, and openness to all sectors of indigenous society. Tilak's aims were to create a public forum for debate and political agitation, rather than reform Hindu religion per se. His emphasis was more on the revitalisation of a deity and a recollection of a 'golden age' represented in a closer historical time - that of Maratha and Peshwas rule before British colonialism took root (Barnouw 1954: 82). Thus the mobilised Ganapati *utsava* represented a revivalism based on recent historical events, rather than an obvious syncretism based on revived notions of a glorious Hindu Vedic era. Tilak was particularly interested in making religion more of a practical worldly matter, such that it might be utilised for specific ends, and no attempt was made to argue for the basis of a monotheistic religion. The god, Ganapati, was recognised as important, but as part of a panoply of other gods, continuing, rather than reforming, Hindu polytheistic beliefs. As such, Tilak did not engage in an argument for the semiticisation of religion, but advocated a change from within traditional institutions, rather than from outside as was the Congress reformist predilection to change society according to a western pattern. Tilak's view was that elite Indians would not be able to communicate their sense of alienation to their society from the precincts of the Congress, but had to work within the framework of traditional institutions as provided by religious practice and indigenous history.

Nationalism is generally seen as derived from the west. But in Tilak's case, religion was prioritised as the point of solidarity between people, which was then presented as the foundation for the political unit of the nation, not the other way round.²⁰ Tilak stated:

'Every reform must aim at the awakening of national consciousness. The only consciousness which we as a nation can proudly retain and foster ought to have its springs in Hindutva' (cited in Karandikar 1956: 198).

Tilak's orientation was more towards the *bhakti* tradition of caste-less and resistive devotional politics in the region, the Peshwas associations of Ganapati, notwithstanding. Yet, it appears that this was at the behest of a westernised education, and with the knowledge of ideas such as western liberalism, legal issues, and nationalism, that this dynamic was set into motion. Cashman comments:

'Coming chiefly from the lower echelons of society, the poet-saints developed a nationalist movement of heterodox and egalitarian character by preaching against "forms and ceremonies and class distinctions based on birth"' (Cashman 1975: 9).

However much open to dispute as to the proto-nationalistic qualities of the *bhakti* movement, Cashman's analysis is derived from indigenous revivalist associations of Maharashtrian identity (Cashman, 1975: 10): the point being that no matter what the realities of the medieval period were, the *bhakti* movement began to be seen as a way of legitimising indigenous struggle and identity in nineteenth century Maharashtra. These precedents were drawn upon for another means of widening and creating the public field of popular struggle and political conscious-raising. Effectively, the mobilisation of the Ganapati *utsava* was more an example of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1993: 3-4), organising around a common history for a particular purpose, than it was an obvious example of 'strategic syncretism' (Jaffrelot 1993). The festival allowed for a widening of the social base for a nationalist project, and a proximity of the Congress elite to perceptions of the national-popular (Gramsci 1971).

Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1856-1920)

As the person most famed for the initiative to mobilise the Ganapati *utsava* into a public ceremony for a political cause in the 1890s, I now concentrate on Tilak's work with a view to setting his activities in a wider socio-political context. Even though Tilak popularised public activities to do with the Ganapati *utsava* already initiated by other Hindus, his charismatic speeches and writings in newspapers played a large part in promulgating the values of reviving public celebrations across the region in his efforts to 'awaken the public' (*lokjagriti*) (Thorat 1992). Here, I begin with a brief profile of Tilak's background and activities. This is followed by an enquiry into three related aspects of cultural revivalist movements that I have identified in festivals such as the Ganapati *utsava* within particular socio-historical contexts of anti-colonial agitations. They concern the interconnected processes of (i) consolidating indigenous

social divisions, (ii) revitalising the region's 'selected' heritage and, (iii) as a strategy of resistance to colonial rule.

Tilak was born a Chitpavan Brahman in the coastal Konkan region. The Brahmans as a caste were generally distrusted by British for a number of reasons. The Chitpavans were the immediate pre-British rulers of the Deccan in the form of the Peshwas. Additionally, there was a general distaste for the priestly castes. Furthermore, the growing Brahmanic predominance in the Bombay Government towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the combination of emergence of popular resistance to colonial rule, began to unsettle the British (Cashman 1975: 23;17-44). After all, with few exceptions, it was indeed elite Brahmans who were instrumental in agitating against the British, particularly in Maharashtra - one of their main concerns being to promulgate disaffection amongst other castes as well.

Tilak was educated in mathematics, astronomy, Vedic studies, and law at Deccan College in Pune from 1872. During the 1880s Tilak became increasingly involved in a number of cultural revivalist and political endeavours. In 1880 he founded the New English School with Vishnushastri Chiplunkar - an educational institution run by, and for, Indians with the agendum to present fairer instruction in Indian traditions than 'British scholars, missionaries, and Indian admirers of Western culture' (Courtright 1985: 229).

In 1881, Tilak launched the two newspapers, *Mahratta* and *Kesari*, the former in English and the latter in Marathi. These newspapers formed another part of his plan to educate and inform the populace as well as acting as a means of popularising the festivals. Cashman notes that 'the most important means of communication was the press, notably the *Kesari*, which was read throughout the Deccan and copied by smaller district newspapers' (Cashman 1975: 82). As Anderson (1983) has accounted, newspapers enabled a spread of the nationalist spirit, but it must be added, only amongst the literate. There was a vast number of illiterate people who also needed to be informed - a point which makes the use of visual, oral, and performative aspects enabled by public festivals all the more pertinent.²¹ In 1897, Tilak and his colleagues themselves installed a *sarvajanik* Ganapati in the courtyard of their offices (illustration 6).

In 1884, Tilak helped establish the Deccan Education Society, a development of the New English School. In 1889, he had joined the Indian National Congress, and attained a post in the organisation in 1892. Around 1896, disagreements between the Moderates or reformers such as G. V. Gokhale, and Extremists or neo-traditionalists represented by Tilak were made manifest (Courtright 1985: 229-230).²² Tilak's main ambitions were to educate, reform, and celebrate Hindu culture with the ultimate aim to throw off colonial rule, rather than reform Indian society on the basis of western

liberal ideas. He was interested in reviving and mobilising what might be called orthodox views on Hinduism, as opposed to a reform of its central tenets. Tilak detested 'an imitation of the west' which he saw as a sign of spiritual bankruptcy and moral degradation:

'He realised that the basic weakness of the Indian people lay in the loss of their self-respect and feeling of nationhood. Unless the people's respect for their own history, culture and religion was restored, he felt convinced all talk of political and social emancipation would prove idle and fruitless' (Tahmankar 1956: 60).

Despite Tilak's motivations, elements of revision based on his westernised education entered into his initiatives. Tilak was to offer scholarly interpretations of the *Bhagavad Gita* in his *Gita Rahasya* (*The Secret Meaning of the Gita*, first published in 1915). In this book, Tilak attempted to counter earlier commentaries by offering what he considered an impartial reading:

'[Tilak] appropriated the threefold ethics of "devotion", "knowledge", and "duty" (or "action") against the countervailing ethics of renunciation and otherworldliness that co-existed among the heterogeneous themes in the text' (Wakankar 1995: 49).

Effectively, Tilak's main argument was that the message of the *Gita* is not to renounce the world, but to act in the world (Cashman 1975: 55). We can see that even though by his own account, Tilak is offering an impartial reading of the *Gita*, the interpretation, in effect, reveals his inclinations by portraying his religio-political philosophy of positive action in the world.²³

Tilak's call for action/activism derived largely from the notion of *karma-yoga*. He sought original principles of Hindu tradition for example in the *Ramayana* and *Bhagavad Gita* (Karunakaran 1964: 96) centring on a call for action, rather than purely devotional or renunciation techniques. As he stated:

'Krishna's exhortations for Arjuna to fight should be taken as a rallying cry for Hindus to "fight the British by violence if necessary, in order to regain political supremacy"' (cited in Harvey 1986: 321).

In Tilak's eyes, religion was not just part of the Hindu identity, but also a force that could facilitate a spiritual and political *moksha* (release or freedom). In a public meeting at the Agricultural and Swadeshi Exhibitions in Pandarpur at the time of the annual pilgrim, Kartiki Ekdashi Day, on October 25th, 1906, Tilak made the parallel between spiritual *moksha* and political *moksha* from colonial rule:

'...political *moksha* would be attained when the struggle for independence would have passed through various phases, just as spiritual *moksha* is attained only after a cycle of births' (Karandikar 1956: 231).

Harvey has described the words and actions of Tilak as 'philosophical justification *cum* rationalization' (Harvey 1986: 321, his italics). It can be seen that Tilak sought to supplant western philosophy, revitalise the tradition of Hinduism and legitimise political activism. These characteristics are all exemplified by the motivations for, and effects of, the *sarvajanik Ganapati utsava* as well. The mobilisation of the Ganapati *utsava* provided an performative vehicle with which he can propagate his support for these interconnected principles across the populace.

Tahmankar (1956) mentions Tilak's study of Greek history. The relevance for the subject of the Ganapati *utsava*, is that Tilak learnt about such matters as how the Olympian Games had developed into a great national festival, thereby building up a national spirit among the many individual city states of Greece. This parallel is also noted by Cashman, taken from Tilak's article in the *Kesari* of September 8, 1896 (cited in Cashman 1975: 78-79). Similarities between the Ganapati *utsava* as it manifested itself in its transition to being a public performance and procession are striking. Every fourth year, the Olympian Games, a religious festival in tribute to Jupiter with its sacrifices, processions and games, also had its poets and authors who recited their compositions and artists who displayed their works:

'Athletes, poets, sculptors, statesmen, philosophers, orators, generals - all met together in friendly contest for the honour of their states and their gods' (Tahmankar 1956: 61).

Tilak's insight was to note festivals' potential for public gatherings and celebration which could be channelled into concerns about self-identity, community awareness, and anti-colonial mobilisation. Just as sport could be considered an effective arena of politics as well as create a sense of discipline and brotherhood, so a public religious event provided a performative occasion to promulgate multiple agendas of a socio-political nature. The Ganapati *utsava* was a way of reclaiming part of the public domain for an indigenous praxis, which due to its religious nature, could not be entirely prohibited by colonial authorities due to their official 'hands-off' policy towards religious matters in India (Michael 1984: 255).²⁴ In such a way, the festival exemplifies Scott's formulation of 'hidden transcripts' of public displays of power in hierarchical society, but significantly, from the perspective of a variegated category of the subordinated (Scott 1989: 153, 1990).²⁵

The two festivals Tilak is associated with in particular in a bid to revive history and religion, are the Ganapati *utsava* from 1892, and the Shivaji festival, for which Tilak began campaigning in 1895. In a speech delivered in Pune on the 25th June 1907, Tilak stated:

'Festivals like these prove an incentive to the legitimate ambitions of a people with a great historic past. They serve to impart courage, such courage as an appreciation of heroes securing their salvation against odds, can give. They are an antidote to vague despair. They serve like manure to the seeds of enthusiasm and the spirit of nationality' (cited in Ghose 1922: 70).

As an example of Tilak's influence on festival participants, in 1906, Tilak put up a four-point programme which was passed in the National Congress meeting. The programme called for the exclusive use of Swadeshi goods; banning of foreign goods; the propagation of national education; and a drive against alcoholism. Participants in the Ganapati *utsava* received these messages through the festival. Every *Ganeshotsava mandal* was even instructed to sell Rs. 2,000-2,500 worth of Swadeshi goods. These later developed into the presence of more permanent stalls all across the country (Thorat 1992: 170).²⁶

Due to his rising popularity and success in agitating the indigenous populace, Tilak underwent two trials. The first was in 1897-8 for charges of sedition with regard to his writings on the interpretation of Shivaji's murder of the Mughal General, Afzal Khan, for which he received eighteen months imprisonment. In 1659, Afzal Khan's army desecrated Hindu sacred places including Pandarpur, the most important pilgrimage site in Maharashtra. This action lost his favours amongst local landlords (*deshmuks*). Khan's army surrounded Chatrapati Shivaji and his army in his fort at Pratapgad. The two sides eventually negotiated a solution, and Afzal Khan and Shivaji agreed to meet. Both men came to the tryst armed, and Shivaji ended up disembowelling Khan with the iron claw he was hiding in his chain mail. Shivaji's troops then descended upon the unsuspecting enemies, and eventually slaughtered them (Gordon 1993: 67-8). This story has been open to various interpretations - whether it was to be taken on face value, or whether there are political parallels to be made with others that pose threats to national integrity and justice. Alongside the nineteenth century revival of the figure of Shivaji, came different interpretations of his life and character. Just as the earlier, largely colonial, accounts argued for veracity in their seeming objectiveness, by the mid-1890s, Shivaji's life was put through the filter of contemporaneous politics particularly with regard to Hindu-Muslim relations. This debate was initiated by a Parsi scholar, R. P. Karkaria, who in an essay on Pratapgad Fort read before the Bombay branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, defended the killing

of Afzal Khan by Shivaji (Kulkarni 1984: 63). It was an interpretation of this story by Tilak perceived as a veiled attack on the injustices of British rule that led to his incrimination in 1897-8. In contemporary times, the story is read as a moment of historical and national glory, with more aggressive interpretations of it as a need to defend the nation (and the Hindu faith) against its perceived enemies, such as Pakistanis or Muslims in India (see Chapter Eight).

The second period of Tilak's incarceration was in 1908. Again, this was for charges of sedition and waging a war against 'the King' for which he was punished with six years transportation to Mandalay in Burma (Pradhan 1994: 30, 75). Each time, there was public outcry at Tilak's incarceration, and several campaigns were mobilised, some of which were channelled through Marathi drama (Ganachari 1994: 584-5). Along with the performative occasions in tribute to Ganapati and Shivaji, Tilak's life was also valorised and became the subject of performative events to promulgate messages of selfless campaigns for nationalist justice.

The Public Mobilisation of Ganapati *Utsava*

There are primarily three entwined strands to the cultural revivalism or 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak 1993: 3-4) encouraged by Tilak as exemplified by the mobilisation of the Ganapati *utsava*. Firstly, the festival was seen as a means to bridge divisions between indigenous groupings whether it be based on caste, educational differences, religious sects, and, to limited extents due to the public and entertaining attractions of the festival, other religious groups as well. Secondly, the festival served a means of encouraging the indigenous populace's interests in their own religion and culture which was invariably depleting due to the policies of westernisation in education and government - that is, to educate, take pride in, celebrate and perhaps 'invent' indigenous traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) for a congregational and performative occasion. Finally, alongside festivities and public gatherings, the festival had the potential to be used as a strategy of resistance to colonial rule. I shall return to the blurred distinctions between efforts of cultural revivalism, anti-colonial resistance strategy, and political agitation through nationalist campaignings in the next chapter. Here I briefly comment on each of the component elements of the Ganapati *utsava*, which provide insights to the reasons for its successes and limitations in the colonial public domain.

By acting as a means of consolidating the indigenous populace so as to overcome divisions within society, the festive occasion allowed for divisions between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, *saivite* and *vaisnavite* sects of Hinduism, the literate and illiterate, and Hindus and non-Hindus to be mitigated to a greater or lesser degree.



Not only was this effected by the festive nature of the event, but also by the particular associations of the deity, Ganapati. For instance, non-Brahmans worshipped gods other than Ganapati such as Khandoba, Bhairav, Hanuman, and Bhavani, but nevertheless joined in Ganapati celebrations due to the god's non-sectarian and *saivite* associations (Cashman 1975: 76).

There were a number of innovations in the 1894 festival. Large public images of the god were installed in *mandaps*. Local subscriptions were collected for a *sarvajanik* Ganapati which became the object of collective worship for the unit involved (Cashman 1975: 76). All the *sarvajanik* Ganapatis were conveyed together on the tenth and final day to immerse the images in a united ceremony instead of families or small groups proceeding on the second day to various sections of the river (Michael 1984: 247).

Mela movement of singing-parties which were attached to the *sarvajanik* Ganapatis were also introduced, adding a further political potency to the performative occasion. The *melas* were composed of anywhere between around twenty to several hundred singers, mostly boys and students. The groups were based in *vadas* (compounds), or *peths* (markets) and attached to *Ganeshotsava mandals*. They rehearsed verses in honour of the god and marched for weeks before the annual procession. Topical political songs were introduced around 1894 (Cashman 1975: 77). They were practised in dancing, drilling, and fencing, and provided colourful and ceremonious displays, as well as demonstrating skills in the combat arts (see Chapter Five). Sometimes the *melas* dressed in the garb of Shivaji's soldiers, armed themselves with bamboo sticks decorated with emblems of Hinduism, as if to propagate memories of a martial and masculinist past which could indeed be of use to boost confidence in the political struggle against colonial rule.

There were, however, limited degrees of success in Tilak's aims to rid society of caste distinctions through an avocation of non-sectarian festivals. The problem lay in the fact that due to residence patterns, caste distinctions continued to spread into *mela* organisations. Caste predominance in residential quarters was also a factor in the composition of the *Ganeshotsava mandals*. In addition, some of the *melas* were based on economic groups, such as the Mumbai mill-hands, and attached to groups based on family connections (Cashman 1975: 85). Nonetheless, all sectors of the city's populace came together during the festival, particularly for immersion processions.

The division between sects from *saivite* and *vaishnavite* traditions was another factor which worship of the god Ganapati alleviated to some extent. Due to his very ambiguous nature, Ganapati was:

'...an ideal symbol for the transitional leader who wished to play a mixed role. The god was a syncretistic figure combining the elements of high Hinduism, asceticism and wisdom, with the values of village Hinduism, devotion and pleasure...Since one part of his personality derived from Shiva, the potent warrior, Ganapati had the potential for a political career. As the "Overcomer of Obstacles" he was a useful symbol for a protest movement' (Cashman 1975: 75).

Furthermore, Tilak exhorted the 'intellectuals of India to take part, not to stand aside and scoff as some members of the "social reform" group had been doing' (Barnouw 1954: 81). Whilst the Congress was attempting political organising, its message could only reach, or indeed was only amenable to, the fringe of the educated few (Tahmankar 1956: 66). Festivals, already an important aspect of folk traditions, provided vehicles with which political messages could be disseminated in a multi-perspectival performative occasion. This enabled a wide sector of the public to partake in anti-colonial campaigns, as well as making literacy a peripheral issue to active engagements in socio-political campaigns. Tilak wrote:

'Why shouldn't we convert the large religious festivals into mass political rallies? Will it not be possible for political activities to enter the humblest cottages of the villages through such means? Will it not be possible to make available to our illiterate countrymen in the villages the moral and religious education which you [the educated people] have obtained after strenuous efforts' (*Kesari*, September 8, 1896, cited in Cashman 1975: 79).

With reference to the participation of non-Hindus, there have been contradictory accounts. For example, sometimes Tilak saw the Muslim community as Indians who needed to collaborate with the rest of the populace in ridding India of colonial rule (Pradhan 1994: 156). Michael comments that 'his stand was to protest against the power behind the Muslims, rather than against the Muslim community itself' (Michael 1984: 255). In more uncompromising circumstances, the Muslim community was castigated for being considered 'lackeys' of colonial authorities, and demonised particularly during times of communal tension and rioting (Michael 1984: 243-247). For instance, Mumbai and Pune were the sites of severe riots in 1893 over what has been described as a Muslim attack made on a religious procession (Barnouw 1954: 81; Michael 1984: 254). This has been argued to further Tilak's appeal to Hindus to organise themselves collectively and publicly. Indeed, some authors conclude that Tilak's support of the Ganapati and Shivaji festivals worsened communal relations in Maharashtra (Basu et al 1993: 4). Tilak's vacillations on this subject in his writings need be contextualised with regard to contemporaneous socio-political contexts of inter-community relations, as well as the contemporary narratives accounting for

Tilak's life. They provide an early instance of the Janus-face of nationalist discourse (Nairn 1981) - at once inclusivist and exclusivist - which I focus on in the next chapter.

The promotion of the Ganapati *utsava* was indeed, in part, a counterpoint to the Muharram procession. Tilak had 'hoped to wean away those Hindu artisans, musicians, and dancers who had freely participated in previous Muharrams' (Cashman 1975: 78), in effect fuelling communalist tensions. The success of the festival in being a public event for all had limitations. Cashman notes how the political use of a Hindu festival tended to alienate not only other religious communities, but also secular-orientated Moderates. As he accounts for newspapers in the 1890s:

'The Parsi-edited Indian Spectator called it as a move towards "the superstitions of bygone ages". The Poona paper *Sudharak* questioned the national character of the festival and suggested that the Muharram could be more appropriately labelled national, because Hindus and Muslims freely mingled in this festival' (Cashman 1975: 90).

It is evident that several communities of interest were precluded from the purview of the Ganapati *utsava*. However, in contemporary times, due to the fact that the Ganapati *utsava* has been accredited the title of a national occasion, the festival is openly exhorted by all classes of Hindu devotees. Further, as a festive context with free entertaining attractions, non-Hindus also participated in the festival, particularly in less communally charged times.

Tilak was against 'the dead spirit of orthodoxy which had nearly destroyed the vital spirit, the self-respect and sense of unity, of great common purpose, of the people' (Shay 1956: 77). Yet, he defended Hinduism in that its principles do not absolutely preclude reform. As he stated:

'If it had drawn its shutters completely, both Hinduism and Hindu *Rashtra* would have disappeared long ago' (Tilak cited in Karandikar 1956: 198).

On the whole, Tilak chose to steer away from direct reformist tactics in case it unleashed a wave of sectarian violence. Instead, Tilak's main ambition was to activate histories that would unify the non-British populace as a nation, rather than have one indigenous group set off against another. Tilak attained a degree of success in forming national consciousness through the promotion of festivals in that the Shivaji festival was even enthusiastically welcomed in the Bengal area - a region which at the time of Shivaji's rule had suffered a lot at the hands of the Marathas (Tahmankar 1956: 64). An ambivalent and performative occasion such as a festival provided a useful arena with which to accomplish the agenda of indigenous consolidation.

The second component of the festival's mobilisation as a means of revitalising pride in Maharashtra's cultural history is demonstrated by the invocation of a period of Peshwas rule, with which the Ganapati *utsava* was associated. After 1818, when the Peshwas dynasty was defeated by the British, the palace tradition of the annual festival largely fell into disuse. It can be discerned that Tilak's initiative to revive the festival also alludes to his ambitions to idealise a past where there were no foreign rulers in Maharashtra. This element forms a significant part of his strategy of resistance to foreign rule.

The festival also recalled elements of Shivaji's rule, who was 'hailed as 'the symbol and embodiment of Hindu courage, sacrifice and chivalry' (Tahmanaker 1956: 64). Tilak set up a Memorial Fund to re-build Shivaji's tomb at Raigad in 1895. He exalted Shivaji as 'a *swadeshi* hero' in 1907 (cited in Cashman 1975: 121). Tilak insisted that it was the spirit of Shivaji's rule that he wanted to exalt rather than the specific incidents of fighting against Mughal rule. He stated that he was only against Muslims in so far as they were acting as agents of foreign rule (Tahmanaker 1956: 62), although as I have argued above, this viewpoint can be undermined by others.

As Courtright comments, 'Tilak looked to the past for guidance in imagining the future' (Courtright 1985: 232). The choice of popularising the deity, Ganapati, as 'the remover of all obstacles' or the god to bring back prosperity to the land and people' (Cashman 1975: 83) has already been addressed above. The mobilisation of the festival constituted a revival of Hinduism in a time of perceived troubles. It has various parallels with contemporary revivalist movements as manifest in the Ganapati *utsava*, but this time, to revivals of a period associated particularly with the social work and nationalist campaignings associated with Tilak's days.

Finally, as a strategy to repel foreign rule, the festival showed a variegated path. By promoting a primarily religious festival as the vehicle for political objectives, it vividly illustrates Scott's theory of 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1986; 1990) - that is, political agenda within the mantle of a religious festival, which initially the colonial British either overlooked, or if they expressed concern, were disposed to do little about it, due to the official policy of non-interference in the religious matters of India. By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the British authorities arrived at a reasonably firm policy of not involving the state in matters of religion, and did not have a policy of imposing Christianity, even though several missionaries worked independent to official government support. The state enacted uniform codes of civil and criminal law, but, as with the 'secular' state after independence, personal law was seen to be governed by religions (Chatterjee 1995: 15). Tilak cleverly utilised this loophole to make the 'private' matters of religion a public affair. Thus the British could only intervene in the religious celebrations on the basis of criminal or civil disturbance;

hence after the mid-1890s, their increased surveillance and regulations by colonial authorities. This subject leads to an extensive area of debate which I pursue in the next chapter. Whereas in this chapter, I have accounted for the regional, religious and colonial contexts of the festival's emergence as a site of public contestation, in the next chapter I enquire into features of nationalism and related issues, and their relevance to the *sarvajanik Ganapati utsava*.

¹Maharashtra derives from Maharashtra, which refers to, either the land of the Mahars and the Ratta, or is a corruption of the term *Maha Kantara* (the Great Forest) (Arunachalam 1985: 15).

²Unless otherwise specified, the term, Maharashtra, will continue to be used to designate this area throughout this thesis, despite the fact that it was only given official sanction in 1960.

³ Note that according to the Census administrative divisions, Greater Mumbai is seen as a separate administrative division to Thane, whereas with the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition considered in Chapter Seven, both areas are taken to be constitutive of Greater Mumbai.

⁴ These figures from the 1991 Census have been rounded off to the nearest whole number.

⁵ In this thesis, I use the term, Mumbai, unless the name of the city as Bombay continues to be used as a constituent part of the title of a manuscript, or municipal or regional institution.

⁶This is not to assume an authentic version of Konkan culture - only to point out the transmutations of practices as people move from the village to urban centres. Note that sometimes Girgaum is also spelt Girgaon.

⁷This is approximately £100,000 and £200,000 respectively. One lakh corresponds to one hundred thousand; one crore refers to one hundred lakh - that is, ten million. In 1994-95, there were approximately fifty rupees to the sterling pound.

⁸Pune is also spelt Poona, particularly as found in colonial writings. I will continue to use the term Pune for closely corresponding to the Devanagari. There is reputed to be a temple near this confluence called 'Punyeshwari' (later pulled down by Muslim conquerors), from which the name of the city most probably derives (Parasnisi 1921: 5).

⁹Peshwa is a Persian word which means 'the foremost' and was introduced in politics as a title by the Bahmani kings. It is equivalent to Prime Minister or Premier, and was adopted by Shivaji who in 1656 appointed his first Prime Minister (Peshwa), Shamrajpant (Parasnisi 1921: 79).

¹⁰This period was triggered by the battle of Kirkee on 5th November, 1817. The city surrendered on 17th November, and the last Peshwa surrendered on 3rd June 1818 to Sir John Malcolm (Parasnisi 1921: 91-92).

¹¹Other religious sects in Maharashtra include those dedicated to various forms of Parvati - Mahalakshmi, Bhavani, Renuka and Saptashringi. Mahalakshmi or Ambabhai of Kolhapur became extremely popular during the Maratha period - that is, in Shivaji's times - but is also worshipped by other castes. The war-goddess, Bhavani of Tuljapur was the family goddess (*kuladevata*) of the Bhonsale rulers, and was also devoted by Shivaji and Ramdas attributing the goddess with a certain pedigree. Renuka is worshipped by non-Brahman castes in the form of Ekvira, Yamai and Yallamma. Saptashringi is the name of a goddess and the place where, according to legend, a part of Sati's dead body fell as Shiva carried her body to the Himalayas (Talim 1985: 66).

¹²Cults of Ganapati or *Ganapatyas* have been written about in the *Puranas*. The two specific to Ganapati are the *Ganesha Purana* (dated around 1100-1400) and the less widely known *Mudgala* or *Maudgalya Purana* (Preston 1980: 103). The *Ganesha Purana* provides evidence as to the worship of Ganapati throughout India, but sites are difficult to determine due to the unfamiliarity of the names. See Preston (1980) for more on early centres dedicated to the worship of Ganapati.

¹³There is also the Asthavinayaka scattered around the city of Varanasi. However these sites are of more interest to the historian than the contemporary devotee for they have fallen into decline.

¹⁴Some of the Asthavinayakas were brought into prominence by the Cincvad family including the temples at Moregaon where Moroba Gosavi did his pilgrimages; the temples at Theur and Ranjangaon said to have been built by Moroba Gosavi's son, Cintaman; and the temple at Siddhatek which was assigned to the Cincvad family in the eighteenth century for administration (Preston 1980:

115-116). Of all the sites, Moregaon is most likely to be the earliest, and is considered the sacred centre of the Asthavinayaka (Preston 1980: 117).

¹⁵The Indian revolt of 1857 has been described in several ways - Mutiny by the more conservative and Revolution by the more radical considering this to be one of the first wars of independence. However debatable, it can be asserted that the 1857 revolt was one of the first modern wars, in that the laying down of telegraph wires, popular newspapers, photography and railway tracks in the 1850s improved communications in general and made the events of immediate concern to people far from the scenes of the battles (Embree 1976: 138; French 1997: 2).

¹⁶Haynes on the Surat elites comments that they 'pursued status, power, and justice within the framework of special relationships with colonial rulers and of institutions established by the Anglo-Indian administration, particularly the local municipality. Within this framework, they discovered they could achieve important goals as individuals and sometimes also satisfy the larger group to which they belonged. But willingness to engage in bargaining with the rulers meant adhering to liberal representative conventions of approach and persuasion that were to a great extent borrowed from British culture. Over time, by accommodating themselves to the discourse of their rulers, local leaders redefined their concepts of political morality, reformulated their own roles, and set the basis for the development of new identities' (Haynes 1992: 28).

¹⁷See also Dirks 1987, Ludden 1994, Prakash 1990, and Inden 1990.

¹⁸The focus on colonial census classification and enumeration is not to overlook surveillance of the colonised. The British-controlled government relied heavily upon rigorous surveillance and covertly obtained information in order to retain supremacy, so much so that as French argues, the British left India because 'they lost control over crucial areas of administration, and lacked the will and financial or military ability to recover that control' (French 1997: xx). This is made evidently clear by reports of the Indian Political Intelligence (IPI) which was founded shortly before the outbreak of World War I until 1947 (French 1997: xix), but is also presented as part of the legal administrative structures and penal codes which I return to in Chapter Four.

¹⁹As Ludden elaborates, there are three formations of 'Orientalism' conflated in Said:

(i) 'a field of scholarship on the 'Orient' with a distinct academic genealogy and tradition;
(ii) an extensive set of images in scholarship, painting, literature etc. that conjure an essence of the East which constitutes Said's main focus;
(iii) a system of 'knowing' the East by establishing an authorised set of data and facts about the Orient and which has become 'so widely accepted as true, so saturated by *excess plausibility*, that it determines the content of assumption on which the theory of inference can be built' (Luddens 1994: 251). Even though Said's view is strictly limited to the Middle East area, it is still valid for the area of South Asia as Inden (1990) has adumbrated.

²⁰The emphasis of priorities is of course an arguable point. In effect, Tilak's motivations illustrate Chatterjee's (1986) point about Indian nationalism as derivative of western precedents, but definitive and distinct in its own right. See Chapter Three for more on a discussion of Chatterjee's argument.

²¹See Chapter Seven for more of a discussion of the relevance of visual and performative arts and media in campaigns to spread nationalist awareness.

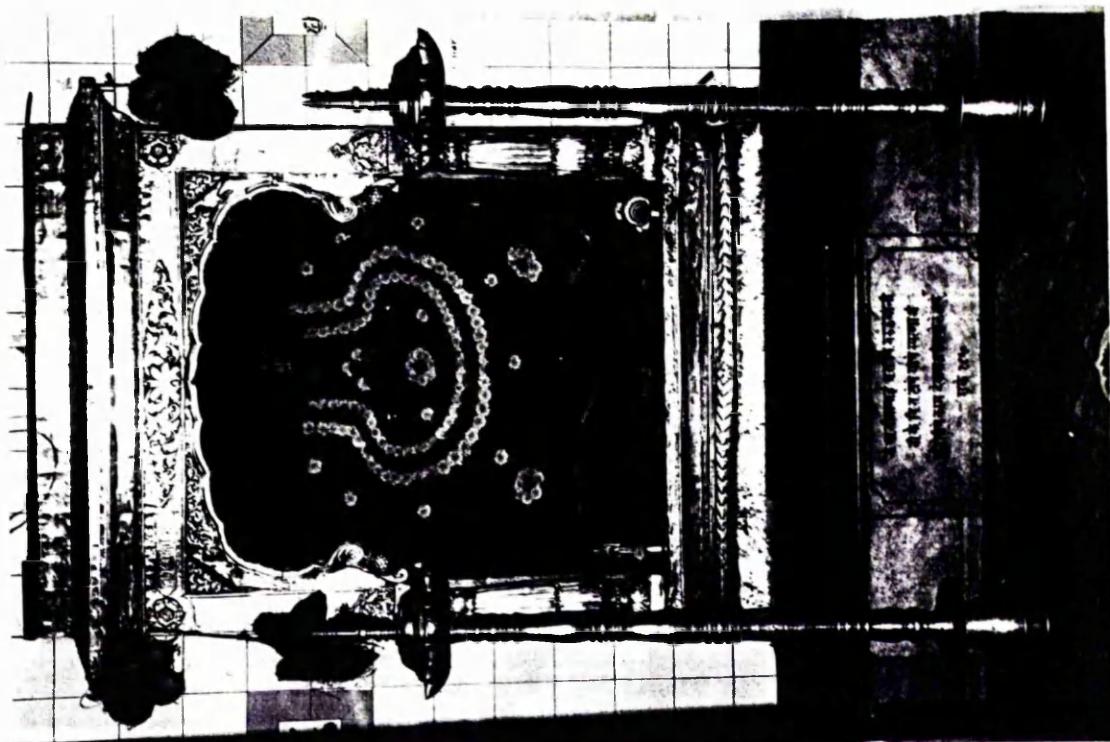
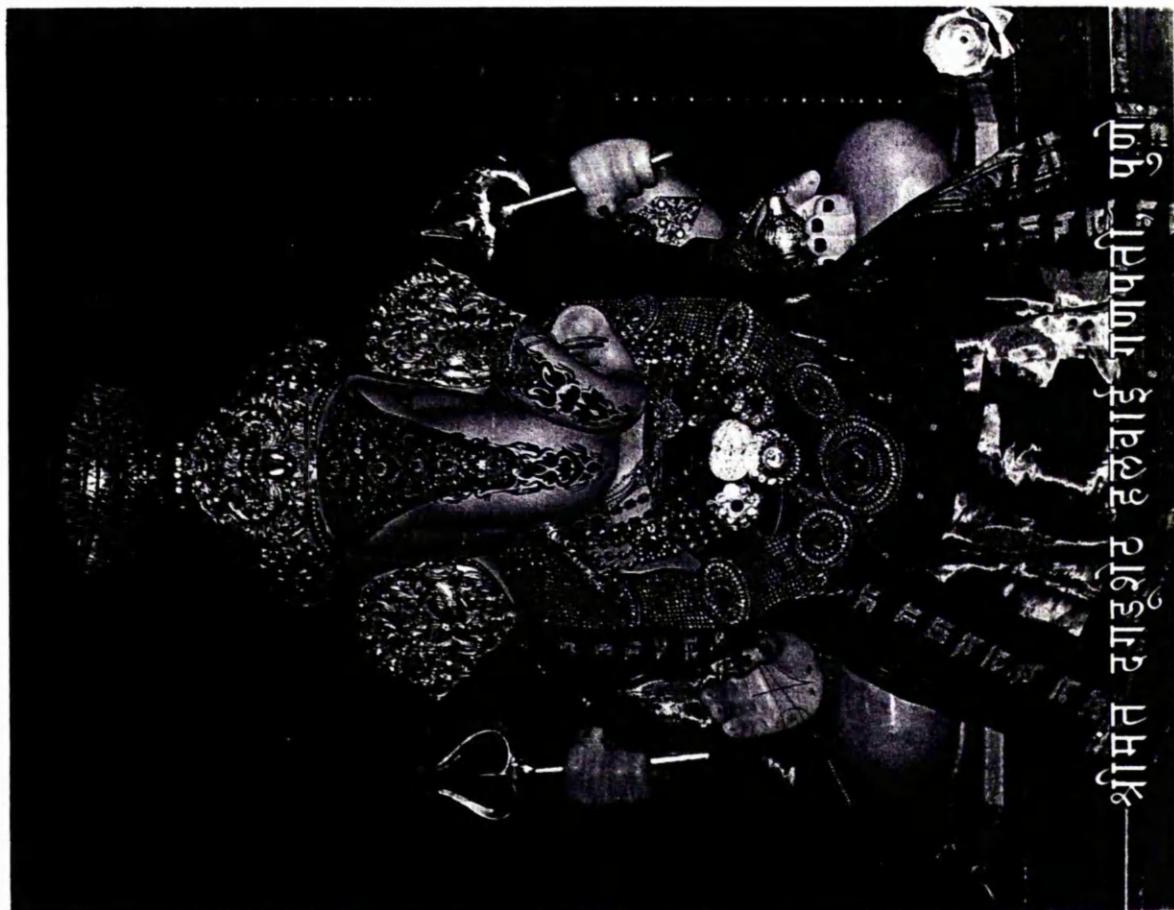
²²The terms Extremists and Moderates represent relational positions. In his speech in Calcutta on 2nd January, 1907, Tilak critiques these terms stating that they are relative to time: 'The Extremists of to-day will be Moderates tomorrow, just as the Moderates of to-day were Extremists yesterday' (cited in Ghose 1922: 55-67). This is one reason why contemporary secularists venerate Tilak as a national exemplar (see Chapter Nine).

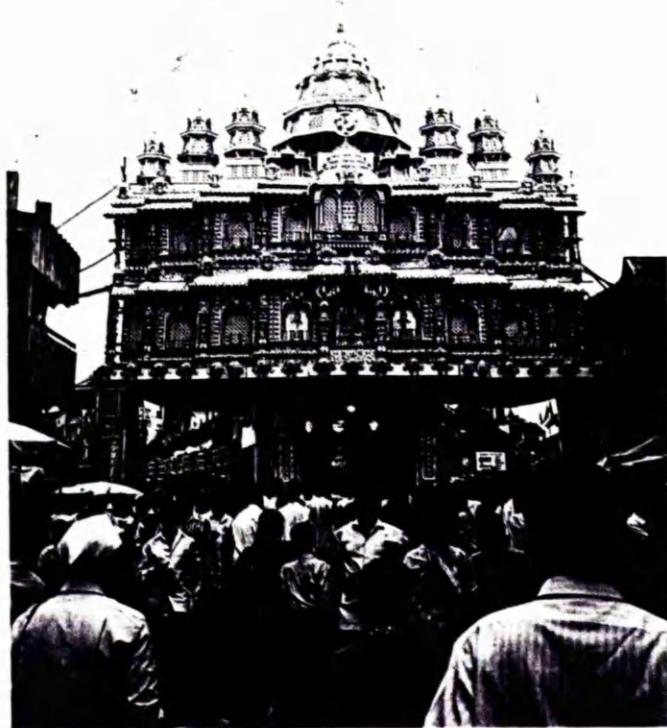
²³In his other major scholarly work, the *Orion* (1892) or *Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas*, Tilak argued that the *Rig Veda* was composed in 4500 B.C., attributing the text with a greater antiquity. This forms part of an indigenous drive to recall the long heritage of a proto-nation of India.

²⁴Even though this was the basic policy, the British did directly intervene in matters that they thought were not strictly religious such as with child marriage and *sati* (widow immolation) for which prohibitive acts were introduced.

²⁵I return to Scott's formulation in my discussion of the colonial state and festival praxis in Chapter Five.

²⁶Naik informs of the use of the festival to propagate use of Swadeshi goods as early as 1896, based on an article in the Pune *Vartnidhi* of August 12 (Naik 1992: 115).

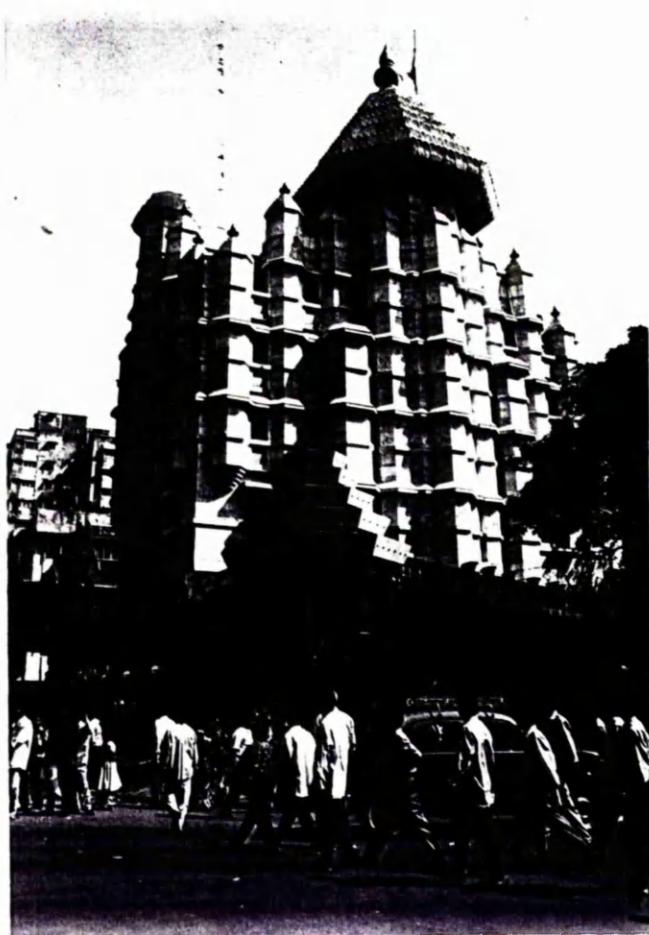




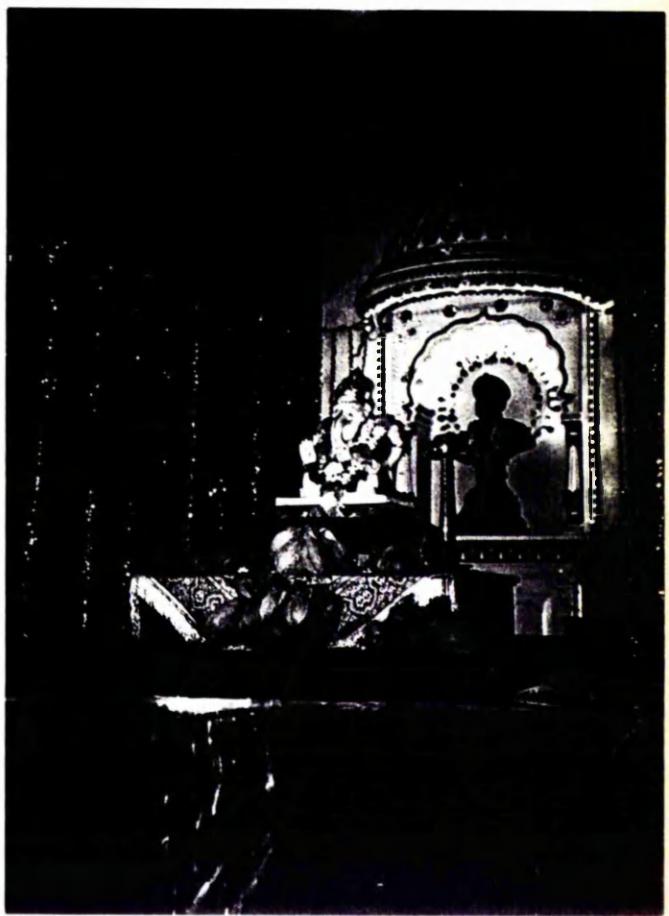
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Chapter Three

The Dynamic Rubric of Nationalism

In this chapter, I focus on the terms of reference in the debate, leading to a theoretical understanding of the various political dynamics pertaining to the Ganapati *utsava* through its public career since the 1890s. I begin by concentrating on the main literature on nationalism and its relevance to colonial and contemporary India, then consider the validity of the term in relation to cultural revivalism and anti-colonialism in the Indian context. In addition, debates on communalism (or its present-day manifestation of militant Hinduism, Hindutva) and secularism which have direct bearing on the community of interests the festival represents, are discussed, and their relevance to my focus on the Ganapati *utsava* are elaborated.

I note that the various terms in the chapter's debate - nationalism, anti-colonialism, cultural revivalism, secularism, and communalism - are but part of a linked chain of significations. Each term refers to a series of specific political phenomena, strategies and instances, but in the end, cannot capture the moment in a totalising political, or indeed, linguistic schema. To mobilise, as does to name a moment, requires a hegemonic articulation of 'fixing' the terms of reference. This in the end is an impossibility (Laclau 1990) primarily for two reasons: first, the *socius* is one of flux and outside systematic attempts at totalising, and second, there is an inherent instability in the sign (Derrida 1977). Derrida notes the essential instability in referential terms, particularly as signs contain their inherent negativity. For moments that can be described as nationalist, negativity has been likened to the marginal or internal Other (Bhabha 1990; Hansen 1996b). The internal Other is both required to constitute nationalism, but also is the focus of its exorcising venom (Hansen 1996b: 150). Terms such as anti-colonialism, cultural revivalism, nationalism, secularism, and communalism are very much formulated with some notion of the Other in mind - but to different degrees of exclusivity - for instance, whereas nationalism is ideally inclusivist yet relies upon some notion of the Other to define its parameters, communalism is vehemently exclusivist and exposes these internal lines of fractures. These aspects might well be included in the Janus-faces of nationalism (Nairn 1981; Bhabha 1990, 1994). As I elaborate below, the terms are overlapping categories in their terms of reference and associated theoretical perspectives. It is for this reason that I have called this chapter the dynamic rubric of nationalism, or, in other words, discursive nationalism. I have prioritised nationalism in the multi-perspectival problematic for two reasons: first, because it is a political phenomena that has received most scholarly attention; and second, because it is the term which most equates with indigenous articulations of the

festival's history, and potential in contemporary times, of promoting *rashtriya ekatmata* (national unity), *desh bhakta* (devotion to the country), and variations thereof.

Perspectives on Nationalism

Here I provide a brief account of varying perspectives on nationalism, beginning with enquiries into the emergence of nationalism, its relations to economic development and socio-cultural modernisation, the main characteristics of nationalism, and variant types of nationalism as encountered in the literature. In this overview, I am wary of endowing undue intentionality and consciousness to the phenomena of nationalism. There are of course people, programmes, and campaigns involved with nationalist phenomena. But for now, I present different facets of arguments made about nationalism as a prelude to my own perspectives on the debate. This argument is substantiated in subsequent chapters on the ethnographic articulations of the terms in the festival context.

Historical studies such as Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (1980) concentrate on the emergence of nationalist movements in Enlightenment Europe - the seminal case deemed to be eighteenth century France, although some historians promote the case of Cromwell's England as a proto-nationalist phenomena (Giddens 1985). Smith comments that the 'origins of the modern ethnic revival can be fairly accurately placed in the third quarter of the eighteenth, forming part of the early romantic movement which first appeared in England and France, and then spread to Germany, Italy and Scandinavia' (Giddens 1981: 87). However, it is arguable how justified or accurately an enquiry into the origins of nationalism can be made, as I argue below.

There are various overlaps on theories of nationalism as invoking a sense of community, and anthropological theories of community. For instance, Tonnies had identified three different kinds of community in his theory of *gemeinschaft* to describe relationships embedded in a personal nature: a community of blood (the family); a community of locality (the village); and a community of mind (groups that are bounded together through shared activity as with a guild) (Tonnies 1955). These aspects of community have been held as pre-modern traits to be destroyed in the wake of industrialisation and urbanisation and replaced by impersonal contractual relationships termed *gesellschaft*. But theorists of nationalism have commented that amongst the complex differences, there is a parallel to be made with the spirit of community and loyalty to kinship groups as entailed in *gemeinschaft* and nationalism (Kaviraj 1992: 20-21). Gellner (1983) comments how industrialisation necessitates communal bonds

such as that of nationalism, and Turner refers to Durkheim's point in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* within which he had argued that a new set of universally significant moral bonds in place of religion had to be formed to stem the anomie of rapid industrialisation (Durkheim cited in Turner 1990: 346).

Smith argues that there has been a rise and fall of ethnic sentiments and ties prior to the eighteenth century (Smith 1981: 63). With nationalist movements in general, pre-existing ethnic ties have tended to become socially significant and politically important. But the modern ethnic revivals differ in that there has been a combination with the movement of 'historicism', since its emergence in eighteenth century Europe. 'Historicism' is described as evolutionary and romanticised formulations of histories which are oriented towards nature and antiquity, with the effects of defining the nation's distinctiveness (Smith 1981: 87). Gellner's maxim that 'nations can be defined only in terms of the age of nationalism, rather than...the other way round' (Gellner 1983: 55) highlights the necessity of nationalist historiographies or ideologies to enable a 'thinking' of the nation.¹

Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1983), in their variant ways, explain nationalism as a by-product of social changes which have created tendencies for cultural homogenisation. Gellner, in particular, concentrates on the structural requirements for nationalism as provided by industrialisation. The distinctive features include universal literacy, numeracy, and technical sophistication; the mobility of people as for instance in the shift from a rural to an urban environment; sufficient training to enable people to follow occupational instructions; the ability to communicate with others in a shared and standardised language; and, most importantly, an educational system that facilitates all the above (Gellner 1983: 33). This latter is greatly enabled by the state machinery, further consolidating the connections between state polity and culture.

Marxist theorists have a similar argument to Gellner, in that the rise of nationalism is attributed to industrialisation, specifically capitalism, but have tended to refer to it as the product of the ruling ideology of the bourgeoisie deluding the worker from class divisions. Whereas the relations between capitalism and the rise of identitarian forms of politics cannot be ruled out, these propositions have raised a number of questions as to the articulation of ideology, assumptions of 'false consciousness', and the politics of identity in tension or in alliance with class-based interests (Walker 1984; Munck 1986; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). Laclau and Mouffe broaden Marxist ideas to consider Gramscian ideas of hegemony as it relates to diverse subject positions, where hegemony is seen as a contingent intervention to fill a 'crisis or gap' produced by capitalism (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 48; see below).

Whereas Gellner places most emphasis on the role of education in (re)producing a national culture as an ideology, Anderson concentrates on how nations are 'imagined'

or created (Anderson 1983: 15). Anderson's main argument is that nations are made possible in and through the printed language. This has enabled an 'imagined community' - a community of people who have a common sense of identity through their shared media of communication even though the individual members do not know each other. It has also contributed to the standardisation of language, as well as created 'languages-of-power' (Anderson 1983: 47).

A national sense of cohesive oneness needs to be considered in relation to social groups that 'imagined communities' might define and pit themselves against - an arena of inclusions and exclusions both within and outside its borders. It is a characteristic of nationalism as a Janus-faced operation as a result of the uneven development of capitalism (Nairn 1981: 348). Janus-faced is a versatile phrase which could be used to highlight several ambiguities, such as tensions between the inclusivist and exclusivist aspects of national formations (see below); the two-way process of utilising and manipulating historical memory in order to set an agenda for the present and future particularly evident with the fact that nationalism is a modern phenomenon yet it creates a history for itself that places it in antiquity; and the universality of the phenomena of nationalism yet propositions as to individual nation's uniqueness (Anderson 1983: 14). Indeed, as Ree (1992) argues, nationalism requires some notion of 'internationality' in order to define itself - that is, concepts of a nation are intricately entwined in a relational way with concepts of other nations on the globe.

Ideal characteristics in common to most national projects include the exaltation of a political organisation accountable to the people rather than that controlled by divinely ordained, hierarchical or dynastic sovereign rule. A nationalist project promises the ideal of individual freedom whereby citizens within a nation-state are deemed to have a social contract with the government - that is being governors as well as being governed. A sense of belonging to a group whether it be on the basis of ethnic, linguistic, religious or historical similarities are exalted. National programmes demonstrate aspirations for internal homogeneity and collective autonomy from other nations - in so doing, it can be a doctrine that aims to suppress or eradicate extant cultural or ethnic difference within its political boundaries (Smith 1986; Tonkin et al 1989). In all, nationalism is a political principle which aims to make the political and national unit - that is, communities with a common identity - congruent (Gellner 1983). In order to do so, nationalism is a project with aspirations to make the nation of people congruent with state mechanisms and representatives.

Smith provides a useful summary of the cultural accretions of nationalism, which I return to in Chapter Nine:

'Identity, purity, regeneration, the 'enemy', historical roots, self-emancipation, building the 'new man' and the 'new community', collective sovereignty and participation....philological, anthropological and historical researches of small coteries of intellectuals, the secret societies pressing for reform and independence, the reliance on censuses, the concern with symbols of solidarity - flags, anthems, frontiers, military parades, services for fallen heroes, shrines and museums, history textbooks, the 'head of state', the name of the country and its constitution, oaths and mythologies, passports, sanctions against treason, even flower and animal totems' (Smith 1981: 87).

Each nation demonstrates similar patterns yet distinct 'colours' in their bid to represent themselves as unique entities. An important part of this project is the use of history and 'traditions' in the formation of group origins, characteristics, and aspirations for the future. To this end, history becomes a very politicised, contested, and constructed area (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Smith 1981; Tonkin et al 1989). Scholars and their work are not immune to this phenomena, and indeed their work might contribute to the national repertoire and project. The strands of history or rather histories pertaining to any particular socio-political context are as contested as they are interdependent in view of the potential boost historical veracity and antiquity can lend present-day concerns and campaigns, including the protracted lineage of the nation. However, this is not to say that the past is infinitely susceptible to contemporary invention, but also contingent on variable restrictions lying beyond manipulable (re)construction (Appadurai 1981).

There are further distinctions one could make between different types of nationalisms. For instance, between civic and ethnic nationalism - civic being aligned to democratic states and allowing space for some degree of multiculturalism; and ethnic nationalism considered the more exclusivist. However, even with cases of civic nationalism, nation-states invariably have several limitations and restrictions, such as with immigration policies. Such ambivalences are characteristic of the Janus-face of nationalism (Nairn 1981: 348). In the case of India, these ambivalences of nationalism closely equate with the general features of secularism and communalism (see below).

Plamentz distinguishes between 'western' nationalism having emerged primarily in western Europe as a post-Enlightenment product and 'eastern' nationalism which has appeared among 'peoples recently drawn into a civilisation hitherto alien to them and whose ancestral cultures are not adapted to success and excellence by these cosmopolitan and increasingly dominant standards' (cited in Chatterjee 1986: 2). Nationalism as it emerged in the west has been described as 'modular nationalism' (Anderson 1983: 14; Chatterjee 1994: 5). Chatterjee takes this point further and considers how emergent nationalism in India was not a straightforward case of the imitation of alien culture, but also of the assertion of a degree of distinctiveness - a

complex within which indigenous ‘culture’, spirituality or religion played a key part (see below).

There is an intrinsic problem with certain accounts on nationalism where it is envisaged that the political phenomena was born in Europe along with industrialisation, and then spread to other continents. The dynamics of nationalism in any place or time present certain features particular to them. As a counterpart to the argument about imitation of the west, one pertinent point of difference between nationalisms in Europe, and their former colonies is the political vanguard that nationalist campaigning enabled the colonised against their rulers. Rather than the tendency to create a national folk and essence, this latter was more of a project of nation-building, although the two can only be cited as general emphases rather than be considered mutually exclusive. Within this broad differentiation, one needs to consider the historical and political dynamics of particular regions. The issue of religion, rather than being antithetical to the case of nationalisms as is argued for most Euro-American cases (Smith 1981; Turner 1990), might be one of the prime cohesive forces in other historical and political instances. This appears to be the case for South Asia, where particularly in colonial times, religion was used as a strategic means of involving the populace, often to detrimental effects for indigenous communal relations. Nonetheless, any discussion on politics or nationalism, aside from ‘secularist’ trends epitomised by the Moderates in the Indian National Congress (itself a debatable point which I return to below) is inherently about the question and uses of religion. As I note in my study of the Ganapati *utsava*, nationalist politics and religion appear to be part of a composite dynamic through space and time for the case of South Asia.

Adopting Gramscian ideas, the complex interconnected relations between socio-cultural and political practices through which a group can exercise or mobilise for domination can be further explored. Whereas Gramsci’s (1971) focus on hegemony largely pertains to class interests, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) broaden his study to consider a more discursive notion of hegemony with regard to its dispersed effects and identitarian political mobilisation. As a form of identitarian politics, nationalism describes both a political process by which groups can organise, contest or accommodate any form of specific domination with nationalist strategies; and a process by which a dominant group, acting in the interests of the nation’s citizens, exercises and maintains influence. Hegemonic processes are both constraining and creative. At times of crisis, hegemonic articulations are likely to rupture into instances of violence, coercion and prohibition (see Chapters Four and Five). This is not to argue for a dichotomous relationship of power distribution between ruler and ruled, but one of a discursive field of relationships and alliances. Effectively, the festival as with the national space, makes for an uneven field of consent and contestation. Due to the

temporal contingencies of the balance and distribution of power, I note the way nationalism, as with hegemony, can at once be a dominant formation operating in order to gain consent so as to become acceptable, and a creative formation operating against extant hegemonies as with colonial powers. This formulation is useful to consider the historical changes of the nationalism of India, correlate with festival praxis, from a colonised country to an independent nation-state this century. Neither the hegemonic process, nor indeed nationalism, is a static, or monolithic condition, but describes a relations of forces which relies upon a process of negotiation, dissent and compromise contingent upon history.

The festival too is a discursive arena - one of devotional, entertaining, and socio-political aspects. It is influenced and characterised by the effects of hegemonising strategies to manage and monopolise festival praxis, particularly with regard to business-sponsored, media-run competitions and political parties with Hindutva or nationalist agendas. In the thesis, I use hegemony to describe strategies which are not necessarily consonant with political organisations, but also organisations which seek to manage festival praxis, as with sponsored media-run competitions (see Chapter Seven).

Indeed, hegemonic articulations demonstrate homogenising dynamics, but can only effect this partially due to the fact that they operate in an uneven field of signifying practices, some of which are naturalised or consensual, and others which are linked together in opposition to extant hegemonies (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Even though articulatory practices do not necessarily fuse into a whole, it is notable that there can be a constitutive character of antagonisms, in which variant hegemonic practices, as with 'secular' and communalist organisations come together for nationalist agendas at strategic junctures (see Chapter Nine). Laclau and Mouffe refer to the differential terrain of hegemonising discourse but also point out the 'impossibility of any given discourse to implement a final suture' - describing it as the 'field of discursivity' (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 111). I find this formulation more useful for this research than Foucault's totalising notions of discourse (Foucault 1977, 1988). I demonstrate the relevance of this formulation in subsequent chapters, particularly in Chapter Six on the performative and discursive milieu of the *Ganapati utsava*, Chapter Seven on the constraining and creative effects of the *Loksatta-Girnar Ganeshotsava* competition, and Chapter Eight on political appropriations and contestations between differing hegemonic strategies of *Ganeshotsava mandals* in contemporary times.

As a result of the negotiations and contestatory field effected by a homogenising and hegemonising impetus demonstrated by nationalist projects, there is, as Bhabha (1990) points out, no one or privileged narration of the nation. My focus is on the way nationalist ideas manifest themselves in the life-world, particularly in the festive arena,

sometimes in antagonistic and contradictory ways, 'as the representation of social *life* rather than the discipline of social *polity*' (Bhabha 1994b: 306, his italics). Bhabha points out the inherent ambivalence in the nation as a form of narrative. He proposes that 'a *discursive* conception of ideology' (Bhabha 1994b: 308, his italics) be used to account for the articulation of elements within the nation-space. For my investigation of the Ganapati *utsava*, I take the notion of discursive ideology to account for a nation-space, sometimes indeterminate and diffuse in relation to nationalist consciousness (see Chapter Six); other times entailing contestation between prominent and conscientized hegemonic blocs (Gramsci 1971; see Chapter Eight). Perspectives of nationalism adumbrated in the above account form narratives of a complex which defies theoretical totalisation in view of Indian nationalism's inherent ambivalence between 'secular' and communalist forms, and its dynamic articulations in lived praxis. The Ganapati *utsava* can be seen as a performative site where versions of the nation are played out - in this case between the Janus-face of 'secularism' and Hindutva of Indian nationalism - both as repercussions of, and constitutive of, the surrounding political culture. Festival praxis demonstrates fractured, diffuse and inchoate senses of the nation. As Fox has commented, national culture is 'not fully formed or reified nor does it consist of rigid, institutional and cognitive pieces properly fitted together into a stable and immobile structure' (Fox 1990: 2). The Ganapati *utsava* represents an uneven field for priming and ploughing national ideology that is sometimes assumed or internalised, sometimes takes root amongst informants' discussions, and sometimes openly contested in its particular form in favour of another kind of collective identity, nationalist or not. These multiple accents of the nationalism rubric as they manifest themselves in the festival is explored further in subsequent chapters.

Cultural Revivalism, Anti-Colonialism or Nationalism in Colonial India

It is requisite that, on the one hand, agitations in colonial India are not all assumed to be nationalistic as is the tendency for nationalist historiographies (Kaviraj 1992); nor, on the other hand, assume that anti-colonial agitation necessarily took the form of political confrontation and campaign (Chatterjee 1994: 5). There are no set definitions to the three inter-linked phrases of cultural revivalism, anti-colonialism and nationalism with which the Ganapati *utsava*'s early public career is linked. As I have noted in Chapter Two, strands of cultural revivalism, indigenous consolidation, and anti-colonial strategies were complementary in the festival since at least the mid-1890s. It is possible to investigate the overlaps and complexities of the emergence of a distinctive Indian consciousness as defined against British colonial powers, and thus explore the premises of a self-conscious sense of national communities in the late nineteenth

century - a nascent nationalism, if not at least, campaigns for a nation-state. However, pin-pointing a period, as with the period of nationalist campaigns for sovereignty, is to assume an essential modular category and moment for the emergence of nationalism in India.

Kaviraj makes the argument that anti-colonialism - that is, 'an oppositional attitude towards colonialism' (Kaviraj 1992: 12) - is not necessarily to be equated as nationalism. With the example of the writings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, he cites that anti-colonialist consciousness was characterised by 'a cultural critique, a resentment against ignominy rather than a political-economic rejection of its civilising pretensions' or arguments about 'home rule, dominion status, complete independence' (Kaviraj 1992: 12, 6).

On the other hand, Chatterjee (1994) argues that the phase of nationalism per se did not start with the first meeting of the Congress party in Mumbai in 1885 as is commonly argued.² He comments that this is to posit Third World nationalism as derivative of European precedents and denies a degree of autonomous development as well as credibility to anti-colonial nationalisms, where the argument seems to be that, 'even our imaginations must remain forever colonized' (Chatterjee 1994: 5). Chatterjee locates nationalist stirrings much earlier than the formal organisation and campaigning of political bodies and movements such as the Congress party. Using Derridean ideas of *difference* within the similarities of signs, he argues:

'The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West' (Chatterjee 1994: 5).

Chatterjee proposes that the distinct nature of Indian nationalism arose from the creation of 'inner' domains of spirituality premised upon religion, language, drama, publications (the novel), schools and the family with its associations of concepts about the purity of Indian women (Chatterjee 1994: 6). This is argued to be distinct from the 'outer' realm in which the 'material world' of the political economy, science and technology, largely under the monopoly of the west, was to reside. A focus on the Ganapati *utsava* in colonial times provides another inflection on Chatterjee's suggestions. Whereas it was a religious festival that was utilised to advocate a version of Indian nationalism, this was done so in the public realm as a means of mobilising against the monopoly of the 'material world' by the west. Colonial institutions - that is the 'outer' - had a direct bearing on the 'inner' in the form of surveillance, monitoring and prohibitive measures. In an attempt to escape surveillance and proscription, religious celebration cloaked socio-political intentions in the public domain -

performative politics in action. However, once the legal administrative structures recognised that something was (potentially) seditious, it was then officially seen as nationalistic - a threat to the government and more often described as terrorist or extremist - although admittedly this is very much a top-down view. This was increasingly the case after the 1900s (Cashman 1975: 87).

Further, attention to popular praxis as exemplified by the festival in the public realm provides a much neglected aspect on the phenomena of nationalism, additional to institutions such as printing presses, newspapers, novels, schools, family and so forth. Although important and integral parts of the complex of religious practice that I consider, these latter areas are subsidiary to my primary focus. The focus on a public religio-social event provides the basis for considering the process of *nationalising* amongst the populace with which this study is concerned - a hegemonising, yet never ever, totalising phenomena.

The Ganapati celebrations from the 1890s constituted a created revival of a religious festival in public, took pride of place within a reinvented identity infused with a consciousness of pre-British Maharashtrian history and traditions with their heroic figure-heads and role-models, and also stirred the populace on educational, cultural and political issues. Thus Ganapati celebrations were not exclusively religious practices, but also intricately intertwined with educational, cultural and political organisations and ambitions (see Chapter Five). This alludes to the difficulties and, perhaps impossibilities, of delineating the 'cultural' as opposed to the 'political', and its respective counterparts of cultural revivalism and nationalism. It is perhaps more useful to consider the two aspects as constitutive of a political culture within which political or cultural emphases can be drawn out for analyses. In attempting an investigation of the rise of nationalist consciousness as a particular historical emergence constitutive of a political culture, the vagaries as to whether religious festivals be seen as primarily revivalist or nationalist are particularly notable. Not only did festivals raise consternation and debate amongst colonial powers, but they also paved the way for creative manipulation by Indian campaigners and politicians (see Chapters Five and Eight).

In sum, whilst in agreement with Kaviraj's argument that not all activities leading up to ostensible campaigns for national independence could have possibly been nationalistic, I argue that it is not possible to delimit the precise definitions nor instances of anti-colonialist, cultural revivalist, or nationalist activities. Latter-day accounts are necessarily refractions on the situation, its various representations through historical texts, and our current contexts and theoretical purposes. Whilst in agreement with Chatterjee's comments that nationalist stirrings did not just manifest themselves through political debates and agitations by the likes of the Indian National

Congress, and the need to consider the 'inner' domain that was created lying outside of colonial influence, I am shifting the focus to consider religious praxis as constitutive of this 'inner' domain which was, however, redirected and mobilised for the public realm as a provocation against the west's monopoly of the 'material world'. I also note that this 'inner' domain was very much effected by the 'outer' domain, not in terms of a rationalisation of religion, which seemed to be the case for the socio-religious movements of the nineteenth century accounted for in Chapter Two. But one that accelerated the growth of revivalist nationalism - that is, strategic essentialism (Spivak 1994: 4) - and more inventive measures to circumvent prohibitive measures to counteract public activities being seen as increasingly threatening, and therefore nationalistic. It might be remembered that one of the reasons the public celebration of a Hindu god was encouraged by Indians was that it allowed a gathering of indigenous people without inviting the immediate suspicion of the British due to their general policy of non-interference in religious matters (see Chapter Two).

It is feasible that from these complexes of cultural revivalism, anti-nationalism, or nationalism, some degree of connectivity can be drawn out. Cultural revivalism, anti-colonialism, and nationalism are but emphases on a larger temporally contingent complex rather than distinct categories. As with Chatterjee's argument on modular and Indian nationalism, the question of overlap of terms and their referents may also be phrased as constituting *difference* with one another (Derrida 1976). For the case of 1890s Maharashtra, debates which were spurred by figures like Tilak were ones that negotiated the need to revive indigenous culture, and agitate against the perceived injustices of colonial rule. Although home rule or national independence was not the campaigning point with Tilak until the 1900s, there is the additional problem of applying too rigid a definition to what constitutes nationalism. As I have outlined in the above commentary, it is apparent that there are several facets on the complex of nationalism, for it is never complete nor is it stable. The performative occasion of the *utsava* further destabilises and diffuses the terms of reference in the public domain, yet due to the public nature of collective celebration, also intensifies their receptivity amongst the participants. It is with these arguments and provisos in mind, I continue to use the rubric of nationalism as a convenient means with which to describe the various aspects of discursive nationalism - a versatile term to describe a dynamic and complex flux of activities, notwithstanding that the term cannot account for all political activities of the period under consideration.³ In order to discuss the particular manifestations of nationalist phenomena in historical and contemporary India, it is requisite to discuss secularism and communalism as the ambivalent faces of nationalism in the South Asian context - that is, one side being the more liberal and inclusive or secular; the other side, more ethnicised and exclusivist or communal. They can be at

once distinct from each other, and also demonstrate constitutive aspects as an instance of hegemonic tactics and the vagaries of the dynamic rubric of nationalism.

Perspectives on Secularism

The discursive category of secularism was concurrent with the emergence of nationalism in India. Many of its principles were discussed under the name of national justice, self-rule, socialism, modernity or through the antagonistic relationships between parties that stressed Hindu-Muslim unity as with the Indian National Congress, and more separatist forces as with the Muslim League and Hindu Maha Sabha (Chandra et al 1989). The nature of indigenous rule was not really at the forefront of considerations until independence was attained. After independence, under Congress leadership, India adopted a fully secular Constitution outlining the foundations for a secular society and polity; but even here, the Constitution of India in 1950 did not use the term secular until the 42nd Amendment in 1976. Nonetheless, the spirit of secularism where religion was not to have any influence on the educational, political and administrative institutions, and that all citizens are free to pursue their religious practices without hindrance was accounted for in Articles 25 to 28 (Ghai 1994). This very much continues the policy of non-interference in religious matters formally adopted by the British in India.

As Bharucha notes, there are at least two versions of the term secular - one which emerges from John Hoylake's coinage of the term in 1850 connoting a place for religion in public life; and the other more 'scientific' interpretation of the term put forward by Charles Braulaugh in which there is a clear separation between matters of religion and the state (Bharucha 1993: 6). Other gradations of secularism prevalent in discussions in India are:

- (i) 'anti-religious', atheist, agnostic, worldly or material - very much considered as the 'dictionary definition' predominant in the west (*Hindustani Times*, December 15, 1991);
- (ii) non-religious, which is the ideas associated with Jawaharlal Nehru's politics and post-independence rule where religious practice is permitted outside the sphere of the state;⁴
- (iii) multi-religious, which is Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi's view of respect for all on an equal basis - '*Sarv dharam sama bhavana*' ('Equal respect for all religions')⁵ - a viewpoint which has been appropriated by the BJP in recent years; and
- (iv) multi-communal - a view which had emerged since the 1970s granting 'equal preference to the fanatical fringe of most, if not all, religious communities' (Bhargava 1994: 71-2).

In India today, these versions of secularism are vehemently disputed, the debate as to whether there is a specific meaning of secularism in the Indian context notwithstanding (Chatterjee 1995: 13). Nonetheless, it is a mix of the Nehruvian view and the Gandhian view which has officially predominated. This viewpoint of secularism need be considered with critiques in latter years of the state allowing for the growth of communal consciousness by granting religious communities more and more privileges resulting in the entrenchment of communal identities (Bhargava 1994).

Even some Indian Marxists have adopted a particular notion of religion-linked secularism, for there is a widespread Marxian view where religion is not discarded altogether, but utilised for its progressive possibilities in mobilising the down-trodden. As Roy comments:

'Hinduism, as most other religions, reflects within itself an inherent contradiction between reactionary and progressive, conservative and liberal, oppressive and liberationist and trends. The task is to intensify this contradiction and mobilise the masses behind the progressive, liberal and liberationist trends' (Roy 1993: 499).

This proposition does not so much as reflect a case of a half-baked Marxism, but the strategic manipulation of popular praxis for illustrating and campaigning for class-based political causes.

However influential and lauded an ideal, secularism has not been properly upheld in India as accusations of partisan allegiances have frequently been made against politicians. The three principles of liberty, equality, and neutrality to religious practice and community have been applied in a contradictory manner, and 'has led to major anomalies' (Chatterjee 1995: 21). Even though secularism should mean equal respect for all religions as far as people are concerned, and equal distance from all religions as far as the state is concerned, for political reasons, it has been argued that the state has not been able to maintain equal distance from all religions (*The Times of India*, January 4, 1991).

The main problems on the limitations of the workings of secularism are two-fold and arise from the co-existence of a secular state and a religious society. One concerns the accusations of a Hindu majority in political rank which have dominated political life since independence, and despite their secular rhetoric have considered caste and religion as decisive factors. This is exemplified with the notion of vote-banks based on religious criteria being a central consideration in elections to democratic institutions; the choice of candidates; and the composition of councils of ministers after elections, which are generally based on considerations of caste and religion. The second accusation has mainly come from the Hindu Right since the 1980s, particularly

the BJP-VHP-RSS combine, who have accused the so-called 'secular' Congress party of 'appeasing' and 'pandering' to minorities, otherwise known as minorityism. It arises particularly in regard to the situation of Muslim reservations in education and employment sectors. Such notions were widely articulate during my fieldwork years in Maharashtra.

Since the revival of Hindu chauvinism in the 1980s, there is another variation of the term, secular, with those who maintain that the roots of secularism in India lie in the ancient Hindu religion - that is, the ideals of religious pluralism and toleration are inherent in Hinduism - an ironic position that has fed into much Hindu chauvinist and intolerant thought (Banatwalla 1992: 9-10). As Nandy argues, 'the language of secularism...has been taken over by hard-eyed, thin-lipped practitioners of ethnic politics, convinced that it will give them respectability and access to state power' (*The Times of India*, February 18, 1991). As a corollary, the notion of pseudo-secularism came increasingly to be used by the BJP after the 1988 Palampur Conference (Chakravarty 1994: 16). For the BJP each of the aforementioned formulations is 'pseudo-secular', unless it prioritises Hinduism as the foundation for just rule - a case which I hereon refer to as Hindutva secular. By stressing this criteria, the BJP prefers the granting of special favours to a particular brand of aggressive Hinduism as the majority religion which needs to be defended from (often imagined) attack, and not compromising to other religious communities. Evidently secularism as a malleable concept has lent itself to variable usage and abuses such that:

' "Secularism" is being bandied on all sides, and in increasingly different varieties too, as politicians advocate "true", "genuine", "pseudo", "false", "Hindu", and "Indian secularisms" ' (Bharucha 1993: 81).

Whereas in the 1950s and 1960s nationalism and secularism were mutually constitutive, and pitted against communalism which was seen as the antithesis of both, nowadays it seems that nationalism and Hinduism are fast becoming two sides of the same coin. In this scenario, the category of secularism is either appropriated in an opportunistic manner where notions of secularism are based on the majority religion of Hinduism, or branded as a 'dirty word' as befitting Hindutva perceptions of Congress rule (Bharucha 1993: 12). Bharucha points out the historical contingencies of the term, secular:

'At that time it was clearly assumed that "secularism" is inextricably linked to "modernity" and a certain tradition of ideas emerging from late nineteenth century Enlightenment, while "religious" (fundamentalist or otherwise) could be more cogently understood as a "pre-modern", if not "anti-

modern" phenomenon which operated in a language different from (if not antithetical to) the premises of Reason, which secularism assumed as a norm' (Bharucha 1993: 12-13).

Opportunistic tendencies by the very sector that brands secularism as a charade are demonstrated when the Hindu Right forward their own historical evidence stressing those very criteria of 'truth', 'objectivity', 'authenticity' and 'rationality' affirmed in 'secular' academic circles when it suits them. The facts of the evidence might be questionable, but 'rational' scientific modes of arguments are used to forward their claim. However this is not to deny that faith is not the bedrock of these ideologues, for certain beliefs lie beyond the court of law and debating circles. One of these being that Ram was born where the Babri Masjid now stands (Bharucha 1993).

As I argue in Chapter Eight, the contemporary Ganapati *utsava* too forms the meeting grounds for both secularist and communalist forces, rather than exemplifying discrete differences in political strategies. In contrast to the contemporary scenario, there tended to be more of a resistance for secularists to propagate their politics in the earlier history of the *sarvajanik* Ganapati *utsava*. This view is epitomised by Nehru who, as Michael comments, was against what he considered as 'medieval habits of thought' (Michael 1984: 242). Despite the fact that the occasion is essentially a Hindu religious occasion, contemporary notions of secularism are prevalent amongst festival participants. As far as the Ganapati *utsava* is concerned, secular politics is instantiated when a saccharine brotherhood (*bhai-bhai*) between Hindus and Muslims is propagated by *mandap* displays, narratives, activities and speeches. Yet, this is in the context of a festival which is fundamentally dedicated to a Hindu deity. One problematic concerning political mobilisation around a religious deity is that the terms of the discourse had already been set around communal lines particularly as the deity icon is anathema to Islamic religious sentiments.

Notions of secularism are very much a component part of the discussion on the public sphere, for its ideal formalisation endowing all people equal citizenship was consonant with the ideal formalisation of an equitable public sphere for all religious communities, castes, classes and genders. However, secular discourse as it pertains to the Ganapati *utsava* presents an example of gestures of multiculturalism within a dominant Hindu-oriented discourse, resulting in an inequitable public domain. Nonetheless, as is noted in my account on the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* judges, the more liberal notion of secularism is non-accepting of opportunistic and Hindu militant usages of the festival. Henceforth, for the sake of clarity, I describe the more liberal secularism of respect for all religions on their own terms as 'Hindu secularism', due to the fact that notions of equality in the case of the festival are articulated in a primarily Hindu public occasion. Those versions of secularism which are associated

with a more chauvinist use of Hinduism, I refer to as ‘Hindutva secularism’. Despite similar appearances, Hindu secularism need be distinguished from Hindutva secularism in that the values of Hindu secularism exemplify a limited notion of multiculturalism and are *necessarily* Hindu-oriented due to the particular religious associations of the festival. Hindutva secularism argues for a secularism which is based on the ethos of a construct of Hinduism in which, firstly, Hinduism is a tolerant religion which tolerates all religions alongside the principle of unity in diversity, and secondly, the notion that people indigenous to India were at one point Hindu then converted to being Muslims or Christians. Hindu secularism as exemplified by the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition is pitted against Hindutva secularism in critique of their instrumental use of religious belief and practice. The argument illustrates points of consonance as well as dissonance between hegemonic strategies entailed in secular arguments and politics themselves.

As I elaborate further in Chapter Eight, the festival has also served as a site of Congress and other party propaganda as *mandals* use its potential to propagate ideas to do with issues such as employment, modernisation and communal harmony based on Hindu-Muslim *bhai-bhai* sentiments. The vagaries one can identify in the articulation of secularism as, on the one hand, a non-partisan concept and, on the other, tipped towards Hindu bias, is equivalent but diametrically opposed to the proceedings and activities of the Ganapati *utsava* where a Hindu religious festival is deemed to contain the potential for a ‘secular’ politics due to its participative and communitarian festive potential.

Niranjana (1995) considers the convergence of discourses of Hindutva and secularism in his discussion on Mani Ratnam’s film, *Roja*. He argues that despite the fact that the film won the 1993 award for National Integration, the film makes assumptions about Hindus and Muslims which are not incompatible with the more flagrant views of the Hindutva brigade (Niranjana 1995: 1291). As Kothari states, national integration is a principle espoused by centralised regimes in relation to diverse cultures and peripheries (Kothari 1995: 627). By the wholesale entry of a religious festival into the public domain, principles of Nehruvian secularism which aim to keep religion out of public affairs and more a matter of private welfare, are further problematised. Thus, the Hindu primacy of the festival seems also to extend to other less identifiably religious practices in the nation-space at large. However, even though Hindu secular and Hindutva secularism seem to demonstrate overlaps in concerns, it is notable that amongst festival participants, the two camps show antagonistic relationships (see Chapters Seven and Eight).

As I have already noted, the appearance of communalism in India’s political history made for a antagonistic relationship between communalists and secular

nationalists in the political realm. These divisions were not only exercised through separate parties as with the Hindu Maha Sabha and Muslim League against the 'secularist' Congress, but also had their partisan supporters within Congress by way of the Extremist and Moderate contingents (Chandra et al 1989: 128). Due to this, Congress have struggled with the propagation of secularism since its formal inception. Evidently, the term secularism needs to be qualified for each instance of use. The various discrepancies and contradictions exemplify the workings and limitations of hegemonic articulations of secularism as a constitutive aspect of the nation-building, as well as nation-state, mechanism (Bharucha 1993: 12).

Perspectives on Communalism

Communalism, as yet another variant of nationalism, has been described in various ways, but indisputably, it is a phenomena that arose in colonial India due to the political usage and mobilisation of religious identities and communities. Even though religion as a principle for social grouping had previously existed, and religious suppression and oppression occurred during ancient and medieval times, politics was not based on a militant religious self-consciousness or communal, despite latter-day historical revisions of the period under the sway of communalism (Chandra 1979: 8). Instead communalism '*was a modern ideology* that incorporated some aspects and elements of the past *ideologies and institutions and historical background* to form a new ideological and political discourse' (Chandra 1979: 6, his italics).

Rather than equating a polity with a state that is representative of all communities, communalism argues for a polity which is exclusively based on a particular religious community. Thus it represents the hegemonic usage of religion for scarce resources and affirming a politicised sense of community. Smith has defined it in the most-used way, as 'the ideology which has emphasised as the social, political and economic unit the group of adherents of each religion, and the distinction, even the antagonism, between such groups' (cited in Panikkar 1994: 29). Even though there have been concurrent trends with nationalist factions, communalists, particularly in twentieth century India, have often come forward as a counter-weight to nationalist forces as exemplified in their oppositions to 'secularist' organisations such as Congress (Thapar, Mukhia, and Chandra 1969).⁶

There has been primarily two ways of considering the question of communalism: one that has approached it in an essentialist way where it is religious worldviews which are seen to provide the basis for political involvement - a view typical of the colonialist historian view (Pandey 1994a).⁷ The other approach is of a Marxist or Marxian approach where either there is an ideological consideration in

which communalism is considered as political mobilisation on the basis of religious identity of a community by its own self-interested elite (Engineer 1989; Chandra 1979); or communalism is considered as a by-product of the uneven development of capitalism (Chakrabarty 1991).

Van der Veer (1994) argues that readings of communalism as 'blind faith' activism have been moulded by the colonial situation of census and survey, which contributed to the formation of communities by recognising religion as the unit for its social, political and administrative measures. Van der Veer emphasises the complicit nature of colonial discourse and the beginnings of communal discourses, by noting the incorporation of essentialised differences between Hindus and Muslims, encouraged by Orientalism:

'This essentialization is certainly not a colonial invention, since it depends on essentializing features of Hindu discourses about the Muslim 'other' and of Muslim discourses about the Hindu 'other' in the colonial period. However, these indigenous discourses were transformed under the influence of orientalism to support the imagination of the religious community as a "nation"' (van der Veer 1994: 23).

Indigenous discourses were largely transformed by the influence of reformist movements in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. As I have argued in Chapter Two, these movements attempted to produce Hinduism and Islam as sets of unifying practices and ideas. It resulted in the creation of new understandings of religion as well as political and economic competition through sectarian values, such that conflicts contingent on socio-economic circumstances were understood in terms of an orientalist-fed communal discourse (van der Veer 1994: 36).

The imposition of western political and administrative institutions on Indian society provided new scope for the expression of communalism. Pandy (1990) comments on how colonial riot reports played a significant part in the construction of communalism in which Hindus and Muslims were unproblematically pitted against each other.⁸ Indian political culture became institutionalised in religious terms, and the division between Hindus and Muslims repeatedly appeared as a principle of governance. Appointments to government jobs also became a question of communal interest and prestige; and separate electorates for the Muslims began in 1909, which meant the recognition of a religious community as a separate political unit, and extended to other communities in 1919 and 1935. Communal divisions were accommodated in the state apparatus, and, paradoxically, rigidified by a process which sought to eradicate their potency. By the twentieth century, religion was the main colonial reference point, which eventually resulted in the partition of the sub-continent

(Panikkar 1994: 42). Communalism became equated with a campaign for a nation-state polity.⁹

Despite the particularity of the modern-day emergence of a discourse of militant Hinduism, one need also note the contingency of the term, communalism, particularly in view of historical and regional specifications to Hindu-Muslim divides which were not constant and varied significantly (Robb 1986: 291). Upsurges in communalism arose due to a variety of factors beginning with the identification of Hindu or Muslim over and above other internal diversities such as caste, class and language in administrative records, the social reform movements of the nineteenth century, and the rise of nationalism and economic and political development since independence (Chakrabarty 1994: 14). Panikkar outlines the articulations of communalist forces:

'Communalism operates at different levels ranging from individual relations and interests to the local, institutional and national politics and to communal riots. First is the state of consciousness in society. The second is communalism as an instrument of power, not purely for capturing state power, but for operating in political, social and economic domains and at almost all levels of social organisation' (Panikkar 1994: 29-30).

Chandra distinguishes two inter-linked types of communal phenomena - communal tension and communal politics. Whereas communal tension is seen as spasmodic and usually involving the lower classes, in which passions are aroused through propaganda, inflammatory accusations and wild rumours, communal politics is seen as long-term, persistent and continuous, largely involving the middle-classes, landlords and bureaucratic elements (Chandra 1979: 4).¹⁰ However, Freitag (1989) contends such distinctions by noting performative perspectives on communalism in colonial India as a politics that was informed by the arena of local praxis, and an arena shaped by state politics. I elaborate her notion of 'public arenas' in the next chapter, as it has particular relevance to the consideration of the Ganapati *utsava* as well.

Much of the communalism in historical India has been in response to the perceived increased organisation of Muslims which fuelled Hindu activists. This led to increased Hindu agitation, not against the colonial state alone, but also what were considered to be their lackeys, Muslims (see Chapter Two). Intensified Hindu communalism resulted in political organisations born as an ideological pressure group from within the Congress party, the Hindu Maha Sabha in 1908, and later, the RSS in 1925. These activist groups were reliant upon the existence of a dormant communitarian feeling which could be transformed by emphasising an antagonistic relationship (Panikkar 1994: 32). It raises the question of religion as faith and practice,

and religion as ideology (Nandy 1988; Bharucha 1993) which I consider in more detail in my discussion on festival participants, procedures and processes in Chapter Six. It must be remembered that these historical dates and parties were no more than signposts for a larger and much more complex actuality that one can only so much as touch upon. But the emergence of these questions into a wider public sphere enabled a public debate and activism which had a significant impact in changing the contours and participants of the public realm as colonial privilege progressively buckled down. As Pandey comments:

'...none of these movements in historiography occurred in neat, chronological sequences, with clear-cut boundaries marking off one view of the past from another. Controversies about the meaning of a composite culture and nationalism, 'Hindu' plus 'Muslim' plus 'Christian', etc., ranged alongside controversies about the meaning of the 'popular'. But the debate itself was the seed of modern India's life. It was a sign of the vibrant politics of this long period of anti-imperialist and nationalist struggle, of the surge of struggle for democratic rights, and of course of the impossibility of ever settling these questions for all times' (Pandey 1994a: 55).

Present-day communalism in the form of Hindutva has manifest itself with accelerated force since the 1980s. However there are several *differences* (in the Derridean sense of the word) between pre-independence and present-day communalism, the latter which I hereon refer to as Hindutva for its Hindu specifications.¹¹ Whereas the Hindu Maha Sabha and the Muslim League organised around communal ideologies, the BJP, Akali Dal and Muslim Leagues in contemporary India use communalism for political support and mobilisation without necessarily adopting communalism as their primary political ideology, largely due to the negative connotations it has acquired throughout its history (Panikkar 1994: 30). In my research, I did not come across the use of communalist terms amongst associated parties advocating communalist politics, unless it was from critiques or the accusations of oppositional forces. Rather, expressions of nationalism, love for the country, secularism and democracy were articulated. As Hindutva forces engage with the protocol of liberal discourse in modern India where it is illegal to blatantly use religion as a vehicle for political issues or inflame religious sensibilities, manifold strategies are adopted in campaigning for their cause.¹² This includes, firstly, the combination of parties which adopt variant strategies at grassroots level, as with the VHP and RSS, and electoral strategies as with the BJP (Basu et al 1993). Since the mid-1980s, the Shiv Sena have tended to waver between these two poles of strategic political action - that is of liberal political speak and provocative chauvinism. Secondly, legal strictures are negotiated with the tempering of political agendas towards ethical and religious questions, such that the Hindutva cause becomes

a moral rather than a political cause. Indeed, by claiming to represent the majority community, Hindutva groups consider themselves as the more democratic and national than ‘secular’ - that is Congress - forces, by seeing themselves as not ‘pandering’ to minority groups (Basu et al 1993: 1). Whilst Hindutva protagonists temper their exclusivist ideologies to enter liberal discourse, the strategic invocation of religion provides moral sanctity to their politics. I shall return to the manifestation of Hindutva forces in the Ganapati *utsava* in Chapter Eight. For now, it is apposite to outline a number of other variations on pre-independence occurrences of communalist activities with a brief consideration of modern-day Hindutva.

Aloysius argues that Hindutva today seeks very much to ‘maintain and strengthen the upper caste dominance within the caste ideology in modern times’ (Aloysius 1994: 1451). The tensions between efforts to present a monolithic view of the Hindu community and upper caste dominance in Hindutva parties was clearly evident in the uproar over the Mandal Commission Report (1990) in which V. P. Singh’s Congress government put forward a renewed programme for reservations for Scheduled and Backwards castes in educational institutions and government jobs (Seshan and Hazarika 1995: 220). However, the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra present a more differentiated populist appropriation of the Hindutva cause (Hansen 1996b). Further, as I have argued in Chapter One, the public festival does not lend itself unproblematically to a caste-based analysis.

Based upon semiticised Hinduism of the past, Hindutva holds an ambivalent relationship with the west. Part of the reason for its emergence in the 1980s was the large-scale economic restructuration and influences of globalisation on India - increased modernisation and integration into economic relationships of western dependency has led to more revivalist and identity-based political movements (Kothari 1995). Due to increased media options and articulations in contemporary times, Rudolph (1992) argues that much of the Hindutva politics is articulated with the dissemination and consumption of key Hindu tropes and images through modern media such as audio cassettes and videos, as with the Ram Jamnabhoomi movement to rebuild a *mandir* on the site of a *masjid* in Ayodhya. Whereas there are overlaps with historical incidents of communal politics in India, contemporary Hindutva shows differences based upon variant processes of globalisation, more reliance upon media circuits, and a negotiation of liberal discourses in its political strategies. As with my concluding comments about secularism above, communalism too demonstrates overlaps with secular strategies, yet can be oppositional forces in the political arena. Another instance of consonance amongst dissonant hegemonic tactics might be noted.

In sum, despite the contingent variations of communalism over time and space, recurrent characteristics of communalism can be outlined as follows. It is a means of

solidarity based upon religious community and antagonism against other religious communities or sects. In the process, religion is reformulated and crystallised as an ideological and reified entity, such that aspirations to form a cohesive and homogenous unit are instanced. Communalist forces have, and continue to pit themselves in an opposition to 'secular' nationalism based on the principle of democratic rights to all religious communities, even if this means reinvention of the terms of their discourse so as to appear the more democratic. Communalism entails the mobilisation of religious communities and icons, often resulting in direct action and violence. As a result, the Hindutva emphasis is on aspects of protracted 'traditional' culture of India's golden age rather than material interests, resources and electoral ambitions, even if these factors form part of the Hindutva brigade's motivations. There is a manipulative element in which attempts are made to gel internal divisions and create external enemies. Many major socio-political issues are made to have a religious gloss, including the allocation of blame on the Other for personal failures of objectives; and a glorified past is created to legitimise present-day action (see Chapters Eight and Nine).

As I show in later chapters, it is the Hindutva forces which have successfully monopolised the Ganapati *utsava* in cities like Mumbai, where communal antagonism is sharper than Pune, for instance. Whereas 'secular' issues and interests are also exemplified by participants in the Ganapati *utsava*, they wane in comparison with the vehemence of religious sectarianism, particularly in periods of communalist tensions. Hindu secularists' main recourse is to emphasise the religious and national primacy of the festival, and accuse Hindutva forces of contaminating the festival with opportunist tactics and instrumental usage of the festival. In Chapter Eight, I describe the character of the contestatory public field as parties attempt to monopolise *Ganeshotsava mandals* in Mumbai and demonstrate their public-oriented concerns in a bid to widen the consent of their hegemonic operations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I focused on the main literature on nationalism and its relevance to colonial India in terms of the ambiguities between nationalism, anti-colonialism and cultural revivalism, and perspectives on secularism and communalism (or Hindutva). It is evident that many of the characteristics of communal appeal apply to Tilak's mobilisation of the Ganapati *utsava*. Even though aligned with the Extremist contingent of the Congress party, Tilak was still largely considered a 'secularist' in relation to later organisations such as the Hindu Maha Sahba and the RSS. Tilak did not expressly uphold communalist viewpoints, but was manifestly more anti-British in

their manipulation of the indigenous populace, particularly Muslim communities. Overall, Tilak conceived of a national culture as opposed to a communal culture, and mobilised festivals to these ends. Nonetheless, as with contemporary politicians, his use of Hindu religious activities in the public sphere subject him to criticism for paving the way for a communal path, where religion is not just a question of personal law, but enters into the public realm. Thus his politics was not clearly one of a secularism as compared to Gandhi's use of religion for instance, however malleable that term has been, nor was it specifically communal nationalism, even though latter-day revisions of his socio-political contributions have stressed the latter viewpoint. Tilak's appeal to Hindu culture and a historical tradition which resulted in antagonising Muslims and encouraging Hindu communal sentiments have lent him to communal discourse, his personal vacillations notwithstanding. Further, the ambiguous position of Tilak is another indication of the Janus-faced characteristics of nationalism - one side being the more liberal and inclusive - that is, secular, the other side, more ethnicised and exclusivist - that is communal. The terms of reference are prone to collapse into each other depending upon the contingencies of the moment. Whereas communalism relies upon more distinct parameters of community identity, nationalism pertains to be more inclusive but is prone to collapse into the communal as a result of the Janus-faced ambivalence of national politics. With the considerations of the workings of democratic politics, this is increasingly likely if the communal represents the common denominator of the majority populace - in the case of India, Hinduism.

The national associations of the Ganapati *utsava* are also prone to similar vacillations. Ambiguities are noted, however, when considering Hindu chauvinist views that communities should participate in public Hindu festivals, yet think it inappropriate for Hindus to celebrate other public religious events such as Eid or Muharram. This is no doubt related to their view that the Indian populace and communities such as Muslim and Christian arose due to the conversion efforts of 'invaders' such as the Mughals and British. The vagaries between the religiously communal and less exclusivist nationalist aspects of cultural events is a complicated and dynamic arena. It is arguably the case that both can be shown to be inter-linked, yet are attached to distinct political programmes. Effectively, they represent dissonant viewpoints amongst consonant practices.

As festival competitions demonstrate, and despite the contingencies of communal relations, the festival continues to be judged for its contribution to the cause of national integration (see Chapter Seven). In Pune in particular, scenes of nationalist histories, such as children dressed up as national heroes, Tilak look-alikes dressed in Maharashtrian dress, girls dressed up in tricolour flags representing Bharatamata, and other national events are performed during the immersion procession (see Chapter

Nine). Despite the prominence of the Ganapati deity, the participants demonstrate a more inclusive gesture to non-Hindus in their choice of non-religious subject matter, and the playing out of a ‘common’ Indian history. Even though primarily a Hindu religious event, other communities including Muslims, have also engaged with the celebrations to limited extents, primarily for its entertainment value. The question of communal identities attached to such religious events come to the fore when communalist forces are at rage in wider society. Thus after the 1992-3 riots in cities throughout India following the destruction of the Babri Masjid, festival participation became an intensely fraught issue. Even though the festival activities are in principle open to all communities, this is not the case in periods of intense communalist sentiment dependent on the climate of communal relationships, as well as the openness of individual *mandal* members.

The main point arising in this chapter is that in colonial times, the festival provided a hegemonic site with which to mobilise against dominant hegemonic formations - that is, colonial powers. The two sides do not represent a binary relationship of power, but one where uneven practices were noticeable, such that the festival also became an event with which to organise against perceptions of an organised Muslim community, and where hegemonic strategies and uses of the festival showed points of dissonance as well as consonance. At one level, the festival can properly be described as nationalistic; at others communalist - features which are characteristic of the ambivalent faces of the Janus which Nairn (1981) has highlighted. After independence, national secularism emerged as the dominant hegemonic bloc. This instigated, on the one hand, consent amongst the populace, and on the other hand, unleashed antagonistic forces contesting its claims to democratic rule. In contemporary times, views as to the character of the festival are necessarily coloured by the different constituencies of festival participants, whether they be *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges, Shiv Sena activists, Congress sympathisers, or the diversity of the public at large. The dissonance amongst the consonance and vice versa is indicative of the fact that the performative and public nature of the festival cannot be bounded by theoretical or political schemas or fixities.

In the next chapter, I discuss the public aspects of festivities, and the public aspects of sociality in relation to collective gatherings and the media. These characteristics are component features of any project that aspires to represent communities of interest in the nation-space. The subsequent chapters explore the facets of the dynamic rubric of nationalism as manifest in the festival, without aspiring to account for the totality of the event, through its variegated historical and contemporary characteristics. This includes Chapter Five which focuses on the visual and performative aesthetics of discursive nationalism before and after India’s independence.

Chapter Six focuses on the performative arena of festival, where discursive nationalism manifests itself in everyday practices within the festival, and how the public nature of the festival lends itself to aggressive Hindu nationalists' 'hijacking' of Hindu religious events. Chapter Seven considers how commodity culture and mass-mediated images fuel different strands of nationalism. It also demonstrates how media competitions provide a public space of resistance to the instrumental use of the considered devotional and artistic field of the festival as well as exemplifying the role of media-run competitions in promoting the cause of national integration. Chapter Eight focuses on how the festival is utilised by political parties, and how this has led to spheres of influence, displays of power, contestation as well as discrepant interpretations by participants. Chapter Nine consider the visual iconography of the festival displays and nationalism with a development of Anderson's notion of 'languages-of-power' (1983: 47), and how media and performative events are crucial to their public dissemination.

¹Ideology has multiple usages and definitions (Eagleton 1991). In brief, they range from Marxist views on ideology to refer to either a system of ideas which reflect and support dominant economic systems, or patterns of ideas shaped by people's class interests, to more broader view where ideologies are regarded as coherent and relatively consistent explanations of a given socio-political order. Unless otherwise stated, it is the latter usage I invoke in the thesis, although as I argue below, I also note its more discursive articulations (Bhabha 1994) and limitations (Laclau 1990).

² It might be recalled that Congress represented a diverse movement dedicated to the cause of 'secular' nationalism, rather than just a party (Chandra et al 1989: 79).

³Patriotism is another ambiguous term which describes more of an devotional attachment to notions of the nation, rather than nation-state polity. However, my thesis considers the interregnum between questions of devotion and praxis in a festival arena and state polity, whether it be that of the colonial government (Chapter Five) or the contemporary nation-state and political parties in the socio-political terrain (Chapter Eight). Due to the large-scale public nature of the Ganapati *utsava*, questions of devotional, performative and political formations need be considered in their complex relations (see Chapter Six). Effectively, the various terms of debate constitute perspectives rather than definitive descriptions on the subject of the *sarvajanik utsava*.

⁴Hereon, Nehruvian is used to refer to ideas associated with Jawaharlal Nehru's nationalism and socialist economics based on Five Year programmes and national industrialisation.

⁵Hereon, Gandhian refers to ideas associated with Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's spiritual nationalism (see below).

⁶Chandra (1979) argues that this bifurcation arose due to the fact that the national movement was confined to the intellectuals, as represented by the Moderates in Congress. But as I have already argued for the Extremist element of Congress as with Tilak, attempts, however restricted, were made to incorporate other sectors of society as well. The oppositions largely emerged as a result of the increased Muslim organisational ability, and the appeal for greater mobilisation amongst Hindus using the values and traditions of its culture as key mobilising tools to enhance self-pride and activism. As I argue above, even 'secularists' were hard-pushed to keep religion out of the political vocabulary and build an entirely non-religious nationalist ideology. Religious idioms and allegories entered its language as well, for religion became an increasingly potent and pervasive force to reckon with (Chandra 1979: 154-5).

⁷In view of the limitations of such approaches, Pandey argues that communalism is best applied to organised political movements operating in opposition to real or imagined threats from another religious community or communities (Pandey 1994b), thus leading one into an examination of communal demonologies, which I explore in Chapters Eight and Nine with regard to the question of the Other.

⁸Before 1946, there had been 72 major communal riots, the maximum communal tension being in the period 1923-26 (Chandra 1979: 4). Since independence, communal riots were few and far between, most probably due to the large-scale massacres of communities around Partition in 1947. Communal tension began to pick up in the late sixties, and reached a height with the resurgence of the Hindutva brigade - that is, the BJP-VHP-RSS combine - since the mid-1980s. But these terms of communalism mask a series of other nefarious activities such as politician-backed pogroms, underworld involvement, and personal vendettas and land settlements through destruction of others peoples' properties.

⁹In the 1920s, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar of the Hindu Maha Sabha declared that Hindus were not a community, but a nation. In 1940, the Muslim League accepted M. A. Jinnah's two-nation theory as its ideological basis in which the Muslims and Hindus were considered separate nations. This theory provided the rationale for the demand for Partition.

¹⁰One sees these aspects in articulation with the combine of Hindutva parties such as the RSS and VHP, and recently the Shiv Sena, in conjunction with the more respected BJP, alluding to the fact that the class bases for parties are not exclusively middle-class (see Chapter Eight).

¹¹This argument is in a similar vein to the post-1918 nationalists' use of politicised Hinduism, which was very different from the earlier religious discourse of Aurobindo Ghose and Bipin Chandra Pal, for instance (Chandra 1979: 155).

¹² This has been particularly the case since the Election Commissioner, T. N. Seshan, took stringent efforts to monitor and regulate electoral campaigning in 1994 (Guru 1995: 733).

Chapter Four

Festive Moments and Public Spaces

In this chapter I explore the sites upon which, and with which, hegemonic strategies take effect in relation to the Ganapati *utsava*'s public career. Whereas the most familiar theorisation of the public sphere has been by Habermas (1991), I note limitations of his formulation, for it does not readily take into account festive collectivities, as a means by which public space is used to disseminate political ideas, and agitate against perceived socio-political injustices. Freitag's concept of 'public arena' (1989) provides a means by which the public space can be further explored, but has limitation in that media circuits are not taken into account. I note that public occasions allow for an arena in which national politics can be disseminated and played out amongst collective gatherings. Such characteristics are extant for considerations of both colonial and post-independence political cultures for variant reasons. In colonial times, festive moments such as the Ganapati *utsava*, as well as other collective gatherings, facilitated the process of carving out a public realm of action and empowerment. Pinney describes such phenomena with reference to the geographic dissemination of Cow Protection movement messages into the thinking of the populace, as the 'colonisation of quotidian space' (Pinney 1995a: 8) - a colonisation from the viewpoint of the colonised. In latter-day times, the festival is increasingly used to enlist support for particular socio-political causes and campaigns, some of which might be the official policies of the nation-state (see Chapters Eight and Nine). Practices in public spaces allow for a zone of debate, agitation, and assertion of national politics alongside other campaigns, in what might be described as the interregnum of polity and the quotidian, or in this study, festive praxis.

My intention in focusing on the performative is also to problematise the notion that this depends upon an essentialist arena of action. Both the history and the contemporary praxis of the festival depends upon a constitutive element of media dissemination and debate. In historical times, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, amongst other political activists, used media to disseminate ideas and coverage of the festival across the region with motives to initiate debates, imbue consciousness of performative activities in public spaces, and trigger off similar initiatives elsewhere. Even if it is contended that there was a distinct sector of the populace which were part of media-instigated circles of debate, the performative arena of the festival was a place where such ideas could be disseminated amongst wider circles with the use of debates, speeches, songs, dramas and tableaux. As Cashman reports for the Mumbai journal, *Bhala*, at the turn of the century, they 'wanted to breathe "some political fervour" into

such festivals' (Cashman 1975: 87). Whereas newspapers could disseminate and spread political fervour across wide sectors of the region, festivals allowed for their performance and intensification amongst large sectors of the populace at any one time.

In latter-day times, media performs a similar function, but with the added remit to raise consciousness about the festival's part in India's national history. Media also organise competitions which encourage social work for the community and nation, regulate criteria to do with devotional, artistic and national values, and publicise those *mandals* that, in the judges' opinions, excel in these categories of evaluation (see Chapter Seven). The two aspects of the performative and the mediated exist in a symbiotic relationship - the performative being informed as well as providing the substance for media coverage and debate and vice versa. I begin with a focus on relevant literature on festive moments as epitomised by rituals, carnivals and festivals. I then assess Habermas' (1991) view on the 'public sphere' and Freitag's (1989) formulations of the 'public arena', before making an argument for their integration. This proposition is further explored in Chapter Six on the processes and procedures of the Ganapati *utsava*, and Chapter Seven on the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition.

Rituals, Carnivals and Festivals

There has been a long tradition in anthropology on focusing on the subject of ritual. The various perspectives have included the relationships between ritual and myth - now considered a circuitous and unproductive debate. The definitions and delimitation of ritual as opposed to ceremony, and the symbolical characteristics of rituals have also been focused upon (Gluckman 1962; Leach 1961). Functionalist theories propose religion and ritual as reinforcing collective sentiment and social integration (Durkheim 1915; Radcliffe-Brown 1952). Van Gennep's (1960) account on *rites de passage* has been widely influential on social structural approaches to the interpretation of ritual. Turner's approach to ritual has focused on the motivation of 'symbols' and 'signs' where the former is considered to relate to an iconic relationship with inner experience, and the latter as an index on the world (Turner 1967, 1975). Although pertaining to the anthropological study of society in general, Geertz (1973) develops Turner's perspectives in that rituals' meaning is considered to come from the motivations of 'symbols' with which a textual and interpretive approach is used to unpack these 'thick texts'. However, in agreement with Sperber (1974), distinctions between signs and symbols, practical and expressive domains are untenable. Levi-Strauss' (1963, 1966) structuralist approach moves away from the study of 'surface structures' to focus on the structures of classification of the mind, particularly in relations to myth,

'symbolism', kinship and marriage. However, such approaches have limited applicability to economic and political considerations, as well as contentious for proposing foundational structures.

Ritual has been considered in terms of expressing, on the one hand, role reversals (Leach 1960; Marriot 1966; da Matta 1977); on the other hand, rebellion or the reversal of social roles in hierarchical societies, albeit temporary, ultimately reinforcing the social order (Gluckman 1963; Miller 1973). Turner's (1969) work on the concept of 'communitas' and 'anti-structure' in which a sense of community is experienced amongst ritual participants has also been widely influential. Historical studies have concentrated on the changes and developments of particular rituals in relation to their contemporaneous socio-political contexts (Bloch 1986; Kelly 1988)

Aside from the historical studies of Bloch (1986) and Kelly (1988), the aforementioned authors consider ritual as if it was a reified religious entity. I do not focus on a ritual or festival per se, but on how it is constitutive of, and constituted by, a city's changing and dynamic political culture. Certain aspects of the debates on ritual, however, do prove useful. For instance, it is notable that the Ganapati *utsava* serves a more integrative role than one might expect from considerations of festivals such as Holi, and demonstrates signs of community unity, though I take heed of drawing out too functionalist an analysis. In addition, as I demonstrate in Chapter Five, the Ganapati *utsava* has shown various developments and changes throughout its public career from the colonial period to contemporary times.

The various perspectives demonstrated in the above review on ritual not only come about from variant approaches, but the nature and context of the event under consideration. It is the specificities of the occasion, rather than theoretical *a priori* generalisations of categories, that lend a public event to be termed ritual, carnival or festival. But we might note variable continuities amongst the discontinuities between categories. The term *utsava* in Maharashtrian contexts means celebration, festivity or function, and derives from *utsaha*, which refers to the notion of pleasure, zeal or enthusiasm. Its closest English equivalent is festival or carnival - but one that is constituted by religious rites of various types, making festival the more suitable appellation. The Ganapati *utsava* is susceptible to various perspectives which can draw out parallels and disjunctures with celebratory occasions elsewhere.

On a similar note to arguments made about ritual, there are variant perspectives on public celebrations replete with ideas about solidarity along with license and inversion. Prominent literature on carnivals and festivals centres on Bakhtin (1968) on the medieval carnival who focuses on the exposure of hidden truths, laughter and inversion against the facade of socio-cultural control. Le Roy Laudrie (1981) considers social critique within festivals in sixteenth century France. Eco (1984) prefers to see

festivals as catharsis that benefits the dominant group. Cohen (1980, 1993) considers the dynamic tensions between aesthetic and political themes in the Notting Hill carnival in London. Miller notes 'an explicit social critique and a general tension between order and disorder' in consideration of carnivals in Trinidad (Miller 1994: 108). Strong prefers to see contemporary festivals as 'a unique alliance of art and power in the creation of the modern State' (Strong 1984: 173). In sum, the literature on festivals ranges from arguments where the festival is seen to uphold the status quo, have marginal effects on the status quo in terms of social, legal and political reconfigurations, to the event being instrumental as a social movement to effect actual changes in the body politic. The evaluation is necessarily prefigured by the perspectives taken on a particular festival in question and the contextual and contemporaneous socio-political climate.

Another notable point is that the public performances in the literature are generally seen as bracketed off from mundane life. However, carnivals or festivals, despite their multi-headed paradoxes, remain constitutive of, and constituted by, the socio-political milieu to varying degrees. Miller comments that the Trinidadian carnival should be seen:

'...neither as an aesthetic alternative to life nor as a direct reflection of reality, but as a stylised rendering of some of the central expressive and moral concerns of the group' (Miller 1994: 82).

This betwixt and between character of festivals as both a performative act, and one that expresses particular socio-political agendas is instructive for this study. I prefer to view the Ganapati *utsava* as an expressive intensification of, and part of, values articulate in its socio-political milieu. There is a dual process where the festival reflects the city's socio-political terrain, but also the festival constitutes and intensifies it at periodic moments. However, the Ganapati *utsava* does not just delimit a space outside of mundane life, but shows a betwixt and between character between the mundane and extra-mundane. Indeed, for some participants such as *murtikars* (artists that make *murtis*), the festival is an all-year round consideration as plans are made for producing ordered *murtis*. For *mandal* members, discussions and plans about the festival are made months in advance of the celebration period. Intensive work for festival competition organisers, begins and continues weeks before and after the duration of the eleven day festive period. Political parties continue their work amongst the populace during the festival with heightened force and vigour.

It is apparent that a tension exists between order and disorder, celebratory and socio-political aspects in the festive context of this study. The tension, however, is a productive one which lends the performative occasion the betwixt and between

character of being both a celebratory occasion distinct from mundane praxis, but also reflective and productive of the vagaries of the socio-political milieux. Whereas there is invariably an element of excess in festivals which lend them their celebratory characteristics lying beyond the strictures of socio-political agendas, this element of excess can often be useful for the propagation of socio-political agendas. This is not to assume that there is a circuitous and instrumental relationship between politics and pleasure in the festival context, but to note just one of the points of conjuncture in the uneven domain of festive praxis. Indeed, politics and pleasure, as noted, may even exemplify an antagonistic relationship, as is the case with cultural revivalists and their disapproval of activities such as drinking and wild dancing in the festival. I return to the notion of pleasure and their socio-political characteristics as exemplified by Ganapati *utsava* praxis in Chapter Six.

As a brief overview, the *sarvajanik* Ganapati *utsava* was initiated in an anti-colonial climate, channelled into nationalist directives, and continues to play a component part of nationalist ideologies, perhaps not in exactly the same way, to this day. License and inversion are minimal and perhaps anathema to the larger indigenous discussions about how much the Ganapati *utsava* epitomises the moral values of the people of the city, state or nation in contemporary times. Nonetheless, in the history of the *sarvajanik utsava*, one may note that when the nationalist sentiment was not as persuasive, as happened in the post-independence period with the rampant influences of film and entertainment values in general, license and inversion in the form of drunkenness, gambling, and 'film star' Ganapatis - that is, *murtis* of Ganapati made to resemble film stars - seemed to be the main features ascendant over the festival's religious and political values. With the drive of purists to filter these components out of the *utsava*, particularly since the 1980s, it was the ethico-political aspects that have come to the fore in the public realm (see Chapter Five). Although the tensions between the two directives continue to manifest themselves in the festival, even those that uphold the ethico-political aspects appreciate some of the 'cleaner' ludic elements, namely song, music and the enjoyment of a celebratory public gathering, effectively seeing their value in reaching and pleasing a large audience (see Chapter Six).

The festive occasion, however, does not just entail the functional engagement of festival participants, for the occasion, despite its intensive management, is an unstable and transient space. The festival period allows for an arena for 'compressed' and provisional politics, which at particular moments takes on heightened meanings with the concerted energies of participants' engagements and activities. Occasionally, despite ethico-political hegemonies, the festive moment also allows for the possibility of disruptive and subversive readings. The festival is not reducible to the sum of its parts, whether they be devotional, political, or entertaining activities; instead, festive

occasion need be considered as constitutive of their inter-dynamic relationships - a series of reactive equations which often require an element of excess as their catalyst.

Miller makes an interesting distinction between two forms of temporal consciousness in festive events - transience, in which the ideal of freedom is expressed as instanced by Trinidadian carnivals; and transcendence, in which festivals act 'to transcend the vicissitudes of the present for an image of an unchanging line of descent' as exemplified by Christmas in Trinidad (Miller 1994: 82). Following the aforementioned argument about license and ethico-politics, the two temporal senses would seem to coexist in the Ganapati *utsava* if only to differing degrees. Rather than positing that contradiction is built into Trinidadian culture as a means of explaining the sense of 'transient' time and 'transcendent' time in two distinct festive occasions (Miller 1994: 83), for the Ganapati *utsava*, it would seem that contradictions and tensions are built into the very festival itself. Furthermore, the transcendent sense is not as simple as positing a line of descent of the Ganapati *utsava*'s antecedents in time immemorial, but one that also realises that the *sarvajanik* festival was a fairly modern invention during the time of Tilak in colonial times. Festival participants in Mumbai and Pune are well-versed with the festival's history, crediting Tilak with its public and socio-political mobilisation. Some of the *mandal* members in Pune pointed out that there were a number of people behind the mobilisation of the *utsava*; it was Tilak who gave the occasion most publicity through his journalistic reports. The subtle gradations in transcendent consciousness are largely due to the differences that exist between the private familial celebrations which are believed to have always been practised in Maharashtra, to those that consider the *sarvajanik utsava* as being a more recent adaptation in the public realm for the good of the community.

Another form of temporal consciousness to consider in relation to carnivals not mentioned by Miller, but arguably an extension of his notion of transcendent time, is one effected by nationalist projects and media. Even though Anderson limits his account to texts such as novels and newspapers, it could be contended that festivals with their various sites of media, performance and artworks also provide premises by which participants can 'think' the nation (Anderson 1983: 22). Anderson proposes that Benjamin's idea of a Messianic time - 'a simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present' - is supplanted by notions of simultaneity where there is a 'homogenous empty time' in nationalist phenomena (Anderson 1983: 29). However, Pinney contends this point and argues that with Indian nationalist representations, 'vertical' dimensions linked to the divine persist: 'a nexus of popular media became the site of a reinvigorated messianic cosmology' (Pinney 1995: 2). Anderson's notion of simultaneity is elaborated by Pinney who considers chromolithographs and popular photography in India where there is juxtaposition of mortals with deities in a 'mythic

“simultaneity”’ (Pinney 1995: 15). Pinney’s proposition also has performative relevance to the ‘play of the gods’ (Ostor 1980) and people as evident in the Ganapati *utsava*, particularly during processions. In the case of a religious national festival, ideas about ‘thinking’ the nation complement ‘thinking’ religion or Ganapati as a figure of devotion amongst Hindus across the region (see Chapter Nine). A tension between the enactment of ‘homogenous’ notions of time pertaining to the national, and ‘mythic’ notions of time pertaining to the divine and devotional, persist in a dynamic relationship in the performative context.

Manning notes four central features in the genre of what he prefers to call celebration - performance; entertainment with ‘ideological significance or pragmatic intent’; its public nature; and its participatory characteristics (Manning 1983: 4). He argues that it is the performative, entertaining (albeit with implicit or explicit political agendas), public and participatory character of the Ganapati *utsava* that can provide the basis for a sense of community, and by extension, nationalist sense of belonging. Manning develops the preceding schemata into core themes with which to approach cross-cultural instances of the ‘celebratory genre’ - its paradoxical ambiguity; its significance as socio-cultural text; its role in socio-political processes; and its complex relationship to modernity and hierarchy (Manning 1983: 4). Manning’s schemata hints at questions that I would like to pursue - that of the relations between festivals, and the ‘public sphere’ (Habermas 1991) as referring to a space of debate and decision-making in civil society. If it is the case that the Ganapati *utsava* exemplifies a betwixt and between character - at once a celebratory occasion distinct from the mundane, yet on the other hand, reflecting and perpetuating socio-political programmes constitutive of society at large - then it is instructive to view the occasion in light of theories of the ‘public sphere’.

Public Spaces

Control of public space, both in the actual and media-related sense of the phrase, is a crucial part of any agenda or activity with nationalist aspirations. I note that the available literature on festivals has not concentrated on the public sphere of media, debate and decision-making as it relates to festivals. This shortcoming seems to be due to the implicit bifurcation between subjects that lend themselves to certain kinds of analyses focusing on so-called ‘rationalist’ realms of politics and public debate or decision-making, and those that have a more religious, ludic or ‘symbolic’ element to them, therefore not seen as part of the realms of public debate and decision-making. Here, I provide a critique of Habermas’ ideas of the public sphere and a consideration of Freitag’s proposition of ‘public arenas’, and make an argument for the dissolution of

the two realms as it pertains to the Ganapati *utsava*. The print-media (as constitutive of a 'public sphere') and public ritual, procession and other participatory activities ('public arenas') have been, and continue to be at an even more intensive level, a crucial part of the Ganapati *utsava*'s educational programmes, political propagation, and role in intensifying Hindu national sensibilities. I begin with an enquiry into Habermas' views on the public sphere, followed by a critique of its assumptions. I then consider key texts as to public space and ritual or festivals in colonial India (Freitag 1989; Haynes 1992; Cohn 1983), and end with an argument as to the entwining of public festivals or rituals and public spheres in what, for the sake of clarity, I have called public fields.

Habermas (1991) has provided the most familiar concept of the public sphere. He proposes an idealistic view of a democratic public sphere ideally open to everyone, outside the forces of fascistic manipulation, in which a new arena of debate and structuring of consciousness emerges. This is seen to be constitutive of a civil society which is considered autonomous from the state. Communication need not be a face-to-face relation between people, but mediated by a dialogue produced in media, such as newspapers, periodicals, radio and television. This phenomena is instanced as a consequence of large publics, the emergence of print capitalism and other technologies, and capitalist mass production. Habermas, somewhat problematically, discusses the public sphere in terms of a reified entity - a 'sphere mediating between state and society' (Habermas 1991: 399). He describes it as:

'...a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed...A portion of the public sphere is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public. They are then acting neither as business or professional people conducting their private affairs, nor as legal consociates subject to the legal regulations of a state bureaucracy and obligated to obedience. Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion; thus with the guarantee that they may assemble and unite freely, and express and publicize their opinions freely' (Habermas 1991: 398).

Habermas asserts that it is largely the newspaper which historically allowed for the emergence of the public sphere, due to it being the predominant means of communication in European history. Its role in revolutionary struggles of Europe's history as the 'political newspaper' is particularly noted:

'Until the permanent legalization of a public sphere that functioned politically, the appearance of a political newspaper was equivalent to engagement in the struggle for a zone of freedom for public opinion, for publication as a principle' (Habermas 1991: 402).

Although offering useful insights, Habermas' analysis is too steeped in European history to be of more general applicability. It also falls prey to the liberal ideology of 'free speech' in modern democratic society. The public sphere is infused with various, perhaps more subtle, mechanisms of state control where the notion of freedom itself could be argued to be part of its 'successful' concoctions. Habermas' stress on 'rationality' overlooks the way it has been used as part of mechanisms to contain and oppress colonised societies, as I have outlined in Chapter Two with regard to colonial administrative systems. His normative concept of the public sphere fails to explain or challenge specific processes of cultural power. This need engage with the internal processes of power within the state and social hierarchies such as those based on gender (Rosaldo 1980) and ethnicity (Cheah 1995). Whereas gender issues do not form the primary focus of this thesis, I return to their relationship in relation to discursive nationalism as represented in *mandap* tableaux in Chapter Nine. Cheah's notion of the politics of difference are highly conspicuous with the *utsava*'s role in public life in colonial times.¹ Barrier notes the tension between 'cherished British ideological traditions and the demands of control over a non-western population' (Barrier 1976: vii) in the colonial government's back and forth swinging from strict controls to virtual freedom of expression - a feature which was characteristic of the emergence of the public sphere in colonial India, if not even in contemporary times (see Chapter Five).

Commenting on colonial Gujarat, Haynes (1992) argues that power differentials mean that governmental structures shape the character of the public sphere, where a few members became representatives of the people:

'The new civic culture was a curious configuration that reflected the many contradictory expectations placed upon the notability. According to these expectations, figures with little English education believed to be hereditary leaders of local groupings and guardians of traditional values were to become agents of progress and political education, representatives of the people, and the advocates of universal principles such as the public good' (Haynes 1992: 115).

The public sphere was not open to all on principle, but very much screened and moulded by state powers. The spokesmen's legitimate areas of decision-making were, initially at least, restricted to a few issues (Haynes 1992: 161). It might be added that even for the European case, Habermas makes too much of a distinction between state and civil society, where in fact there is a complex interaction. In the western context, parliament is an organ of civil society in its investigative and debating facilities. Similarly news media institutions and political parties straddle the state-civil society

divide. In the colonial situation, however, this interconnection between state and civil society need be considered alongside another complex - that of the distinct spheres of 'state-focused institutional activities and the collective action of public arenas' (Freitag 1989: 284) - a point which I return to below.

In his account of the institutionalised public forum, Haynes notes that the under-classes were very much left out of the picture. Their public influence was limited, but nonetheless came to the fore through other activities, such as gatherings, processions and public rituals. Haynes' illustrative case study on colonial Gujarat is instructive for this study:

'Discussion and debate, which were extremely important in the theory of western liberal democracy, found little place in public meetings in Surat. Local actors established their own procedures for identifying public opinion, but these procedures actively prevented opening public life to the under-classes of Surat, who in any case were undoubtedly perplexed by the strange rituals of nominating chairs, proposing and seconding propositions, shouting 'shame' or 'hear, hear' in response to speakers' arguments, and voting for resolutions that arose in these meetings. The control exercised over public meetings by a small number of men gave limited scope for the percolation into civic politics of ideas, causes, and vocabulary from below' (Haynes 1992: 161).

As Tilak himself argued, the nationalist project was not going to be attained around debating tables, but widespread grassroots activities using local and familiar idioms of action. On a similar point, Haynes notes the 'different political idioms of the educated elite and the populace at large who conducted their day-to-day politics in idioms that were almost completely distinct' (Haynes 1992: 161). Despite being a member of the educated elite, such critiques formed part of Tilak's critique of Congress Moderates' and others' hesitation of the use of a festival for political campaigning (see Chapter Two).

Gestures of a public sphere were implemented by colonial government, where the sphere of debate and decision-making had a restrictive purview. Considering the wider populace, Freitag (1989) looks at the process of the emergence of constructed communities, and their responses to a centralised and interventionist state in colonial Uttar Pradesh. She postulates that a public realm emerged which was 'expressed and redefined through collective activities in public spaces' - a realm of 'symbolic behaviour' or 'public arenas' which 'impinged simultaneously on two worlds - that encompassing activity by locally constituted groups, and that structured by state institutions' (Freitag 1989: 6). In her efforts to move away from historiographic approaches that concentrate on a study of organisations alone in fostering communal consciousness, Freitag presents a processual analysis of 'the changed meaning infused

in the symbolic behaviour of public arenas' (Freitag 1989: 284). She argues that this led to a sense of community identity that was wider than the immediate locale. It is a pattern that was replicated throughout much of colonial India. Freitag calls this area, the 'public arena - a symbolically rich world informed by popular culture and consisting of collective activities on behalf of group interests'. Structurally, they were similar with other collective events throughout British India in that they emerged in contradistinction to imperial institutions. However, public arenas varied in each locality due to the 'interaction of specific provincial policies and the local content of popular culture' (Freitag 1989: 284). In this sense, the Ganapati *utsava* can also be considered as a 'public arena' arising out of a need to confront colonial policies of rule, yet very particular to the 'popular' culture of western India. However, this is not to argue for a distinct sphere from indigenous elite sectors, as Tilak's and others' involvement in vernacular culture shows. I discuss some of the other lesser-known people involved in the mobilisation of the festival in Chapter Five.

As Freitag continues, participation in festivals was crucial in providing an experience and statement of group solidarity, particularly during processions:

'The experience of involvement in the acting out of major events in the lives of the deities blended momentarily with the more abstract lessons the event symbolized. This convergence of the "dispositional" and the "conceptual" aspects of religious life played a particularly important part in South Asian experience, for it built on cultural assumptions that exemplary behaviour gained one merit even as it trained one for future meritorious actions. The processional festival thus served as a kind of metaphor for the process of group identification' (Freitag 1989: 131).

Freitag's discussion parallels my argument above about developing Anderson's 'simultaneity' of the nation and Pinney's notion of the 'mythic simultaneity' for the performative occasion of national religious festivals. Eventually, the consequences of such public events in Uttar Pradesh was of a bifurcated structure where the state distinguished between state-focused institutional activities, and the collective actions of public arenas (Freitag 1989: 284). The latter very much constituted 'popular' culture, from which the British tended to recoil, unless proving to be politically volatile. However, Freitag, somewhat problematically, continues distinctions between expressive or 'symbolic' arenas and pragmatic domains. With the example of the Ganapati *utsava*, colonial authorities began to change their policies of non-interference in the festival at the turn of the century, when it was seen that the gatherings were not just religious gatherings but used to disseminate political or 'seditious' messages. This more circumspect treatment of the public festival was a result of widespread unrest in the region (see below). Colonial vacillations were evidenced in indecision as to

whether to see the festival as primarily a religio-cultural occasion, and therefore not intervene; or view the possible disruptive and anti-colonial activities that it could harbour and spawn, in which case to keep the festival under stringent surveillance and regulation.

Although Freitag develops her argument from Habermas' ideas, she does little to critique their Eurocentric premises of formal logics based on 'rational' egoism. Nor does she consider the interaction of medias and collective action in these public arenas - conceivably as it impinged less on her subject of study. As I show in Chapter Seven in particular, a religious occasion does not necessarily preclude pragmatic or intellectual debate. Indeed, the two are very much interconnected spheres, with associated inflections for the concept of ideal personhood as at once observant of religion and 'rational' areas of concern. This is not the space to explore questions of personhood in depth, but only to note the argument's wider ramifications lying outside the scope of this thesis. Noting the relevance of Freitag's argument for my study on public strategies and sites, I also consider it requisite to decentre her notion of the public arena slightly so as the collective arena is also seen to be intricately entwined with media spheres for the Ganapati *utsava*. This is pertinent in view of the way media informs and regulates the public, active reception of mediated forms, and how the event informs and invigorates the media.

In the case of the Ganapati *utsava*, the public sphere need be conceptualised in a way that gets away from the monopoly of Habermas' ideas on the phrase: for the Ganapati *utsava* is not just a religious or entertaining occasion, but has a historical and contemporary role in being an arena for disseminating news and debate, as well as being the site for 'political fervour' and agitation. Whereas Freitag provides another means of conceptualising this sphere of gatherings, communication and exchange of information and sentiment in this intense moment of communion with public arenas, her conception of the public realm is divorced from the impact of public debate and technologies, such as print-media. Printed literature was not only available for the educated elites, but also several vernacular language newspapers and literature existed for another network of news circulation (Ganesan 1992; Kumar 1994). Furthermore, as Pinney (1995c) elaborates, it is known that imagery such as chromolithographs were used to propagate support for the Cow Protection movement, which forms part of Freitag's focus on colonial Uttar Pradesh 'public arenas'. It is quite feasible that similar kinds of illustrations were used for other campaigns as well. In the case of the Ganapati *utsava*, there is a need to consider not only the public activities as constitutive of public arenas in Maharashtra, but also how festive activities were informed by, interacted with, and shaped media-instigated debates, particularly as

much of the public propagation was done through the mouth organs of the *Kesari* and *Maratha* newspapers, amongst others.

The public sphere at the turn of the century was one predominantly formed by print, although film experiments were beginning to be shown as well (Chabria 1994). Whereas in colonial Maharashtra, print was the predominant media which circulated images and opinions about Ganapati and the festival, nowadays, the public sphere demonstrates an intermeshing of print, celluloid, television, and in more privileged circles, satellite, cable and then the internet (Kumar 1994). But this does not eclipse the public participative aspect of sociality altogether. Thus, I utilise Habermas' notions of the public sphere, but with the following provisos: a critique of its Eurocentric bias to consider the Indian context; and a consideration of public spheres based on media interactions alongside the arena of public gatherings, campaigns, procession - that is, bodily participation. Furthermore, though a nexus of simultaneous performative activities and media coverage, the 'imaginining' (Anderson 1983) of the festival reaches beyond the immediate locality. Combined with the understanding that the festival is celebrated by Hindus throughout the nation, if not parts of the world, but most importantly in Maharashtra, the festival becomes the 'pulsating text' which participants immerse themselves in, and demonstrate solidarity with other actual and 'imagined' constituencies of people, as well as with the divine. These media-based spheres and performative arenas were not distinct entities but intertwined with one another in, for the sake of convenience and specificity, I have called public fields. Thus, public fields are constituted by both the media and public participative events - discursive practices that shape, inform and constitute each other.

All these descriptions of the public are of course synonyms whether they be sphere, arena, culture, field, realm, domain and so forth, but they differ in valency according to the theorisations they are attached to. I have chosen field to provide another slightly different inflection to the debate which suits my research interests and findings. I have refrained from using the phrase, public culture, for the following reason. The journal of the said name refers to public culture as 'the cultural transformations associated with cities, media and consumption' as well as 'the cultural flows that draw cities, societies and states into larger transnational relationships and global political economies'. Part of this project requires one to 'situate these forms, flows, and processes in their historical and political contexts' thus providing an arena to create 'alternative modernities' (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988: 6). Not too far removed from Habermas, Appadurai and Breckenridge, however, recognise the particularities of different debates, the economic factors, and the global interconnections in any one considered situation. Nonetheless, their stress on the media and public culture as 'a zone of cultural debate' (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1988:

6), do not readily take into account festive collective occasions such as the Ganapati *utsava*.

The limitations of public culture is epitomised by Haynes' use of the term where he describes public culture as very much an elite discourse:

'revolving around originally British notions of public opinion and the public good [which] effectively excluded the city's under-classes from a genuine participation in shaping the larger political order' (Haynes 1992: 28-29).

Even though it was Tilak, a member of the indigenous elite, who was credited with the mobilisation of the festival, the festival began to take on a momentum of its own, initiated in different parts of western India by numerous community leaders and activists. Haynes' formulation of public culture is not adequate to consider the Ganapati *utsava* in the colonial period where the festival provided a partially autonomous zone from the colonial and elite sectors, if these hierarchical distinctions are to be retained. This is not to suggest that these sectors were very much distinct and different - but to point out sites of consent and contestation in a hegemonic, socio-political complex. In sum, the public field is an integrative space which encapsulates media networks that inform debate, as well as suffusing collective performative arenas. Further, the public field is a realm where differences and oppositional forces are negotiated, accommodated, suppressed, and resisted through various channels. In particular, I refer to the ways the Ganapati *utsava* and associated activities were used to negotiate and resist colonial measures to control and regulate the event as instances of hegemonic interventions.²

The Public Field in Colonial India

If one was to sketch out the emergence of the public field under colonial rule with the institutionalisation of the print industries, it is noticeable that as media forms proliferate, the politico-legal administrative structures adapt accordingly to keep the limits of acceptability of public debate in order. Substantive threats to colonial rule at the turn of the century, came from the uses of media for a nationalist agenda to overthrow colonial rule. Just as significant were performative events, such as songs, dramas, and collective gatherings and campaigns. At times, indigenous critiques were less entrenched in motivated nationalism, but targeted at injustices of various sorts perpetrated by the colonial government. Often, particularly at the turn of the century in Maharashtra, the mantle of public civil debate was worn in order to exercise other agendas, as was demonstrated by Tilak's use of his writings, carefully couched in

language that would not immediately incriminate him.³ This parallels Tilak's strategies of supporting a religious festival to propagate political ideas which could not be immediately condemned (see Chapter Five).

The issue of censorship or state intervention has direct bearing on the formation of the public sphere (in Habermas' sense). However, censorship was not just used for media, but also for public performances as with songs and dramas that were banned, festivals that were stringently monitored and so forth ('public arenas' in Freitag's sense). That is, it was not just the written word was proscribed, but, in the case of songs and scripts, their performative potential, and in the case of collective gatherings, their disruptive possibilities, were also regulated and proscribed where colonial government deemed necessary. In Chapter Two, I accounted for Tilak's mobilisation of a primarily domestic festival into the public where it received widespread participation, publicity as well as colonial surveillance, regulation, control and prohibition. The antagonistic process demonstrates the carving out of a public space that was ideally open to the whole of the indigenous populace, communal antagonisms notwithstanding. This is alongside the growth of an indigenous press and publications circuit, not always working in opposition to colonial powers, but to begin with at least, demonstrating collaborations of every sort, however inequitable they were in actuality.⁴ Both enabled the emergence of public consciousness and action in India's recent history that rested both upon public spheres of debate and decision-making, and direct action and events as expressed in Freitag's public arenas. Hegemonic strategies used, and continue to use, both the performative and mediated realms - that is, the public field.

In the early 1890s, the British colonial government did not consider the revivalist measures taken by the likes of Tilak to be a direct threat to the colonial status quo (Cashman 1975). Prohibitive measures as impinging on my focus on the Ganapati *utsava* and related activities began to surface in the late 1890s, civil acts to deal with other disturbances prior to this date notwithstanding.⁵ This is not so far after the initial public mobilisation of the festival in 1893. These changes in political cultures were primarily influenced by the Hindu-Muslim riots of 1893, the reaction to the increasingly oppressive colonial treatment during the Plague years 1896-67, and the arrest of Tilak under the charge of seditious writings in 1897-98. The latter resulted directly in the amendment of Section 12-A and incorporation of Section 153-A into the Indian Penal Code to make the law sufficiently comprehensive to deal with writing considered to be seditious (Barrier 1976).⁶

For instance, Kulkarni writes that in the mid-1890s, 'the political expediency or otherwise of discouraging the growing Shivaji cult...had not yet entered the thinking of the British government' (Kulkarni 1984: 68). Ostensibly, at the time of the revival

of the Shivaji festival in Raigad Fort, the issue that most preoccupied the colonial administrative structures was that forest or fair laws should not be violated by the organisers. Further, the festival organisers were very clever in stressing the hero-worship element of the occasion rather than the political gains. Thus, it was difficult for colonials to ascertain whether something was directly political if it was in the guise of a religious celebration, as with the case of the Ganapati *utsava*, or hero-worship, as with the case of Shivaji. Whereas it was the religious nature of Ganapati that saved the occasion from direct accusations of sedition, in the case of the figure of Shivaji, historical and cultural recollections were its ostensible purpose. However, to indigenous people's advantage, Shivaji could be used as a symbolic resource to indirectly contrast the rule of a just leader to an unjust rule of an alien government.

The Police did not report on the Shivaji occasion until the late 1890s, particularly after the murder of Colonel Walter Rand on 22nd June 1897 by the Chaphekar brothers with which Tilak was suspected of conspiracy in view of the fact that the Chaphekar brothers used the platform of the Shivaji festival to rouse anger against the Government (Kulkarni 1984: 69). Tilak's writing and associated activities, particularly the Shivaji festival of that year and his writings on the Afzal Khan murder were seen to be seditious and Tilak was taken to task and arrested on 27th July 1897 (Kulkarni 1984: 70-1). Stringent colonial surveillance also extended to other public events, including the Ganapati *utsava*.

Thus changes in colonial surveillance of festivals were instigated around 1897. The colonial government began licensing of *melas* as a means of regulating the organisations and censorship of *mela* songs in 1896 (Ganachari 1994: 583), and thorough Police reports began in the *Secret Abstracts of Intelligence* shortly afterwards. Earlier the concerns were with issues to do with civic order for public events. Later this developed the character of a spying network on insurgent activities which could result in an upsurge of political activities and threaten the Government (Desai 1984: 134).

By 1905, the Ganapati *utsava* not only had an increasingly political character, but was also begun to be seen as more of a threat. This was in large part to the increased paranoia amongst the rulers and more disturbances amongst the ruled as a result of Lord Curzon's decision to bifurcate the state of Bengal in 1905, as well as the increased consciousness and promulgation of principles of Swadeshi, Boycott (of foreign goods) and National Education throughout the country (Ganachari 1994: 585). Cashman reports:

'No longer did the Brahman versifiers attempt subtly to blend politics with religion, but openly exhorted the true patriot to wear *swadeshi* garb, to abstain from liquor, to support the *paisa* fund to

regenerate Indian industry, and to oppose the policies of Lord Curzon, the moderates, and all the enemies of the extremists' (Cashman 1975: 87).

Overall 'Ganapati's political stock was highest in 1894-96, and again in 1905-1910 but by then he was a limited political force' (Cashman 1975: 97). As with the clamping down of political struggles, there was a virtual suppression of the festival in 1910 as it had become 'an engine for the dissemination and nourishment of vicious extremist propaganda' (Cashman 1975: 85). This suppression was facilitated by the Press Act of 1910. Even though the religious rites in deference to Ganapati were not specifically oppressed, other related activities such as publications, theatre scripts and performances, *melas* (processional groups), songs, slogans and speeches did directly clash with colonial prohibitive measures.⁷

By 1913, most *melas* in Pune had disappeared consequent of the increased punitive measures taken by colonial governments and the conditions of austerity in the World War period. Censorship of Ganapati *utsava* in Pune was further extended in 1916 when the government decreed that no pictures of humans could be carried, no names other than gods be invoked in procession, and that the approval of the District Magistrate was necessary for any public speech (*Kesari*, August 29, 1916, cited in Cashman 1975: 167). It appears that, even though the colonial state tried to control the output of different significatory practices, prohibition and incarceration of nationalists further fuelled their reproduction in the form of portraits. The significant potential of visual icons was later recognised and suppressed. As I show in Chapter Five, ever defiantly, portraits of human figures such as Tilak, Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi, and Subhas Chandra Bose were transposed on to the *murti* of Ganapati from around the 1920s to the 1940s.

Ostensibly, there was little that the British could do in terms of stopping religious practices, not only due to their policy of non-interference in religious matters, but also little weight that could be held up in court unless it was recorded and assimilated well with the language of the courts. Performance without publications, and furthermore, performances dressed up as religious allegories were more difficult to prove in court, as to their considered seditious potential. Allegorical references were widespread with relevance to stories from Shivaji's life, the battle of Ram and Ravana in the *Ramayana*, and episodes from the *Mahabharata*, such as the story about Kichak's murder by Bhima (Ganachari 1994; see Chapter Five). Religious or allegorical subject matter was discussed and monitored by colonial authorities in so far as it could contain specific allusions to current politics. But even here, due to the inventiveness and cunning shown by Maharashtrian protagonists, colonial authorities were left in a quandary about whether allusions were specific enough to warrant prosecution. Nonetheless,

their superiority complexes and inveterate distrust of the 'natives' invariably took over. The following extract taken from judicial reports on a play about the unjust incarceration of Tilak in 1898, *Bandhvimochan* (*Liberation from the Foreign Yoke*) is instructive :

'After much bureaucratic battle of wits over the applicability of suitable law, the government arrived at a decision that "we cannot prohibit a performance on the ground that it is a caricature on the travesty of a judicial trial unless it is scandalous, defamatory, seditious and immoral," and it could at best attract contempt of the High Court. Nevertheless, the Secretary to the Government confidentially suggested that the Police Commissioner may unofficially put a ban on the play. The suggestion was implemented' (Ganachari 1994: 585).

Perhaps, it was due to the nature of colonial policy towards religious issues in India, that nationalist campaigns did not necessarily proliferate through the print medium; but through a network of other populist and religious-based events, particularly those that proved difficult for the surveillance of colonial powers. Festivals proved to be an ideal space for propagating and recruiting sympathisers to the cause, primarily due to the awkwardness and anxiety the British colonial government felt in interfering with a religious occasion, and the difficulties of providing incriminating evidence for courts, particularly if it was an undocumented expressive form that was in question.

It is notable that after Tilak's death in 1920, and with public outcries as to events such as the massacres at Jallianwala Bagh under General Reginald Dyer in 1919, it was a particular blend of spiritualism and politics characteristic of M. K. Gandhi that came to the fore in mass agitations with the Civil Disobedience movements. Critical of what he saw as ritualistic religion, Gandhi did not publicly advocate methods such as the Ganapati *utsava* as a means of political mobilisation, perhaps recognising the possible divisiveness it might breed in a sensitive communal political atmosphere. He advocated a direct campaign against colonial rule, rather than resorting to veiled techniques as was the earlier predilection of Tilak. Nonetheless, according to *mandal* histories in Pune and Girgaum, Mumbai, Gandhi is remembered to have used the platform of Ganapati *utsava mandals* and gatherings to deliver speeches. The point still stands in that in the public domain, he delimited the role of ritualistic religion, and stressed a universal spiritualism which was his personal imprint on the notion of secularism (see Chapter Three).

Finally, it is noteworthy that the politicisation of a ritualistic performance parallels colonial aspirations of the legitimisation of their rule with the staging of grand imperial rituals recalling Mughal traditions (Cohn 1983). Collective performances of a different kind, ones exercised by the powers rather than the colonised, were instanced on

several occasions especially during the period of 'high imperialism' up until the outbreak of World War I. The epitome of this could be argued to be George V's coronation in 1911 'when brute force was to an extent forsaken in favour of pomp as a means of asserting authority' (French 1997: 3).⁸ Haynes notes four different phases in the life of elite public ritual, each associated with different sets of elite individuals in the city:

- (i) the high imperial phase 1890-1914 for British collectors and local notables;⁹
- (ii) the early nationalist phase around 1900-1920 comprising of Englishmen and educated politicians associated with the Indian National Congress;
- (iii) the years of Gandhian challenge especially at the height of the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22); and
- (iv) the post-Non-Cooperation phase when imperial ceremonial order reasserted itself but when nationalist leaders such as Jawarhalal Nehru, Kanaiyalal Munshi and Morarji Desai increasingly became chief figures of ritual attention (Haynes 1990: 495). I return to this latter phenomena as part of the modern-day 'secular' rituals of the state in contemporary India below.

Such events received pages of publicity, again demonstrating the networks of ritual events and media forms - this time, forming the strategies and sites of dominant hegemonies. It can be seen that ritual events, whether they be from the coloniser's objectives to maintain power and impress, or colonised's objectives to attain greater empowerment, were 'crucial arenas of politics in which authority was generated, confirmed and contested' (Haynes 1990: 494). In sum, the public field in colonial India need encompass not only the troubled emergence of a sphere of decision-making and public means of expression as was characteristic of Moderate Congress supporters' clubs and the press, but also public participative or collective events such as the Ganapati *utsava*. This need be assessed in view of colonial efforts to circumscribe their efficacy in times of perceived crisis.¹⁰ It does not need reiterating that Tilak, amongst other lesser known activists, utilised both media forms and performative religious events to further their political campaign against perceived colonial injustice.

Strategies and Sites

To recall my main argument, I have noted the interaction between print-media (as constitutive of a 'public sphere') and public ritual, procession and other participatory activities ('public arenas') during the Ganapati *utsava* which can lead to an intensification of national sensibilities. I attempt to reconcile the realms of religious festivals and public media for a better understanding of spheres of public participation, opinion and decision-making (see Chapters Six and Seven). With my focus on the

Ganapati *utsava*, I continue the argument for developing Anderson's (1983) focus on 'print capitalism' to explain national consciousness, and argue for a multi-sensory approach to the workings of the national imaginary rather than through written texts alone.

Performative politics alludes to the vitality and effects of political agendas as entailed in public events, rather than an analysis of written forms alone. This is however not to overlook the vital role media plays in influencing and communicating the performative event. In cultural performances such as carnival and festivals, 'invented traditions' are lived out and performed but this is not just the tame traditions of national anthems, flags and rallies as in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's study *The Invention of Tradition* (1983). As Harney comments, festivals are characterised not just by 'formalization and ritualization' alone but also by 'unpredictability, irreverence, shifts in identity - all qualities dangerous to the official nationalist' (Harney 1996: 126). Jayant Salgaonkar notes the functionality of 'modern festivals' such as National Republic Day on January 26th and India's day of independence on August 15th (*Loksatta-Lokrang*, September 15, 1996) - which might be described as rituals of the modern nation-state in India. He notes that they are not so much a part of family and community life as a festival like the Ganapati *utsava* in Maharashtra. This is primarily due to the fact that the stately rituals are seen as more of a national duty rather than forming a 'emotional connection' (*bhavanik dhaga*) with people. Indeed, it might be argued, if noting Cohn's (1983) argument as to the Mughal references entailed in British colonial ritual strategies, and Haynes' (1990) outline of the modern-day nation-state ritual strategies emerging out of colonial precedents above, that the modern nation-state, developed largely under Congress rule, continues forms of ritual expressions which are considered far-removed from indigenous culture. Indeed, they emerged as part of the 'secular' nationalist policies of the modern Constitution, where programmes of an economic, industrial or agricultural nature formed the main sites of political intervention in vernacular culture. For instance, as Pandey argues, Nehru stressed science as the new national religion and large-scale industries as temples of modern India (Pandey 1994a: 50-1). As Rajagopal (1994) also concurs, vernacular culture was not the site of Congress political work after independence. Whilst this seems to explain the late entry of Congress politicians in the contemporary Ganapati *utsava* in Mumbai, it does not readily account for the predominance of Congress politics in the Ganapati *utsava* in Pune. I shall return to these questions in Chapters Five and Eight. Latterday governments have come to recognise the potential of religious events in enabling a closeness with the devotional psyche of the majority populace for their strategic programmes. It is primarily for this more organic connectivity with people's lives that state governments, as well as oppositional

political parties, appropriate *Ganeshotsava mandals*, and sponsor celebrations for their potential as a means to get closer to the public in Maharashtra (see Chapter Eight). Yet the Ganapati *utsava* cannot be solely reduced to political agendas. It is a discursive arena fulfilling devotional, artistic, and entertainment purposes as well as social welfare work for the community within which hegemonic strategies and effects are discernible.

One finds a complex of relationships with official nationalism emanating from central governmental institutions, with the example of the Ganapati *utsava*. Occasionally, *mandals* present themselves in sympathy and obeisance to figures and symbols of the central powers; but more often, particularly as most of the *mandals* in Mumbai sympathise with the Shiv Sena, they present themselves in an antagonistic manner in contemporary times (see Chapter Eight). The main point, whatever the presentation alignment might be, is that the nationalism at issue is not finely formulated with its set of component parts and agendas, nor can it be said that it is without internal contestations. Such fault-lines can be exemplified with the disputes between 'Moderate' and 'Extremist' protagonists in the Indian National Congress' history, which in contemporary times, transposes into 'secular' nationalism and Hindutva nationalism, the latter tending to be at the forefront with regard to the usage of religious festivals to political ends, though this is not to assume that such hegemonies are exercised without contestation. In the case of dynamic community-oriented events, such as festivals, processes of *nationalising* are instanced - the dynamic and shifting (re)production of a national culture - rather than the corporate stamp of institutional nationalism. Fox comments:

'National culture is not fully formed or reified nor does it consist of rigid, institutional and cognitive pieces properly fitted together into a stable and immobile structure....national culture is malleable and mobile. It is the outcome of a constant process of cultural production. A national culture is constantly being moulded as individuals and groups confront their social worlds and try to (re)form them. Out of such confrontations emerge nationalist ideologies from which, in turn, a national culture gets produced' (Fox 1990: 2).

It is the constant processes of cultural (re)production which contribute to and sustain a national culture with the example of the Ganapati *utsava*. The festival itself is in dynamic flux, although political forces might attempt to constrain this malleability to limited levels of success. Activities for, and within, the Ganapati *utsava* is part of the dynamic and endless processes of (re)producing a national culture - itself a site of contestation. In order to investigate this complex further, I consider the variety of *mandap* tableaux designed for the festival in the following chapters. A consideration of the artworks, their uses and reception, provides a means with which to reconcile

individual viewpoints, as collated in ethnographic research, with a larger socio-political framework addressing the characteristics of the Ganapati *utsava* as part of the (re)production of discursive nationalism. Tableaux can be considered as mediatory points between festival praxis and hegemonic strategies. In the case of *rashtriya* (nationalist) displays, the tableaux become sites of representing and inducing values to do with devotion, the nation and other related concerns (see Chapter Nine). These *mandap* tableaux form a significant and attractive feature of the Ganapati *utsava*, particularly in contemporary times. The tableaux demonstrate innovations consonant with topical concerns, though as I elaborate in later chapters, often variations on recurrent themes. They form a significant component of a much larger entity which is the festival complex itself.

The various sites of activities within the *utsava* form an expressive intensification of, and part of, society which, due to their performative, multi-sensory and media connections, play a considerable part in enhancing the sense of community of participants. Along with nationalist agendas and narratives entailed in the performative occasion, the festive moment can lead to an intensification of national sensibilities, although it can also demonstrate the fault-lines of contestatory hegemonic groups. This phenomena effectively entails an articulation of media forms and bodily participation in the public field. In Chapter Six, I account for the *utsava* activities in detail; followed by Chapter Seven on how festive activities are informed by, interact with, and shape media-instigated debates with a consideration of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition. The latter forms an instance of hegemonic strategies to manage festival praxis, and compares with political parties' use of the festival explored in Chapter Eight.

Conclusion

In sum, due to the festival's dynamic character, politics as played out through the Ganapati *utsava* seem to perform a vital role, precisely because the *utsava* is not just a political institution, but demonstrates an intermeshing of religious, socio-political and aesthetic considerations. At any one point, one aspect of it can be highlighted over and against the others. The festival forms a invigorating part of the political culture of the area, tending to integrate the spheres of visceral events and bodily participation with those of media and debating fora, which is further illustrated in subsequent chapters. The festival allows for a performative space - essentially unstable, riven with contradictions and tensions - an event which is regulated yet lies out of totalising parameters as well, where versions of the nation can be played out.

In this chapter, I considered the characteristics of the festive moment, and how they lie both outside and as part of might be described as the practices of civilian bodies such as media institutions, and political organisations. As a stylised rendering of the social's central moral interests in an expressive and public way, the Ganapati *utsava* is linked with spheres of decision-making and political strategies. Further, the performative event is intricately entwined with the mediated through a number of means - media coverage, regulation, recording, and informing opinion and decision-making. In the next chapter, I outline the emergence of the particular aesthetics of the 'stylised' expression of the festival throughout its recent history. It is notable that the performative occasion allows for an aestheticisation of political concerns, and a politicisation of aesthetic issues. I consider this complex in more detail, additionally providing background information on the development of the festival's aesthetics which is developed in later chapters by a consideration of the contemporary festival.

¹The public sphere has particular limitations in a colonial or totalitarian context, where due to the gulf between ruler and ruled, resistive mobilisation does not just stop at control of the public space, but with nationalist campaigning, seeks to overturn the state apparatus. This movement generally consists of a broad front involving a number of strategies, not just mediated by communicative organs, but also mobilised with the means of very visceral and collective events and campaigns.

²Contemporary socio-political uses of the festival provide other inflexions to this formulation, as will be further demonstrated in Chapters Seven and Eight.

³This was particularly the case in Tilak's early days. However, by the court case of 1908, he did not beat about the bush. The court case is renowned for his popular slogan of 'Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it' (Pradhan 1994).

⁴The newspaper has been present in India for at least two hundred years; initially, at least, in the hands of the British colonial powers. Early newspapers included the *Bengal Gazette*, The *Madras Courier*, and in Mumbai, *The Bombay Herald* which later merged with *The Bombay Courier* (Kumar 1994: 29). Other English papers that are present today, such as *The Times of India*, had a similar provenance in that they were started off by the British to be taken over by Indians after independence. Vernacular papers were started at a later date by the likes of Ram Mohan Roy in Bengal and Bal Gangadhar Tilak in western India towards the latter end of the nineteenth century.

⁵It is surprising that despite Barrier's findings that patriotic songs and poetry were 'probably the largest single category of printed matter confiscated by the British' (Barrier 1976: 270), he should still reserve his main focus to the censorship of press and publications. This lends strength to my main argument about the focus on the written text, as opposed to the performative potential of songs and poetry. With the Ganapati *utsava*, censorship and incrimination was effected on the basis of government representatives' observations, drama scripts, songs and poetry texts.

⁶The amendments of 1898 to the 'sedition clause' allowed for a broader scope for prosecution including media of various sorts: 'Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards Her Majesty, or the Government established by law in British India shall be punished...' (cited in Barrier 1976: 6). These changes facilitated the purview of public events such as the Ganapati *utsava*, despite it being primarily a religious festival.

⁷As an example of the increased attention given to public media by the colonial authorities: within the period 1897-1913, there were thirty nine drama prosecuted, thirty one of which were eventually banned under provisions of law, and sixteen of them prescribed (Ganachari 1994: 588). As I have already commented, Tilak himself was arrested and trailed in 1898 for his writings in the newspaper, *Kesari*, which in fact further contributed to nationalist stirrings as the public were even more angered and agitated.

⁸French reports on the intense preparations and networks of news created about this event: 'New tables of precedence were printed, cinematographic photographers appointed, maps of the various

miniature tented cities prepared, a polo ground dusted down, crowds brought in by train from the Punjab to cheer, and a photograph of the new ruler distributed to every village in India' (French 1997: 4). It would seem that even a photograph was sufficient to carry the relevant news to Indian villagers.

⁹Haynes notes that between 1895 and 1914, 'native gentlemen' took part in visits by governors and viceroys' *durbars* organised by district establishments, ceremonies for openings of public buildings, and parties in the home of district collector, imperial victory celebrations, coronation observances, birthday celebrations for dignitaries, and memorial services. (Haynes 1990: 494). In addition, reasserting my earlier point about the need to integrate a focus on ritual along with media spheres, Haynes notes that such events were given pages of publicity.

¹⁰Barrier notes how the strict rule of certain periods fuelled even more strategies to fight for public justice. The Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon, 1898-1905, was one of these periods:

'At first working within accepted constitutional channels, a segment of these [Indian] politicians became disillusioned with reliance on petitions and British good will. They accordingly explored new methods and strategies so as to inject themselves more fully into official decision-making. A natural offshoot of these concerns was a move towards mass politicising, as exemplified by Bal Gangadhar Tilak's popular festivals in Maharashtra and later his labour campaign in Bombay. Another was a tendency to decry the Indian National Congress as an effective vehicle for political change' (Barrier 1976: 8).

Chapter Five

The Historical *Utsava* as a Site for ‘Creative Patriotism’

Photography, print-media, lithographs, theatre, and film provide an ‘inter-ocular field’ of visual and auditory signifiers (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1992: 52) with which *mandap* tableaux have an invigorating dialogue. This inter-ocularity is not just a contemporary phenomena for the case of India, but consonant with the development of print, photographic and audio-visual technologies for over a century. This chapter outlines the emergence of the inter-ocular public field of visual and performative interactions, as it relates to *Ganeshotsava mandap* tableaux, from *sarvajanik* displays in the 1890s mainly consisting of the *murti* alone. The account provides perspectives as to the political aesthetics of the historical festival, as well as a background with which to appreciate contemporary artworks and festival praxis explored in subsequent chapters.¹

Whereas much attention has been given to the ‘martialisation’ of the deity, Ram, in contemporary Hindutva politics (Kapur 1993), earlier examples of warrior-like transformations of deities seems to have been overlooked. Ganapati *murtis*, particularly of the 1890s, demonstrate the development of active and martial images of the deity in the process of killing models of *rakshas* (demons) - the whole making allegorical allusions to the overthrow of colonial powers, and Ganapati’s role as the remover of obstacles (*vighna*) in the way of national justice and self-determination. Indeed, throughout the festival’s public history, despite the continuing prevalence of more orthodox representations of Ganapati, the *murti* has also acted as a site of innovation and activation of socio-political concerns in society at large.

Such historical praxis may be described as ‘creative patriotism’ - a phrase taken from Puranjape’s translations of Vashta’s (1992) essay title, *Deshbhaktipar Kalavishkar*, to describe militant nationalist aesthetics of festival activities in colonial times. It is notable that due to the temporal contingencies of the distribution and balance of power, the rubric of nationalism, as with hegemony, can at once be a dominant formation operating in order to gain consent so as to become acceptable as is the contemporary scenario, and a creative formation operating against dominant hegemonies as in colonial times. This is not to argue for a dichotomous relationship of power distribution, but one of a discursive realm of relationships and alliances. In historical times, this complex entailed communalist sentiments and activities as well as alliances with colonial authorities. Nonetheless, the dominant axes in the Ganapati *utsava* at the turn of the century was arguably one of nationalism as against

colonialism. Evidence which I have gathered on the historical festival seems to support this argument.

Strands of Histories

In my enquiries into the history of the festival, I became conscious of the particular character of perspectives on the past - histories that have been culled from newspapers and other archival sources, personal and community memories, politically motivated and normalised histories, and the transformed regurgitation of traditions through revivalist measures, particularly since the first centennial celebrations of the *utsava* in 1992. Most of the historical accounts available to us on the festival are elite histories, not what Cohn has called 'proctological' history - that is, from the 'bottom up' (Cohn 1987: 39). Subaltern historians have attempted to tackle this dearth, as well as the hegemonic views of both 'colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism' (Guha 1982: 1) to give subaltern perspectives. A lot of this has been influenced by the works of Gramsci's work on hegemony (1971) and a legacy of E. P. Thompson's historical works (Thompson 1968), where it is oral traditions, study of marginalia, use of songs, folklore, public celebrations and ritual that are prioritised. However, this is not to propose that a distinct discourse exists which is relevant to the lower strata of society alone - only a complex interconnective matrix between top-down and bottom-up perspectives. Indeed, the recorded histories of Tilak's involvement with the *sarvajanik utsava* precludes assumptions of an autonomous space with regards to a subaltern constituency. I take heed of Spivak's (1985) comments as to imbuing undue agency and insurgent consciousness into the subaltern subject. It is primarily for this reason that I consider the performative context of the Ganapati *utsava* as an inroad into the historical public field - one characterised by plural dynamics, some of which are consensual with extant dominant powers, others contestatory.

One need proceed with caution as to teleological accounts of a nation's history which are extant in contemporary India. Historiographies of the festival also seem to point to an all-too easy involvement of the Ganapati *utsava* of the historical struggle of Maharashtra's contribution to India's freedom struggle. Nonetheless, the contemporary scenario of the festival is overwhelmingly dominated by nationalist thinking, that it is difficult, and perhaps even ethically fraught, to attempt to represent what might be proposed as a 'true' history. Nonetheless, my main argument of the festival as a discursive arena within which hegemonising strategies take root still holds. For whilst, in this chapter, I provide evidence as to the nationalist politics played out in the performative context, I also reserve the fact that this is part of a larger and uneven realm of festival praxis. The festival, alongside the historical narratives it provides for

contemporary times are described here. Further, the account provides inroads into the complex of the vital part such histories play in contemporary Maharashtra, as part of its nationalist narratives (see Chapter Nine).

As I have argued in Chapter One, the role of literature in the spread of nationalist sentiment has had a limited outreach in India. This is due to the fact that the population is not entirely literate, and in colonial times in particular, the literate were in the minority tending to come from elite or educated sectors. This gives other forms of representations, such as with the oral, performative and visual mediums, a further saliency in an investigation of nationalist representations for the case of India. It is another reason why festivals such as the Ganapati *utsava* played a role during periods of nationalist campaigning, particularly in colonial times.

There are perhaps two ways one can consider the question of nationalism and the production of the arts (taken in its larger sense to refer to cultural artefacts in general). First, nationalism can be considered as a directional thrust on the creation and production of art with its repertoire of emblems, icons, colours, narratives and so forth. The second way of approaching the question is that of an assemblage of materials, perhaps produced and read within a totally different context, for the purposes of creating and maintaining a national culture. The two are overlapping areas but with different emphases. The former is more of a pro-active project, the arts based in contemporaneous times, relevant to the Ganapati *mandap* tableaux. The latter is more of a revisionist exercise within which the arts are canonised and become part of the historical narrative of the nation, more often than not backed up by the state. The former is the area that most pertains to the Ganapati *utsava* artworks, even though the festival forms part of the historical narrative of the contemporary nation as well.

Mitter (1994) considers the works of Indian painters during colonial times, whilst Guha-Thakurta (1992) provides an exposition on the emergence of a nationalist art in Bengal at the turn of the century with the work of the artist, Abanindranath and his following. Both works discuss an indigenised art practice and form adopted from the west, that was ‘powerfully propagated and established as the only legitimate “national art” of modern India’ (Guha-Thakurta 1992: 3).² However, there is a problem in their accounts in that the foci remains on the producers of the art form, largely from the elite classes, rather than an analysis of the uses and effects the art forms had to actually implement a nationalist consciousness in the wider society. An additional problem with their accounts is that apart from the assimilation of indigenous art styles into canvas painting and the phenomena of Ravi Varma’s paintings made into chromolithographs and therefore having a wide dissemination as well as crossing the boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ art, there is little attention given to the arts outside of an institutional framework. There is a contradiction in such accounts in the fact that

nationalism being reliant on a collective base and mass appeal should be allied with an art form that was in the main, by and for, an indigenous elitist clientele. Despite the appropriation of folk arts into 'high art' canons, Mitter's and Guha-Thakurta's accounts are delimited by the restrictive scope of the notion of art based on western models, and their circulation amongst the populace. Other works, such as Uberoi (1990) and Pinney (1992, 1995a), however, take account of this dynamic by focusing on the spread of chromolithographs amongst the populace, initially inspired by Ravi Varma's canvas paintings in the late nineteenth century. Pinney refers to this phenomena as the 'democracy of the image' (Pinney 1992: 3), a process which one could feasibly ally with the workings of artworks and the national imaginary amongst large sectors of the populace.

As is evident in this thesis, I have attributed the term artworks to describe the *mandap* displays - a term which is corroborated by artists' own descriptions, and consolidated by the competition process which places significance on the community-oriented, educational and national potential of the displays in contemporary times (see Chapter Seven). However, in historical times, *mandap* displays were a constitutive aspect of a wider realm of festival aesthetic praxis including songs, script narratives, music, *rangoli*, dramas, *mela* parades and so forth. Even though, apart from the *melas*, these artistic practices continue to exist in contemporary praxis, they are eclipsed by the creative displays around the *murti* and forms of 'packaged' entertainment such as films and audio-tapes. My interest here is not so much in the definitions of art in this context, but the ways in which popular creative artefacts and activities have been used in the festival, their 'conversations' with each other in terms of influences and innovations, and to what socio-political effects.

Anderson (1983) provides a means by which the complex of cultural texts and nationalism can be further investigated. As I have already outlined in Chapter Three, he argues that nations are 'imagined' into existence, and acquire concrete shape particularly through 'print capitalism' which provides the new institutional space for the development of the modern 'national' language. Whilst Anderson's argument accounts for a vector of the imagined process vis-a-vis the spectator's relation with the art forms, Anderson overlooks performative participation to concentrate on print capitalism and the emergence of nationalist consciousness. In effect, modes of apprehending the nation are not only effected through the media, but have been, and continue to be, fired by performances - gatherings, marches, campaigns, ceremonies, processions and so forth. Festivals provide a kind of living text - aural, visual and performative - which can involve a large number of the populace, literate or illiterate, and have, indeed, been mobilised to these ends.

With regard to the Ganapati *utsava*, there are a number of considerations. Even though most of the accounts that have been passed down to us have been from elite sources, such as Tilak's writings and colonial records, there still remain traces of evidence as to a bottom-up perspective, largely through photographic evidence of festival events and *mandap* tableaux, and oral accounts and memories. Chronologies are often neglected in this perspective culled from personal memories and *mandal* repertoires. Nonetheless, along with a critical use of other available sources of India's histories, they provide an inroad into unaccounted perspectives of the past in Maharashtra. The historical schema below has been developed with an analysis of people's memories, newspaper and magazine articles, and historically-based literature on the festival including *Ganeshotsava mandal* publications (Vashta 1992; Kamat 1992), *Kesari* newspaper publications (Karandikar 1953; Ghorpade 1992), accounts on the festival's history (Parasnus 1921; Barnouw 1954; Michael 1984) and accounts on colonial Police records on surveillance and proscriptions of festival and other public activities (Cashman 1975; Barrier 1976; Ganachari 1994). Further, there are several historical records of the kinds of *mandaps* that were erected in earlier times in Maharashtra. The magazine, *Citramai Jagat*, documents a number of photographs of *mandap* tableaux since the 1910s in its August-September issues, and several *mandals* too have records of former years of *mandap* decorations. Although analyses of historiography are outside the scope of this study, I account for historical perspectives on the Ganapati *utsava* which is relevant to my focus on the relations between artworks, festival praxis, and nationalism. Fuller accounts of the festival in the 1980s and 1990s are provided in ensuing chapters.

Martial Murtis

After the demise of the Peshwas dynasty, the public festival died out in the early nineteenth century, although continued to be celebrated in domestic and temple contexts. As I have elaborated in Chapter Two, it was not until the 1890s that the festival was revitalised for large-scale public involvement again, lasting ten days instead of one, under the initiatives taken by the likes of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The protagonists were interested in restoring the former glory of indigenous rule back in the land. This early period of mobilisation is interesting for the kinds of *murtis* that were installed in *sarvajanik mandals*. Due to the practice of immersion of a second smaller Ganapati *murti* with Pune *mandals*, several of the original larger Ganapati *murtis* are extant to this day.

Of the early Ganapatis in Pune, there are generally two types of *murtis*. The two iconographic forms bear comparisons with Kapur's (1993) account on the latter-

day transformations of popular iconography of Ram, with the difference in that the consideration here is of a period of anti-colonial insurgency in 1890s Maharashtra. Common forms of the Ganapati *murti* show a sitting Ganapati with a cherubic face and beatific smile, exuding a *shanta rasa* - that is, tranquillity, compassion and benevolence (Kapur 1993: 74). The others are much more dynamic, representing either a standing Ganapati bending over to deliver a blow to a demon as with the Bhau Rangari Ganapati in Budhwar Peth (established 1893, illustration 7), the Taravade Ganapati in Kariche Maidan (established 1894, illustration 8-9), and the Chatrapati Rajaram Ganapati in Sadashev Peth (established 1894, illustration 11), or sitting upon an elephant, striking a demon or tiger with a spear (*trishul*) as exemplified by the Akhil Navipeth Hatti Ganapati in Kasba Peth (established 1896, illustration 10).³ The *murtis* represent *ugra* forms of iconography - that is, angry, active and punishing (Kapur 1993: 75).

The earliest *mandal* in Pune, the Bausaheb Rangari Ganapati Mandal, was established by Bausaheb Lakshman Javale, alias Bausaheb Rangari, an ayurvedic doctor, and some of his friends - Dagduseth Halvai, Nanaheb Khasgivale, Maharshi Annasaheb Patvardhan, Balasaheb Natu, Ganapatrao Ghoravadekar, and Lakhusheth Dantale. This was an idea that Tilak approved of as a means of unifying the community, and widely publicised throughout his journalistic writings. Later in 1905, Tilak became a Trust member of the Bausaheb Rangari Ganapati Mandal. Here the Ganapati *murti* is shown in the act of killing a demon 'as a personification of action and even violence' (*Maharashtra Herald*, December 17, 1990). There are several other models similar to this pose, as with the Taravade Ganapati which shows a four-handed Ganapati wrestling with a demon. The representations of Ganapati *murtis* present overwhelming evidence to the use of icons for conveying a veiled political message - the view which is proposed by informants in Pune: 'To many the *rakshas* Ganesh is shown killing is a personification of the country's erstwhile British rulers' (*Maharashtra Herald*, December 17, 1990). This would seem a Maharashtrian counterpart to unresolved debates about whether lithographs of Kali striking a demon with a lion couchant in the corner is to be seen as a personification of nationalists overcoming the colonial 'evil' in Bengal (Pinney in Bailey 1990: 341).

Pinney focuses on popular political prints in the early part of this century in relation to the Cow Protection movement in north India, which were antecedents to contemporary Hindutva imagery (Pinney 1995a: 4). Pinney notes the use of prints with a cow with deities within the body of the cow and a group of figures either underneath its udders or advancing as if to slay the cow in the movement. Effectively, the image portrayed the sacred associations of cow and nation, as well as disseminated communalist messages against Muslims (Pinney 1995a: 9-10; 1995c). Similarly, the

visual discursive politics that the active Ganapati *murti* exemplifies also sets a precedent for Hindutva ‘televisual politics’ (Pinney 1995a: 4; see below). The martialisation of the deity Ganapati invites immediate parallels with activist ideals for the Hindu community, and thus feeds into Hindutva influenced images of Ram as the ideal Hindu man. This seems to be distinct from the ‘passive’ images of the cow, which as Pinney argues have striking parallels for chromolithographs of Mahatma Gandhi, figurated with national heroes (Pinney 1995c).

Whilst the warrior image of Ganapati provides earlier examples of the ‘martialisation’ of Hindu deities - antecedents to, though not necessarily directly informing, the changes of contemporary images of Ram under the influence of Hindutva - there appears to be a dissonance in readings between the two martial figures of Ganapati and Ram in their temporal contexts. The martial Ganapati seemed more to be an allegorical message against British colonialism, particularly at the turn of the century, rather than a direct allusion to the Muslim subject. However, bearing in mind the vacillations between anti-Muslim and anti-British messages as explored in Chapter Two, it is arguable as to how definitive anti-colonial allusions were. Perhaps, the *vighna* is best seen as an abstract combination of obstacles that prevented justice and sovereignty for the majority populace, in this case, Hindu. However, in contemporary indigenous narratives of the festival’s history, the national associations of the festival, and thus interpretations of the warrior *murti*, are primary to communalist readings.

As Kapur (1993) describes in her essay, the Ram deity in Hindutva iconography has been endowed with Kshatrya warrior-like features, given an *ugra* visage which does not address the viewer, but looks away inviting the viewer to gaze with him in the direction of an assumed enemy. This contrasts markedly with the benign, almost androgynous representation of Ram meeting the gaze of the viewer. With the example of the Ganapati *murti* in the 1890s, the deity is also shown with an angry and active pose, but this time, the enemy is shown, personified in the form of a demon or an animal. However, perhaps due to a combination of the multiple dimensions of the festival context, the dispersal of *mandals*, and a less regulated and saturated media realm at the turn of the century, such versions of the *murti* did not result in being the hegemonic form of representation for the deity. In fact, in recent years, Hindu revivalists have aspired towards recalling orthodox versions of the Ganapati *murti*, as stipulated in the *Puranas*. Indeed, it appears that *mandap* tableaux around the *murti* of Ganapati are the predominant sites for contemporary socio-political commentary and allegories, as I elaborate below. It also appears to be the case that visual or allegorical politics have reached a crescendo in recent years due to the compact and complex interconnections between performance, lithographs, print-

media, television and film in a media-saturated domain (see Chapter Seven). Hegemonic representations have been effected by Hindutva parties through their broad and multiple political strategies, spanning the use of *rath yatras*, video, audio-cassettes, print-media and to a lesser extent, yet no less potent, television.⁴ This is a complex which Pinney has described as 'televisual politics' (Pinney 1995a: 4). Despite media saturation in contemporary India, the performative event as a site of activation still remains significant.

Nonetheless, warrior-like images of Ganapati persisted from the 1890s, and spread throughout the region. Other later models also reveal interesting developments - the Sakhalipir Talim Rashtriya Maruti Mandal (established 1919), formerly associated with a *talim* (gymnasium) in Pune, has a four-armed Ganapati in a white chemise typical of earlier wrestlers, and sports a watch as one might find in chromolithographs of Chandrashekhar Azad as informed by a *mandal* member (illustrations 13-14). The Jai Bajrang Tarun Mandal in Shukarwar Peth (established 1907, illustration 12) shows a muscular, standing Ganapati in shorts, ripping apart his heart to reveal Ram and Sita as one might find in representations of the deity, Hanuman. It appears that in this case, the *murti* is blended with dramatic themes: with allegorical references to the *Ramayana* in which Hanuman shows undying devotion to the Indian heroes, Ram and Sita. But here, instead of Hanuman, a martial and muscle-bound image of Ganapati is portrayed. Such evidence also points to the political usage of deities of Hanuman, Maruti, or Bajrang as one of Ram's loyal and strong supporter for disseminating associated national allegories for festival participants. I return to the prevalence and political significance of *talims* as well as dramatic excerpts from the epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in the festival below.

Other early martial representations of Ganapati include the Narasimha Samaj Karyalaya Ganapati in Nagpur which shows a six-armed Ganapati on a tiger homologous to the goddess, Durga, spearing a demon, arguably allegorical of the overthrow of British rule (*Citramai Jagat* 1922, illustration 15). The Bharata Vaishnava Samaj from Malad in 1925 shows a Ganapati dressed in military clothes spearing a tiger or a lion (*Citramai Jagat* 1925, illustration 16). The Jummadada Vyayamamandir Ganapati in Baroda of 1923 depicts a four-armed Ganapati standing on top of a demon on the floor with a spear (*Citramai Jagat* 1923, illustration 18). The Jummadada Vyayamashala Ganapati in Baroda of 1924, possibly the same *mandal*, also depicts a four-armed Ganapati attacking a demon (*Citramai Jagat* 1924, illustration 17). Although I was not able to get contextual information for these historical *mandals*, one can reasonably suppose that the representations were attuned to the socio-political developments of the time, particularly as to public expressions of nationalism.

Other photographs show Ganapati assuming the characteristics of political figures. The Ganapati *murti* is made with recognisably human features, such that the divine is made more earthly, and the earthly is further sanctified. The Nagpur Rashtriya Utsavamandala Ganapati of 1917 shows what appears to be Ganapati dressed in Tilak's dress, holding a flag and surrounded by two lions (*Citramai Jagat* 1917). The Mumbai Suprasiddha Citrakar tableau shows a regal Ganapati sitting in front of Bharatamata holding up a flag in 1924 (*Citramai Jagat* 1924; illustration 19). Later unaccredited pictorial evidence available with the artist, Pradeep Madhuskar, likely to be from the 1940s, exists of Ganapati dressed in military gear as Subhas Chandra Bose, one leg on a step and holding up a flag. Another shows Ganapati wearing the Nehru cap and suit.

One finds evidence of the widespread and variant influences of the prominent older *mandals* and their *murtis* as found in Pune throughout the countryside - a testament to the readership of journals and newspapers like the *Citramai Jagat*, and the interconnections between cities and villages in the early part of this century. As far as evidence permits, it would seem that the 1890s, 1900s, 1920s and 1940s are particularly potent periods for anti-colonial nationalist messages disseminated by *mandap* tableaux. Although not a cohesive overview due to the sheer number of *mandals* and lack of thorough historical sources, these periods correspond to intensely political and anti-colonial periods in India's history. These include parallel incidents and initiatives to the respective periods, such as the spurt of agitations undertook by Tilak in the 1890s, the widespread criticism of the colonial government after Lord Curzon's attempts to bifurcate the state of Bengal in 1905 and the Swadeshi movement (1903-8), the aftermath of World War I, particularly with the spread of the Non-Cooperation movement (1920-22) and later in the 1930s, the Civil Disobedience movement, and the impact of the Quit India Movement from 1942 (Chaudhari 1996). Space does not allow me to concentrate on these political movements at length, only to note, as I have argued in Chapter Four, the antagonistic public field, where considered 'seditious' and aggressive activities against the state were met with a barrage of prohibitive, punitive and accommodating measures as hegemonic authorities worked to extend the consent of their rule, often resorting to violent coercion at times of crisis.

Evidently, the *murti* has served as a visual and conceptual vehicle of 'hidden transcripts' (Scott 1989, 1990) in the performative and collective occasion, however paradoxical the conjunction of the visible and the hidden might sound. This paradox alludes to the veiled political symbolism that religious stories provided in the visual field. Hidden transcript is not intended to convey the idea of it being evident to some exclusive few, and hidden to others. Indeed, such representations have been the

subject of heated debate in many colonial circles. The point is that it was not so explicitly obvious, and the message adaptable to suit the opportune occasion. As opposed to clearly propositional arts, the religious trope had the advantage of being at once religious, yet imparting a political message. Whilst being of religious concerns, the *murti* also served as a site for the performance of socio-political commentary. Even though understood as an emblem of retaliation against the colonial powers, due to the unstable and provisional nature of the religio-political visual iconography, incriminating evidence was not always enough for colonial prohibition. Nor indeed, would the British have immediately done so, due to their cautious treatment of the religious matters of Indian communities, particularly *murtis* of deities.

It is not surprising, due to the intricate entanglement with such martial Ganapati *murtis* and anti-colonial politics, that such representations were not deemed necessary after independence. Indeed, the earlier Ganapati *murtis* are still venerated and respected, but seem to hold more historical value than devotional intimacy. They stand as significant relics of the nation's emergence in the past, but other more conventional *murtis* seem to be preferred by devotees in contemporary times. I have not heard of such warrior *murtis* being made after the period of colonial rule. This is not to assume that the *murti* has not shown innovations in post-independence years, nor indeed in Peshwas times. It is known that the ruler, Madhava Peshwas, had made a *murti* out of blue sapphires, known as the Neelmanjach ('Blue Beads') in the eighteenth century (Parasnisi 1921: 9), anticipating the wholesale inventions and innovations of the Ganapati *murti* form in the twentieth century. Restrictions on space do not allow me to comment on the multiple innovations made by *murtikars* (artists) in contemporary times, particularly in Mumbai. Innovations tend to be according to precedents set in *pauranic* texts. In recent years, however, the Ganapati *murti* has, to much controversy, assumed, for instance, the features of the actor, Rakesh Khanna, the cricketer, Kapil Dev, and even an Arab for the Gulf migrant Hindus. The latter was declared as so offensive, presumably because of its Muslim connotations, that the *murti* form was banned by the Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray in the 1980s (see Chapter Eight). More religious fusions, as with the mixture of Ganapati's features with that of Krishna, Vishnu and other deities are more readily acceptable. Judging by other illustrations of Ganapati *murtis* in *Citramai Jagat*, signs of fusing Ganapati's image with the attributes of other gods such as Durga, and Krishna have been practised for a considerable amount of time, and are not just recent manifestations.

The *Utsava* and the Inter-ocular Public Field

Contemporary *mandap* tableaux around the main *murti*, exemplify both visual and, along with audio-taped narratives, performative roles. In historical times, they seemed to have played a marginal role to other activities in the festival, but nonetheless, show the influences of surrounding activities. The *utsava* could consist of an arena of lectures, debates, *pravacans* (religious discourses on sacred verses from the *Vedas*, *Puranas*, *Upanishads*, *Bhaktisutras* and the like), *kirtans* (narration based on stories from the *Puranas* and history blended with poetry and music with the motives to impart a moral message), *melas* (groups performing song, drama, martial displays and parades), dramas, *bhajans* (devotional songs), music groups, and, from the 1920s, films. Judging from historical accounts, it was *melas* rather than *mandap* tableaux per se that effected what Vashta (1992) has called *deshbhaktipar kalavishkar* or creative patriotism. Even though tableaux aesthetics were important, they were of more significance once placed in a suitable context of song, narration, drama and parade - that is, a milieu that activates their presence to be of meaningful import. As Vashta relates, '*mela* was the audio-visual medium of the times, which greatly influenced the minds of people' (Vashta 1992: 134). *Melas* derived from other folk art forms, and 'had portable sets, chorus songs, dances, enthusiastic participants, and a lot of sarcasm which was understood by all and made people laugh' (Vashta 1992: 134). They also enacted well-known stories inflected with socio-political messages, due to the impact it had on audiences:

'A lecture on the inhumanity of child marriage is less effective than when the same problem is presented in a Marathi play called *Sarada*, as the latter has the potential of touching the hearts of people. The songs from the play were memorable, and the meanings of those songs were etched in the hearts of the people. No wonder British rulers were apprehensive about the play, *Kichak Vadh*' (Vashta 1992: 134).

The latter was a story from the *Mahabharata*, in which Kichak, the brother-in-law of the king of Virata, tried to abduct Draupadi, who was seen as a symbol of Indian womanhood and thus a personification of India. Unbeknownst to him, Yudhistra had dressed up as Draupadi. As a result of Kichak's transgressions, Bhima vowed to kill Kichak. Pinney also reports on the story being the subject of a series of Ravi Varma paintings, which were reproduced widely through chromolithographs and postcards throughout Mumbai and the Deccan area from the 1900s (Pinney 1995c: 11). Indeed, allegorical parallels of demons and tyrant or colonial rule were often quite explicit in *mela* songs, as with the following lyrics: 'The reign of Ravana was the reign of the devil himself. Curzon's rule is no better' (cited in Vashta 1992: 134).

Even nationalist campaigners, such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, established a *mela* in 1900 known as the Mitra Mela. It was formed with the purpose to perform during the Ganapati *utsava*, but was also a hive of revolutionary activities. As Vashta argues, it was called Mitra Mela, meaning Friends' Mela, so that the colonial government could not immediately ban it for seditious activities (Vashta 1992: 135).⁵ However, by 1901, the group became renowned for their use of religious stories for disseminating political messages. For instance, a poet called Govinda had composed a dialogue between Ram and Ravana. Outwardly, it appeared the same age-old tale out of the *Ramayana* where Ram saves Sita from her abduction by the demon king, Ravana. But reception of it was in terms of Sita as a personification of the concept of freedom, Ram the Indian warrior, and Ravana, the tyrant colonial ruler (Vashta 1992: 135). These kinds of dramas proved so effective that Savarkar himself penned a few dialogues. He wrote in his autobiography:

'Never before had anybody preached patriotism like the Mitra Mela in modern times. The whole of Maharashtra would be inspired by hearing the fiery speeches. Even young children were able to spread the message of patriotism. So effective were they, that the British later confiscated many of these songs' (cited in Vashta 1922: 136).

There was a substantial increase in *Ganeshotsava mandals* in the 1940s, the *melas* being seen as a training grounds for physical combat which increasingly came to the fore with the Quit India Movement from 1942. Several of these *melas* were attached to *talims* (gymnasiums), evidence of which persists in the names of older *mandals* such as the Sakhalipir Talim Rashtriya Maruti Mandal mentioned above. Particular *mandals* in Pune gained a reputation for placing importance on nationalist campaigns. These included *mandals* attached to *talims* such as the Nana Peth Doke Talim, Amar Jyoti Mandal and Nagarkar Talim (*Saptahik Sakal*, September 25, 1993). Just as Freitag notes the prevalence of *akhadas* (gymnasiums) in colonial Uttar Pradesh (Freitag 1989: 225), so in Maharashtra, *talims* were often found connected to *Ganeshotsava melas* which themselves were linked to *mandals*. It is well-known that the RSS encouraged educational and physical exercises since its formation in 1925 (Basu et al 1993; Hansen 1996b). The proximity of gymnasium, organisations, *melas* and *mandals* alludes to the politicised and militant arenas in the public domain. Physicality, masculinity and militancy allowed for an activist arena against perceptions of an emasculated nation (Nandy 1983; Hansen 1996b: 147).

Here one can see the potency of a cultural politics foci with regards to historical India as opposed to a focus on constitutional politics and polity that concentrates on the statements and acts of leading campaigners, politicians, and legislators in order to

try and get close to a city's history and political culture. The Ganapati *utsava* proved to be one vehicle amongst many others that managed to negotiate the ramifications of constitutional politics with everyday practices within communities. It is the articulation of politics pervaded with the spirit of play and devotion that seems to be effective in spreading a particular message throughout the populace.

Similarly, despite the propagation of a more 'effeminate' type of politics (Katrak 1992), love and devotion to the selfless saint-like persona of Gandhi who often developed 'symbolic' strategies to oppose colonial rule propelled the nationalist movement forward - an attribute that was considered paramount to his clever and shrewd bargaining with colonial and fellow Congress figures. Delineating these poles of action is not to impose an opposition between 'symbolic' and 'real', 'irrational' and 'rational', nor suggest one as more true than another, but note contrasting emphases. In effect, the stress on the 'symbolic', whether it be the mass agitation of Tilak or Gandhi, both of which differed in their personal approaches, was instrumental in the spread of nationalist campaigning throughout the populace. Even though Gandhi did not have as direct an involvement in the Ganapati *utsava* as had Tilak, he did use the festival as a platform to make speeches. After Tilak's death in 1920, the festival was sustained by its own momentum amongst the populace, as well as promoted in other rural and urban localities by lesser known community leaders. Gandhi's prominence in India's political culture from the 1920s in particular was phenomenal, such that Gandhi's persona and activities influenced a wide sector of society, including the Ganapati *utsava*.

It is feasible to posit the *melas* along with the dramatic arts as precursors, if not conterminous to, the Ganapati *mandap* tableaux with movement, narration, sound and lighting effects. The influence of theatre can be seen both in choice of themes and style of presentations. Whereas there is little evidence of early domestic shrines, records exist of the kind of Ganapati celebrations held in Peshwas times. It appears that Peshwas tradition of actors dressed up in costumes befitting scenes around the Ganapati *murti* pre-empts the use of mannequins in tableaux found in present-day Maharashtra and elsewhere. The first recorded indications of the Ganapati *utsava* being celebrated in a quasi-public way was in the eighteenth century under the patronage of the Peshwas rulers in Pune. The Peshwas had a special room designed and built for the celebration of the Ganapati *utsava* called the Ganapati Ranga-Mahal, in their palace, Shaniwarwada (Parasnisi 1921: 9). For the festival, the room was elaborately decorated and entertainment was provided by the likes of musicians, dancers, and religious sermons (*kathas*). Artisans were employed for the task of decorating the palace and shrine with lamps, mirrors and paintings of sceneries. Servants too were dressed up in costume for the occasion. Although I have not come

across documentation of what the actors might do once placed in front of the Ganapati *murti*, judging by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century records of dramas and illustrations (Ganachari 1994), one can reasonably suppose, that they performed or read out scenarios from well-known stories, most probably from the epics. Representations of grand palace structures, reminiscent of Peshwas palaces, in *mandap* tableaux also became widespread in colonial times.

Later the dramatic arts, under the influence of westernised Parsi theatre, propagated the use of sets and proscenium arches. Pinney notes the parallels between such theatrical sets and chromolithographs. The curtained proscenium arch has also been incorporated in *mandap* tableaux design as 'visual signifiers of theatrical space' (Pinney 1995a: 5), likely to be as a result of influences of both theatre sets and chromolithographs. Other forms of more mobile drama, as with *melas*, were also key to the development of *mandap* artworks. The folk arts too had a definitive influence on *mandap* tableaux as they did with *melas* with their narratives, 'frozen' action, skits on national and social issues, myths and so forth. Evidently, conversations between different artistic forms were instanced, which informed the emergent aesthetics of *mandap* displays. The influence of theatrical traditions are directly evident in the Tarunaikyamela from Kalyan with human figures representing the *Five Races of Mankind* (*Pancrangi Dunya*) in 1929 (*Citramai Jagat* 1929). A man dressed in European clothes stands next to natives of India and Africa. However, it is difficult to interpret whether the picture is a parody of the colonial situation, or intended as an adventure in exoticism and worldly knowledge. The Tilak Rashtriya Vidhyala in Khamgaon of 1926 shows a painted cloth backdrop as one would find in theatrical performances (*Citramai Jagat* 1926). The Akola Sarvajanik Shri Ganeshotsava of 1913 depicts Ganapati sitting against an alcove frieze flanked by two hardboard cut-outs of Riddhi and Siddhi (*Citramai Jagat* 1913, illustration 20).

Ganachari comments on the use of 'drop-scene' curtains to spread anti-British feelings, an idea founded by G. B. Phansalkar in Marathi theatre. The Central Investigation Department (CID) report describes the words on the curtain, 'Have patriotism, don't take articles from foreign countries and don't drink' and the words were interposed by three pictures:

'The first picture depicted an European talking to a Marwari trader. It was meant to show the Europeans who first came to India and obtained information on trade and commerce. The second showed the Peshwa sitting on the throne with half-drawn sword, flanked by his Sardars, and an European kneeling before him with his cap off. It showed how 'humble and crouching' they were initially. The third portrayed an European sitting in the carriage being pulled by a Brahmin. It was

meant to portray the contemporary state in which children of the soil were being treated as beasts' (Ganachari 1994: 588).

Not surprisingly the curtains were confiscated, and Phansalkar and the painter were reprimanded. Although not coming across any explicitly political use of such drop-curtains, early illustrations in *Citramai Jagat* show their widespread use in several *mandap* tableaux, which is continued to this day.

There were distinct types of drama subjects performed in the festival - historical (*aitihasik*), religio-mythological or devotional (*dharmaik/pauranik*), and 'social' genres. Historical plays included topics such as *Shivsambhav*, *Shapsambhram*, *Shakuntala* and, very commonly, *Shivaji*. Mythological plays tended to show the influences of the theme of *Dashavatara* - that is, the ten avatars of Vishnu. Social plays engaged with themes of a contemporary relevance. Other more original plays looked at topical issues, and experimental topic matters, such as village life, the theme of war, life in a chawl and so forth. (Kamat 1992: 155).⁶ Such typologies of plays laid the basis for *mandap* typologies. One can also see these categories operating within film since the beginnings of indigenous production in India around the turn of the century. Plays would often be accompanied by other literature such as song pamphlets, leaflets, and advertisements, presenting a rich field of media forms.⁷ This situation is even sharper today as photographic, video and film projections are incorporated into *mandap* tableaux, and scripts and sounds are provided for *mandap* tableaux by artists from the theatre and film worlds.

Film and magic lantern slides were used to develop fresh methods of propaganda in colonial times, particularly in the 1930s (Barrier 1976: 117; Chandra et al 1989: 279). Whereas film was largely in the hands of colonial powers due to their expense and limited availability, magic lantern slides were very much part of Congress anti-colonial strategies.⁸ In addition to news sheets and hand bills, magic lantern slides were used to show 'controversial scenes or "Boycott British Goods" labels surreptitiously affixed to mail articles' (Barrier 1976: 117). Some of the magic lantern slides showed scenes such as a child being flogged by an East India Company Employee. Another had a slogan: 'Ruling and Sucking Blood are the functions of the same government' (Barrier 1976: 117). Other technologies which were utilised to disseminate patriotic songs including the popular anthem, *Vande Mataram*, were the sound recording industry, talking machines, cylinder and disc recordings at the turn of the century (Kinnear 1994: 61). However, I have not come across any details as to the use of these technologies in the historical *utsava*. Incorporation of new media, such as sound, lighting, video, and slide projections are a common feature of several *mandals* in contemporary times. It is conceivable, judging by *mandal* members innovations, and

the collusion of political activists and the Ganapati *utsava*, that these media strategies were also used for, if not the *mandap* tableaux themselves, the historical festival at large. It remains indisputable that audio and (audio-)visual forms and technologies as well as the political dynamics of early twentieth century India, were undergoing rapid changes and transformations which also filtered into the *Ganeshotsava* performative milieux.

Early *Ganeshotsava Mandap* Tableaux

The *mandap* tableaux in addition to enhancing the display, acted as a socio-political ‘spillage zone’ for subject which were not deemed suitable for the representation of the Ganapati *murti* itself, as with mundane subject matter. Decorative and attractive sets are cited to have caught the popular imagination in Mumbai around the late 1930s (*Saptahik Sakal*, September 25, 1993). Even though *pauranik* scenes such as *Vishvarup darshan* (*Scenes of the world*), *Samudra manthana* (*Krishna churning the amrit*) and stories from the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* persist to this day, the style of presentation show notable changes. For instance, the size and scale of contemporary *mandap* tableaux tend to be much larger and more extravagant. Further, there appears to be more influence of ‘cinematic realism’ with contemporary mannequins than historical ones. By cinematic realism, I refer to endeavours to present as realistic a mannequin as possible, so that it appears credible, alongside the considerable influence of prototype models from chromolithographs and cinema on the displayed models.

Plants used to form a more staple part of the *mandap* design than they do now, for cardboard cut-outs and lighting effects seem to fill in for the comparative lack of greenery use in contemporary times. Many small *mandals* began to show novel scenes of Ganapati sitting on a wooden bench in a garden, for instance, using the simplest items at hand to create a lush scene - flowers, pots, lamps, and, before the widespread use of electricity, gas lamps (*Saptahik Sakal*, September 25, 1993). The image of Ganapati was traditionally kept with a mirror at the back so as, even though physical *pradakshina* could not be conducted, at least a visual *pradakshina* could be effected. One sees this tradition being continued in some of the older *mandals* of Girgaum, such as the Brahma Sabha, but on the whole, it does not seem to have persisted. Nonetheless, mirrors enhance the aesthetic quality of the scene, and have been used in creative ways in newer *mandals* as well, but not necessarily for the purpose of a visual *pradakshina*.

Recollections of national histories are evident in the Parashram Motar Savinhsa Ganapati of Kanhar in 1926 depicting a tiered tableaux with Ganapati and other gods shown in various settings and at the bottom, a figure of Shivaji kneeling in front of .

Ramdas (*Citramai Jagat* 1926). The Krishnaji Ganu More Ganapati from Grahagar in 1929 shows figures of Shivaji and his mother around the figure of Ganapati (*Citramai Jagat* 1929). The presentations of Shivaji's coronations have become even more popular in 1995, particularly as the Shiv Sena had just recently won the State Legislative Assembly elections. Shivaji's coronations was explicitly identified with the coming into state power of the Shiv Sena, in particular its leader, Bal Thackeray (see Chapter Eight).

In the 1940s, large *pandals* began to be constructed out of bamboo, and the *purdah* started to be used (*Saptahik Sakal*, September 25, 1993). Quite feasibly, this was with the motif to shade *pandal* activities from the eyes of the British, but nowadays the *purdah* serves a more commercial interest in that it entices visitors to come in to the *pandal*, and thus offer a donation, or in the case of competitions in a busy locality, it secludes new *mandap* designs from other competitors. Signs of topical incursions as a means to draw more public attention have been common from the inception of the *sarvajanik utsava*. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, even nationalist campaigners like Bhausaheb Rangari (accredited with the first public *Ganeshotsava mandal* in 1893 in Pune), were considering sensationalist measures to draw audiences such as presenting caged tigers around the figure of Ganapati. Signs of innovation of decorations are particularly evident in the Belgaum Maharashtra Sangha Ganapati of 1918 where Ganapati is shown riding a bike (*Citramai Jagat* 1918, illustration 22); and the Khamgaum Ganapati of 1929 depicting railway tracks and houses around the Samoril Railway (*Citramai Jagat* 1929, illustration 23). The 1923 tableau in Pune of the Aryan Cinema Ganapati shows a grand white building with stairs leading up to the sanctum sanctorum exemplifying the use of an entertainment house for a religious occasion (*Citramai Jagat* 1923).

Evidently, unique presentations of the Ganapati *murti* and tableaux are not just a recent phenomena, although admittedly, they have escalated in popularity particularly in the last two decades. Designs and subject matter of *mandap* tableaux were influenced by a complex of performative arts and topical concerns. In colonial times, the *utsava* encompassed multiple sites, some of which with the potential for subterfuge particularly with regards to 'hidden transcripts' of Indians overcoming British, and signs of nationhood as demonstrated by *murti* representations, *mandap* tableaux, and displays of national emblems such as flags and the figure of Bharatmata (illustration 19).

Post-Independence Developments

After independence, the immediate cause of campaigning for nationalism as a right to govern one's own nation of people, was no longer required.⁹ Despite the horrors caused by Partition as the flip-side to this celebratory event, Ganapati *mandap* tableaux in Maharashtra tended to emphasise messages of joy and celebration. For a few years, social activities took a back-seat to the entertainment values of the festive occasion. In general, the Ganapati *utsava* lost its nationalist moorings, and became a more religious and entertaining occasion. As Rajagopal comments on the nation at large:

'Since independence, the task of 'development' has been understood as predominantly economic, with culture being treated as a residual category. With the labours of the state directed elsewhere, 'national culture' has largely meant official propaganda indifferent to its reception' (Rajagopal 1994: 1659).

Vernacular culture, as exemplified by the Ganapati *utsava*, was largely ignored by Congress politicians and activists at the centre after independence as a site for political work. This effectively left the festival to be utilised by other cultural or political organisations as happened with the Shiv Sena from the late 1960s. The Shiv Sena saw the Ganapati *utsava*, along with other Maharashtrian icons such as Shivaji, as a means to assert parochial politics in Mumbai (see Chapter Eight). Those *mandals* in Pune who had a strong connection with Congress politics since the colonial period, as with the Sakhalipir Talim Rashtriya Maruti Mandal and Sat Tote Howd Mandal, continued their hold in the city. Combined with the Congress monopoly of the commercial Pune Festival, arranged at the same time as the Ganapati *utsava*, primarily to attract tourists to the city, and the affinity of the President, Tatasaheb Godse, of Dagdu Seth Halvai, the largest and most popular *Ganeshotsava mandal* in Maharashtra, to Congress politics, Congress monopoly of the Ganapati *utsava* continued in the city. This predominance is related to the limited inroads of Shiv Sena politics, and the comparatively less communalist relations in the city. The BJP-Shiv Sena victory at the State Legislative Assembly elections in 1995 is largely attributed to electoral strategies (Guru 1995; Palshikar 1996; Hansen 1996a; see Chapter Eight). It is notable, that despite the works of political parties, at times of national crisis as happened with the border skirmishes with China (1962) and wars with Pakistan (1964, 1971), several even non-partisan *mandals* demonstrated nationalist themes in their artworks (see below).

After independence, *melas* began to be regarded as fairly anachronistic having lost their function to propagate nationalist values. With the demise of *melas*, folk plays and amateur theatre continued during the festival, now known as Worker's Theatre which

were groups of amateurs gathering together to put together stage performances (Kamat 1992: 151). The workers that constituted the Worker's Theatre had migrated from the Konkan region and Sahyadri Ghats to look for better work opportunities. Examples include the Navahind Balmitra Mandal in Chinchpokli, an area renowned for its Ganapati celebrations. Other groups had formed in mill areas and Girgaum including the Pragati Kala Mandir, Ganesh Kala Mandir, Dattaraja Kala Mandir, Kumar Kala Mandir, Arun Kala Mandir, Nutan Natyalaya and Sahakar Natya Mandal (Kamat 1992: 153). In fact, it can be reasonably postulated that, even though folk plays are not as popular as they used to be, any extant *mandal* with a Natya or Kala in its name started off as an amateur theatre group which would make a special effort to arrange entertainment programmes in the Ganapati *utsava* period. Most of these were mobile groups which moved from chawl to chawl. Some of these people ended up excelling in set designs. Many of these artists began to pursue a professional career in the arts.

Around 1970, however, the trend of Worker's Theatre began to wane. This was due to a number of reasons, the main ones being due to municipal corporations levying taxes on stages erected in public places, chawls being replaced by modern buildings with no communal grounds, thus constituting an obstacle to the levels of increased traffic, and the increased popularity of films. Nowadays, such plays are performed by groups for competitive occasions organised by Mill Owner's Associations, labour welfare centres, inter-school, inter-college, interstate competitions, radio and television and so forth (Kamat 1992: 158).

As a result of the fascination for moving images, moving models began to be used in the late 1940s and early 1950s - first in Tulshibagh, Pune with a scene influenced by the movie, *Ram Vanas*. This scene relates the story of Ram being sent to Vanas by Kaikee, Bharat's mother and the step-mother of Ram. The movie, *Ram Vanas*, had an enormous impact on developing people's interest for *pauranic* themes again, and many *mandals* created this scene for their Ganapati tableaux (*Saptahik Sakal*, September 25, 1993).

According to residents in Girgaum and *mandal* records, the first moving scene in Mumbai was created by the Balmohan Mandal in Girgaum in 1952, again a testament to the close allegiances between this part of Mumbai and the developments made in Pune. The establishment of this *mandal* was in 1947 by local residents with their ancestry in the Konkan region - the late Chintaman Potdar, Haraschandra Patil, Kamlakar Patil, Kamlakar Pethe, Prabhakar Pethe and Kishore Rahut - in the Varik House. In 1952, Chintaman Potdar constructed a tableau with moving models (*calat citra*) with slightly moving figures of the Sherpa, Tensing, and Edmund Hillary on Mount Everest. Afterwards, mythological stories were chosen. In 1962-63, the

sculptures and moving sceneries were made slightly bigger, making the present platform insufficient, and so everything was moved to a larger platform. Moving models were hugely influential. A later example of 1956 at the Chinchpokli Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava *mandal* shows a painted photograph of Ganapati flying on a large Garuda with *sant* Tukaram, as was depicted in the very successful Marathi film of the times. Ganapati sits alongside Tukaram as he descends to the heavens, and people look on at them with awe and reverence (illustration 21).

In a bid to innovate and draw more visitors, the more extravagant tableaux involved 'trick scenes' of moving images which, due to the need for expensive sets, music and costume, were almost invariably executed by the more affluent *mandals*. This entailed a transposition of 'tricks' executed in drama and seen on film, for the *mandap* platform. Several of the set designers ended up earning names for themselves including Ashok Palekar, Tulsiram Gavade, Rangankar, Shyam Adarkar, Pandurang Kothare and Junnakar Painter. As some of these set designers worked in theatre and the film industry, styles of construction would be comparable for both dramatic forms.

In the 1960s in general, with the professional help of artists, larger sets and plaster of Paris or clay idols and figures were used to decorate scenes. As sets got more 'busy', to minimise expenditure some of the figures were made as hard-board cut-outs, similar to cinema hoardings. Prominent artists who took the initiative to make large models included Arvind Shedge, N. N. Vagh, B. R. Kherkar, Anant Vaikar, Vivek Khatavkar, Prakash Gosvami and Dinaneth Veling. Lighting today is an essential part of the *mandap* aesthetic, and people would prefer to go through raging crowds in the evening time to see the lights as much as they would do *darshan* of the *murti* and see the decorations. Since the late 1970s, light effects were integrated with sound as one might find in a film. In recent years, *mandals* have paid through the nose on recording studios and theatre/film practitioners to construct small film-like shows dedicated to Ganapati but for the visitors.

Bollywood played, and continues to play, a key part in the Ganapati *utsava*. Film stars might be invited to opening days, *mandal* programmes, award ceremonies, or, as with key politicians, figure as part of the *pandal* scenes. As already commented, artists who might be involved in the production of sculptures and tableaux scenes during the season of the Ganapati *utsava* sometimes work for the film industry, designing and painting studio sets. Another channel through which the influence of Bollywood is felt is through their film outputs. Scenes from films might be copied for tableaux, or the image of actors might be blended with the *murti* of Ganapati by artists. Hindi film music also plays a prominent part in the Ganapati *utsava* celebrations. From the 1980s, cassette tapes have been specially produced for the season of the Ganapati *utsava* (Manuel 1993). Several of them adapt popular film tunes to lyrics about

Ganapati or for the worship of *arati* as with the songs, *Tu chij badi hai masta masta* (*You are a very intoxicating thing*) and *Aja meri gadi me baith ja* (*Come, sit in my car*) (*The Metropolis on Saturday*, September 11, 1994). These practices, however, are not always appreciated by the more orthodox members of society.

Since the mid-1970s, the gangster underworld has vied to make attractive *pandals* to win the favour of visitors and accrue social status, even if they be on the run from Police authorities. In the 1990s, there are around forty five *mandals* which are financed by elements of the underworld (*The Metropolis on Saturday*, September 11, 1994). These are located around central Mumbai, and the eastern suburbs of Ghatkapor, Chembur and Mulund. Two areas are especially renowned in Mumbai for gangsters collecting donations for the Ganapati *utsava* - Matunga in central Mumbai led by the smuggler, Vardarajan Mudaliar or 'Vardhabhai', and Tilaknagar or Chembur in the eastern suburbs led by the don, Rajendra Nikhalje alias 'Chotan Raja'. In 1993, the latter had constructed an extravagant set based on the Sanchi stupa and the Ajanta caves. This large theme park spilled on to the surrounding public roads. In 1994, plans were made to construct a model of the Rameshvar temple in Tamil Nadu - the site where Ram is reputed to have left for Sri Lanka in the epic, the *Ramayana*. In 1995, a large almost life-size replica of the Gateway of India and Red Fort (Lal Qila) was constructed (see Chapter Nine, illustrations 120, 125).

Due to the increased vigilance of the CID since the 1992-3 riots and bomb blasts in Mumbai, and up until 1995, the use of TADA with which a suspected 'anti-national' could be detained in prison until s/he is proven innocent in court, many of these underworld dons have kept a low profile as compared to former years.¹⁰ Police authorities hoped to put a stop to their involvement in the Ganapati *utsava*. In 1994, this cleansing operation was quite effective, but malpractice in extortion rackets continued, especially with the involvement of the Shiv Sena (see Chapter Eight). This practice is more evident in Mumbai than Pune. The practices have left a bitter taste with local businesses and residents for the Ganapati *utsava* celebrations. Some complain of the vast waste of money on the festival - money literally down the drain which could serve a better social purpose. Regulating organisations, such as the Brihanmumbai Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samanvay Samiti (Greater Mumbai Public Ganesha Festival Co-ordination Committee) which was set up in 1982 to deal expressly with such criticisms of the festival. They have formed part of the general spirit of revivalism since the 1980s of Tilak's ideals and times.

Despite commercial trends and the involvement of gangster rackets, socio-political commentary continued to be made after India's independence, but largely through *mandap* tableaux instead of the Ganapati *murtis*. Increased finance allowed for extravagant sets, featuring audio narratives influenced by theatre and film,

effectively constituting a dramatisation of visual forms without the live drama, although moving and ‘trick’ scenes went some way to compensating for the stasis of the scenes. The tableaux tended to cover widespread topics, generally connected to the progress and crises of the nation. Although the narratives are not available, I have come across several photographic examples of elaborate sets which look as if they were taken from a theatrical or filmic episode.

Around the time of the troubles between Pakistan and India over east Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971-2, the Pehli Sutar Galli Sarvajanik Utsava Mandal constructed a tableau of Ganapati against a backdrop of a map of India, a circle of Indira Gandhi around the area of what is now Bangladesh, a picture of warring soldiers and aeroplanes to the side, and a tall building to the other side. In front stand various three-dimensional figures - a man in Indian dress standing with a garland of flowers in his hands, the goddess Durgamata or what could conceivably be Bharatamata, crushing a man under her foot, and two men dressed in western clothes standing to the viewers' right. The latter probably alludes to the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, and the Bangladeshi leader, Muzhbhai Rehman. Although no title to the illustration, there are labels, barely visible, at the foot of each of the models (illustration 24).

One can interpret the visual data for a number of themes based on certain themes that persist to this day - the use of a deity to throw off the enemies at times of war, and the comparison between Indian dress and those that have been corrupted by western mores indicated by the contrast in their western formal dress of suit and tie. In this presentation, India is represented as the holier country that has stood steadfast throughout the times (see Chapter Nine).

Another unaccredited tableau dealing with a similar theme depicts Yeshvantrao Chavan with his hand on an Indian soldier's shoulder. A woman to the other side places a *tikka* on his forehead to give him strength and support. To the other side is a scene from the *Ramayana* with a large image of Ravana painted on a backdrop and figures of Hanuman and Ram at the feet of Ganapati (illustration 25).

The contrast in use of the feminine trope is notable (see Chapter Nine). In the previous *mandap* tableau, aside from the inclusion of the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, almost like a figure of Mother India in political power, there is the fierce representation of the female goddess in the form of *shakti* crushing the enemy underfoot.¹¹ In the second tableau, aside from the villagers painted on the backdrop, the female figure is represented in the *sati* form - demure and contained - yet alluding to a more motherly role as an active protector of the honour of India. The practice of placing a *tikka* on the forehead of a soldier ensures that the inner *shakti* of women will be passed on to the men in a time of dire need. According to contemporary informants,

this tableau is more effective in communicating its message than the previous *mandap* tableau. This is primarily for the following reasons - the use of ordinary folk in the scene, the familial qualities between minister, mother and soldier, a more compact composition of figure and background, and the direct juxtaposition of a contemporary and religio-mythological subjects enabling a fusion of political and moral universes. Even though one can only make evaluations based on a second, if not third, removed representation of the actual scene, there is a certain 'homeliness' about the image as compared to the dispersed and 'clinical' figures of the former. Both scenes demonstrate an acceptance of Congress rule, rather than a critique of it as is the contemporary predilection in the area. It is perhaps testimony to the fact that the Shiv Sena were in cohorts with the Congress in the early 1970s (see Chapter Eight). Moreover, the two tableaux represent the effects of national hegemonies of consent when around the time of war with foreign powers, the populace tends to gather around the powers-that-be in a nationalist fervour.

Although it is not possible to provide more contextual information without details of the audio-taped narratives, *mandal* members' aspirations and political affiliations, the above commentary illustrates the use of *mandap* tableaux as mediatory points in the festive context. In this chapter, they have also complemented oral and recorded histories. The tableaux are both reflective and productive of political culture in their reference points and performative milieux, contemporary examples of which I provide in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine.

Types of Contemporary *Mandaps*

Thematic *mandap* tableaux have become widespread in the last couple of decades due to the combination of intensive media coverage, competitions, and substantial funds collected for the displays. According to festival participants, categories of *mandap* themes and designs are discernible. Even though vacillations may be demonstrated in these categorisations, there remain distinct patterns in the spectrum which I outline here. These categorisations of *mandap* tableaux are articulate amongst popular parley, and further congealed by media coverage and competition categories (see Chapter Seven).

Considering first, the forms of the *mandaps*: the biggest determinant in the form of the *mandap* is the space wherein they are constructed, whether it be domestic, public, or temple grounds. Domestic shrines, not surprisingly, are the smallest, and adhere most to traditional designs of a *murti* in the middle of a raised platform (most often a table) with flowers, fruits, surrounded by ritual apparati. Public shrines in Mumbai are located on the sides of roads or large squares, covered in tarpaulin and

other weather-resistant material with entrances and exits for the long queues of people coming to do *darshan* of the *murti*. In Pune, more so than in Mumbai, the *mandaps* are left open for passer-bys during the evening when they are opened up for the public's *darshan*.¹² If the place of *mandap* construction is a *mandir*, there tends to be an ephemeral version of a temple *murti* set in its grand palace (*mahal*) surroundings.

Murtis placed on the *mandap* platform with decoration alone are generally termed 'simple' - that is, simply the *murti*. *Murtis* vary according to size, colour, posture, and the nature of vehicle (not always presented on a *mushaka* - the vehicle traditionally associated with Ganapati as is the *shastrik* sanction). The living vitality of Ganapati is further demonstrated in the vast array of sizes, shapes, colours, attributes, poses and characteristics that the figure of Ganapati appears in. *Murtis* of Ganapatis may be anything from two-handed to ten-handed, one-headed to five-headed, standing, sitting, reclining, in motion, playing an instrument and so forth. They may demonstrate characteristics of other gods, as with the attributes in its hands, its vehicle, its pose and clothing. Sometimes, as has already been accounted, the features of earthly figures are merged with Ganapati's features so that we might find a Peshwas type Ganapati, a Shivaji type Ganapati, and more contentiously, Ganapati blended with modern figures such as the features of Gandhi and Nehru. The latter appear to have become controversial and less common due to increasing critique of the two figures, particularly by non-Congress parties and supporters. Ganapatis may also be made out of an array of novel materials such as coconuts, pearls, coins, buttons and so forth.

In large public *mandaps*, one tends to find two *murtis* - one for the display, and another smaller one for ritual observance. The two *murtis* are generally both immersed in Mumbai, but in Pune, due to the shallowness of the river and comparatively less financial resources, it is only the smaller *murti* that is immersed. This is why in Pune, one tends to still have the *murtis* from the *mandal*'s first year of establishment in existence.

As distinct to 'simple' *mandaps*, there are those that contain a specific narrative. These can be variations of two types - those that depict a single narrative, which tend to be static representations; and those that depict multiple narratives and tend to incorporate moving models and 'trick scenes'. The latter I have termed 'masala' after the description attributed to Hindi film formulas.

Most public *mandap* scenes tend to have sound and sometimes light effects. Others stand 'quiet', with some kind of story written on the sides, accompanied by loud music. Most *mandap* scenes are done in the 'proscenium arch' way - that is, where one looks straight ahead at the scenes. However, in latter years, there are a few adventurous *mandals* which have attempted a 'walk-through' effect rather like a theme

park, where the visitor steps into a series of chambers which eventually lead in to the sanctum sanctorum where the *murti* is placed.

As I have accounted above, there were distinct types of drama subjects one could delineate in theatre groups - historical, religious/mythologicals or devotional (*dharmik/pauranik*) and social. Similarly, with *mandap* tableaux, narrative themes tend to be categorised according to the following schema:

- (i) Religious/mythological (*dharmik/pauranik*) as with scenes depicting stories of the gods. These are largely taken from the two main epics of the *Mahabharata* or *Ramayana* but also other *pauranik* stories where Ganapati might be placed in the midst of other gods or seen in place of other gods, as with narratives of Krishna overcoming the lake serpent king, Kalyamardan, where Krishna is replaced by Ganapati (illustration 41).
- (ii) Historical (*aitihasik*) referring to scenes that have happened according to recent history as with scenes of Shivaji, the Pehwas court, the British in India, freedom fighters and so forth.¹³
- (iii) Topical or 'latest' - that is, containing stories about current news items whether it be the civil war in Kashmir, corruption as with Harshad Mehta's stock market scam, Sukhdev's or the 'god-man' Chandrashekhar's frauds, scandals such as the Jalgaon rape incident in which Congress politicians were implicated with a series of videoed rape scenes in the north of Greater Mumbai, the Latur earthquake, the anti-corruption drives of the Municipal Officer, G. R. Khairnair, the Dubai-based gangster lord, Dawood Ibrahim, operating in Mumbai, the film actor, Sanjay Dutt's, collusion with the Mehmood brothers held responsible for the bomb blasts in Mumbai in March 1993, bomb-spots and riots, the Naina Sahni tandoor murder in which the leader of the Congress Youth Committee murdered his wife by grilling her in a tandoor oven, the Enron power plant, an American-owned power company hoping to build a plant in Maharashtra, and Bal Thackeray and the coming into State Legislative Assembly power of the Bharatiya Janata Party - Shiv Sena alliance in 1995 and so forth (see Chapter Eight).
- (iv) 'Social' referring to the public good or health-related themes as with *mandaps* with scenes delivering messages about cleanliness of the environment, anti-pollution, polio vaccinations, saving water, education, modernity and the need for more job-creation and industrialisation and so forth.
- (v) 'Nationalist' (*rashtriya*) referring to themes with an explicit nationalist message which, for the purposes of analysis, can be broken down further into different kinds of nationalism whether it be explicitly Hindu chauvinistic, 'secular' - that is inclusive of other religions as tends to be the Congress predilection, or regionalist referring specifically to a Maharashtrian sense of heritage and cohesion. Hindu chauvinistic

tableaux tend to prioritise the holiness and integrity of the nation and the Hindu religion. ‘Secular’ ones emphasise the brotherhood between all national religions, primarily, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi and Christian, although see threats coming from ‘outsiders’ as intent on breaking this ‘*bhai-bhai*’ situation (see Chapter Nine).

- (vi) Theme-based as with ‘walk-through’ *mandaps* based on the theme of the Ajanta caves, Nine Planets, Sai Baba’s Mandir at Shirdi and so forth.
- (vii) ‘Entertaining’ or ‘commercial’ - that is, for scenes which entertain as with scenes of circuses, dancers, brightly-lit Ganapatis or what are referred to as ‘disco Ganapatis’ and so forth.

In ‘masala’ *mandap* tableaux, one might find a number of the above components appearing one after the other, as a litany of events to do with India’s history, religious make-up and socio-political scenarios are reeled off. Many of these extravagant tableaux with sound and lighting are considered under the rubric of nationalist or national integration (*rashtriya ekatmata*). Indeed, it is possible to argue that each of the above thematic displays can be subsumed to nationalist categories if we are to consider nationalism as constituted by the nation’s definition of its cultural heritage and distinctiveness. As I show in Chapter Seven on competitions, tableaux which skilfully merge topical matters with a religio-mythological parallel and manage to profess the need to work for national integration are rated highly with *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the emergence of politicised imagery in the festival context, and the dialogue of *mandap* tableaux with other auditory and visual significatory sites in the inter-ocular public field. The political career of the public festival shows a discrepant and uneven involvement in nationalism, but, nonetheless, demonstrated strands which were overwhelmingly nationalist, particularly at times of intensified campaigns and national crisis. Whereas around the turn of the century, the Ganapati *murti* provided a site of innovation and veiled commentary on socio-political aspirations, later more explicit socio-political commentary was provided by illustrative *mandap* tableaux. Indeed, after independence, the tableaux got more and more extravagant and assertive in view of a democratic nation-state. They absorbed influences of other festive activities, as well as responding to the contemporaneous inter-ocular field. On the other hand, Ganapati *murti* representations fell under the sway of revivalists who promulgated the idea that traditional versions of Ganapati should be adhered to, and innovations with *murti* forms ought to show *shastrik*

precedents. Even though, *murtis* continued to be blended with other deity forms, the blending of the *murti* with mundane figures was not generally encouraged.

The rubric of nationalism seems to pervade the *mandap* tableaux as much as the ubiquity of the Ganapati *murti* whether it be through a religious subject, constructions of historical events, the filtering of topical events, or more propositional campaigns. Nationalism is not just a generic category demonstrated in festival activities and displays, but manifests itself in various forms changing with the contingencies of time. Whereas in colonial times, the festival was a site for hegemonic contestation against the colonial powers, in contemporary times with the monopoly of Shiv Sena control of *mandals* particularly in Mumbai, the festival appears to be the site of, albeit splintered, hegemonic formations - one in which Nehruvian or Gandhian 'secular' and Hindutva hegemonies contest for arenas of consent (see Chapter Eight). Effectively, this account provides a background for an appreciation of the current practices, artworks and aesthetics entailed in the performative milieux of the festival explored further in the next chapter.

¹Space does not permit me to concentrate on theories of aesthetics; suffice it to note that characteristics of aesthetics entailed in artworks and festival praxis are entwined with religio-political ideas. I shall return to this discussion as it relates to the contemporary *utsava* in Chapter Six.

²Parallels with Chatterjee's argument about how the emergent nationalism in India did not just imitate alien culture, but indigenised it so as it became particular to the Indian context are notable (Chatterjee 1986: 2).

³There is another important and unique prototypes in Pune - the Mandai Mandal Ganapati, a reclining Ganapati tended to by one of his consorts. The respective *mandal* was established in 1896. The *murti* is popular due to its historical value, beauty, and the fact that it is placed in a very busy market area, which since World War II, has become the focus of the city's commercial and social activities (*Maharashtra Herald*, December 17 1990).

⁴It is notable that televised Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* in the 1980s were done so on Doordarshan, a terrestrial station very much in the hands of the then Congress government. Nonetheless, the reception of such narratives fed into Hindutva discourse (Richman 1995; Manekkar 1996). Satellite has provided another less government-regulated opening for political parties (see Chapter Nine).

⁵Savarkar writes about it in his biography: 'We named our organisation the Mitra Mela [Friends' Group] as it appeared harmless, and was suitable for government servants as much as it was for revolutionaries' (cited in Vashta 1992: 135).

⁶A chawl is a term to refer to a cluster of communal houses, for people in the low to middle income bracket.

⁷Handbills showing Tilak's photographs are first recorded in 1898, when they accompanied a play *Bandhvimochan* (*Liberation from the Foreign Yoke*) by Gopal Govind Soman - which was an allegory to the unjust treatment of Tilak in the hands of the British (Ganachari 1994: 584).

⁸It is known that Dadasaheb Phalke, famed for making the first Indian feature movie, *Raja Harischandra* (1913), had produced a documentary on the Ganapati *utsava* (now not available). Travelling cinema in portable tents, following in the footsteps of theatre companies at the turn of the century, were quickly replaced by picture palaces in the 1910s (Chabria 1994: 6). The popularity and power of the new medium was so much that the colonial government introduced the 1918 Cinematography Act, which was used to ban internally produced films, such as those on the Sikhs and communalism, and foreign movies particularly American movies which might show immoral conduct or spread nationalist or revolutionary ideas (Barrier 1976: 97).

⁹The face of nationalism after independence was one of nation-building, influenced largely by Nehru's vision of a secular nation. Pandey argues that 'the moment of Indian and establishment of a

sovereign nation-state, which in India may be said to extend over the period from 1946 to the early 1950s, marks the end of the national (popular) political struggle, and with it an end - apparently - to the debate on 'pasts' and 'futures' and how these should be constructed. The general assumption is that the national history, national culture and national visions are now secure, reasonably well-established and well-known. What remain are primarily administrative and economic tasks, which can be left to the 'specialists': the mass of the people too, can turn to their own (specialist) vocations' (Pandey 1994b: 57). See Chapters Three for debates on nationalism.

¹⁰TADA is an acronym for the Terrorism and Disruptive Activities Act which was put into force to deal primarily with the volatile situation in Punjab, allowing the Police to intern people for up to a year without proper trial and conviction. The act was abused by several authorities and formally dismantled in 1995.

¹¹During my time in India, I had heard of critical representations of Indira Gandhi with *mandap* scenes on the theme of Emergency in the late 1970s. However, to date, I have not come across any substantial evidence.

¹²There are financial considerations here, for queues means that people enter the *pandal* and make some kind of contribution to the *mandal* in the fund box. Covering the *mandal* design also ensures that neighbouring *mandals* do not see the design preparations which effects their outcomes in the eyes of visitors and competition judges.

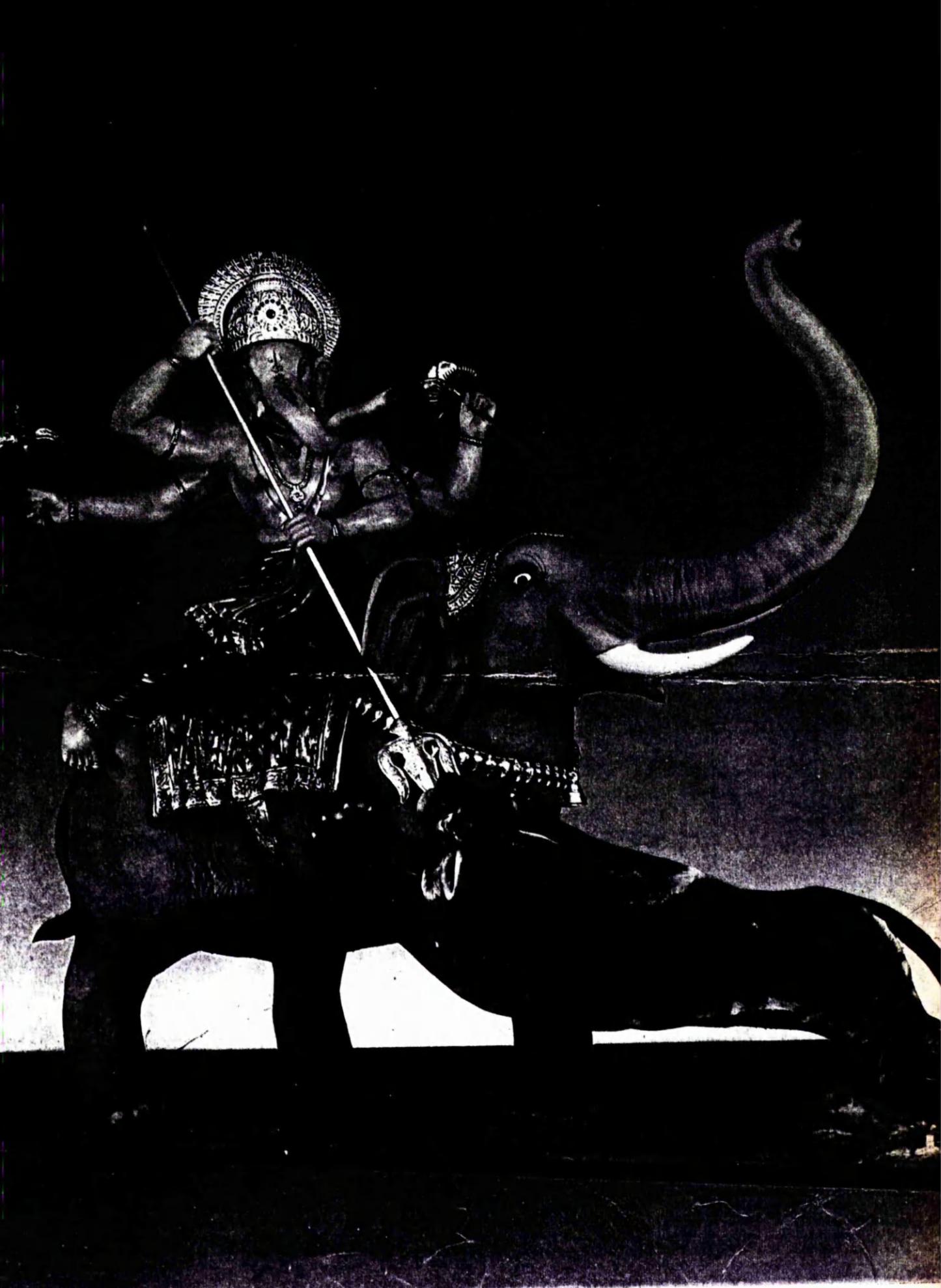
¹³Admittedly, the distinction between mythology and history is contentious for seemingly asserting a hierarchy between a 'real' or 'true' and 'imaginary' pasts. I use these descriptive terms as a point of reference, rather than as a means of judgement.



8



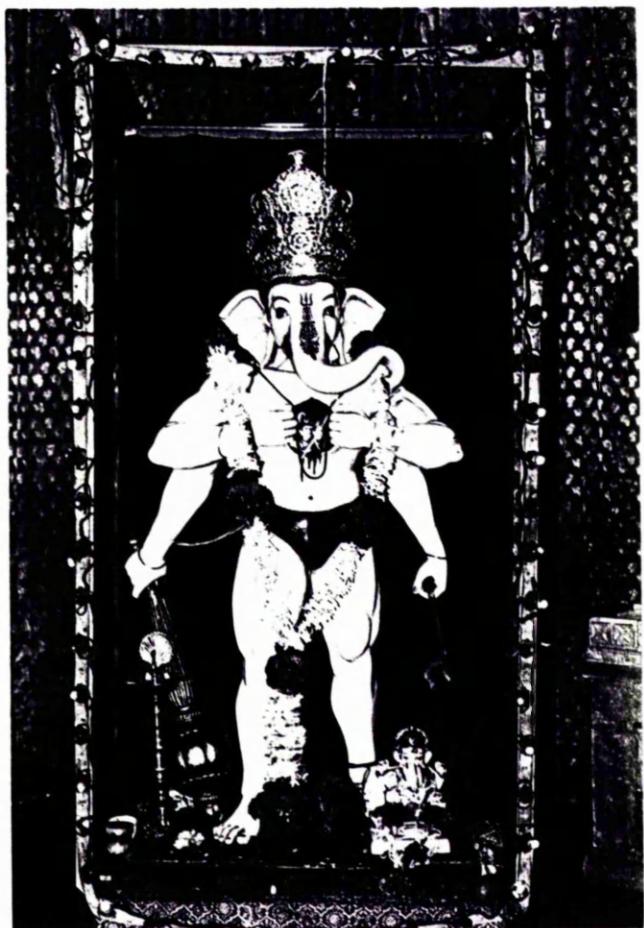
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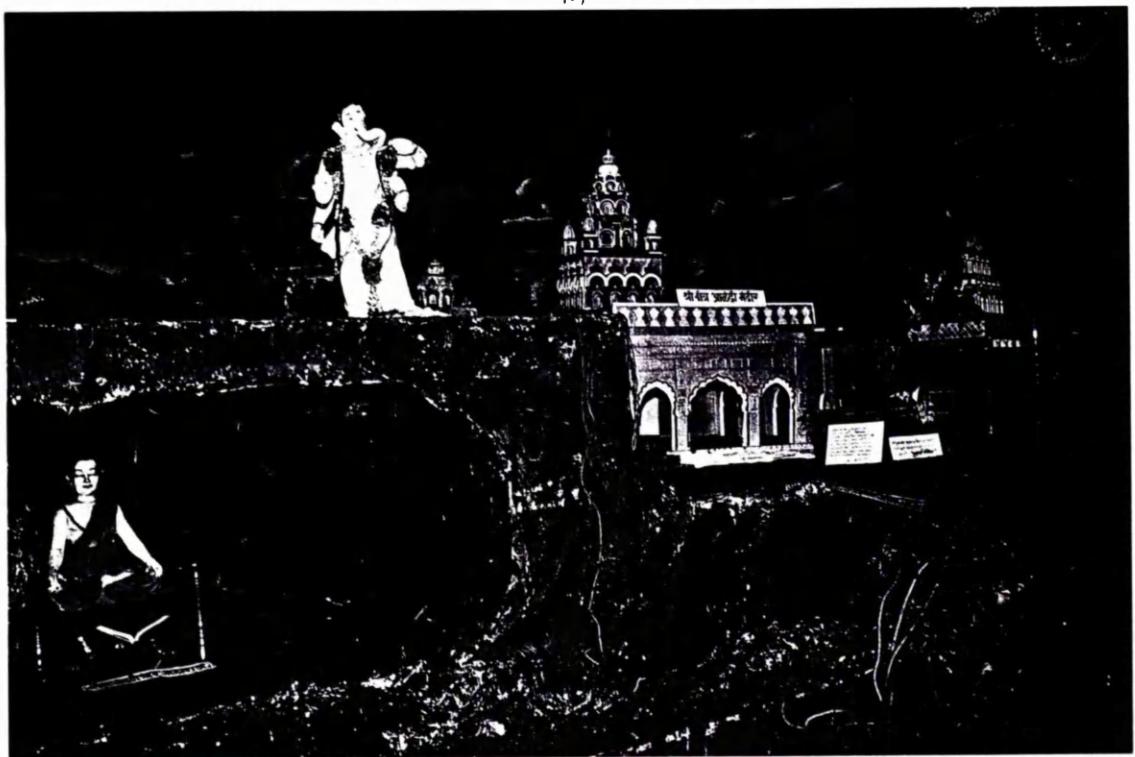
12: JAI BAJRUNG TARUN MANDAL (est. 1907)



13: SIKHAKALIPUR TALIM RASHTRIYA MARUTI MANDAL (est 1919)
SOUVENIR COVER



14: SAKHALIPUR TALIM RASHTRIYA MARUTI MANDAL - 1996 DISPLAY



नागपूर येथील नृसिंह-समाज-कार्यालयाचा
गणपती.



[पाठविणार- बी. बी. मुजे, नागपूर]

कमवे लिंब (सातारा) येथील गणपत्युत्सव.

कोल्हापूर येथील भक्तभंडळीचा गणपत्युत्सव.



[कृष्ण दहोरीचे देस. [कोटोदामे- अ. ए. धर्माविकाश]

ठिकठिकाणचा गणपती उत्सव.



दंडगडे याचा गणपती. (यवतमाळ)



मारने वेणुवे ममाज (महाराष्ट्र)



सारंग याचा गणपती (निवाळी)



रत्नागिरीचा गणपती





रत्नामिती बेचील रा. वेदानकर बांधा गणपती.



रत्नामिती बेचील रा. सोइदी बांधा गणपती.



वडोदरे गोरील नुस्मादादा दयायामशंदोर बांधा गणपती.



तिरंगोब बेचील धुर्यो बांधा गणपती.



१७

६ बंदाचे आंगणेशोस्सव.



इहाट श्रीकृष्ण बांधा येथील गणपती.



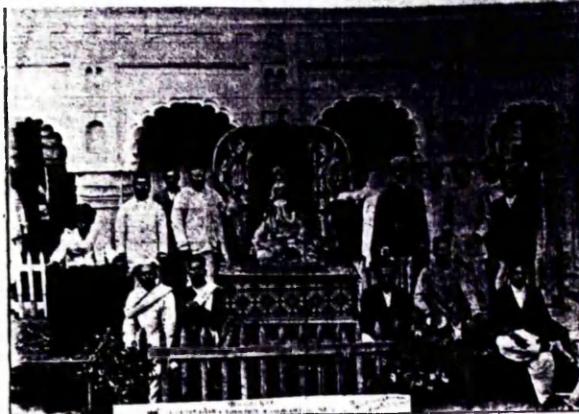
नुस्मादादा दयायामशंदोर वडोदरे गोरील गणपती

श्रीगणेश संविद सांगली.



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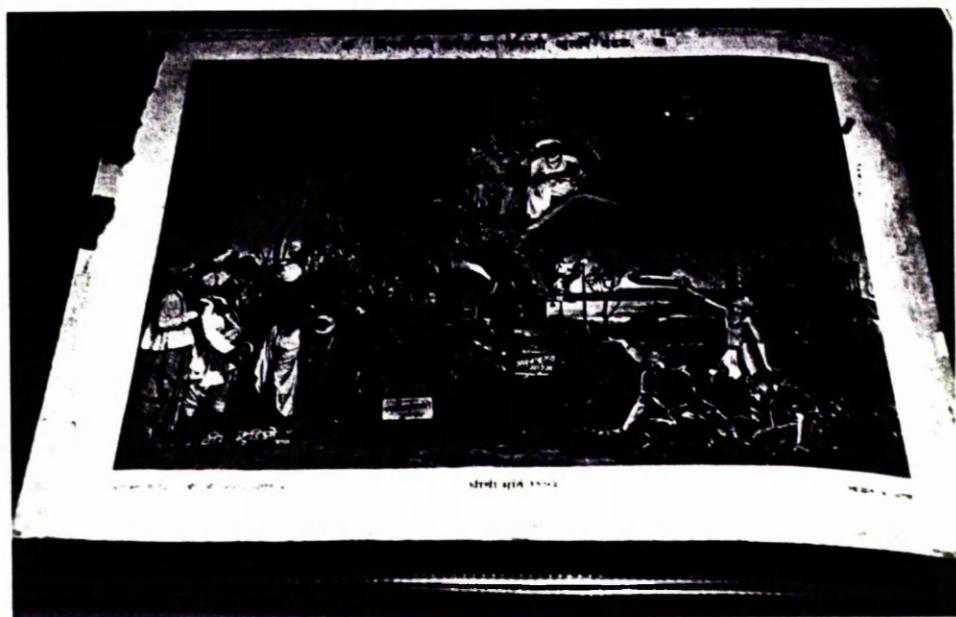
अकोला (वन्हाड) येथील सार्वजनिक श्रीगणेशोत्सव.

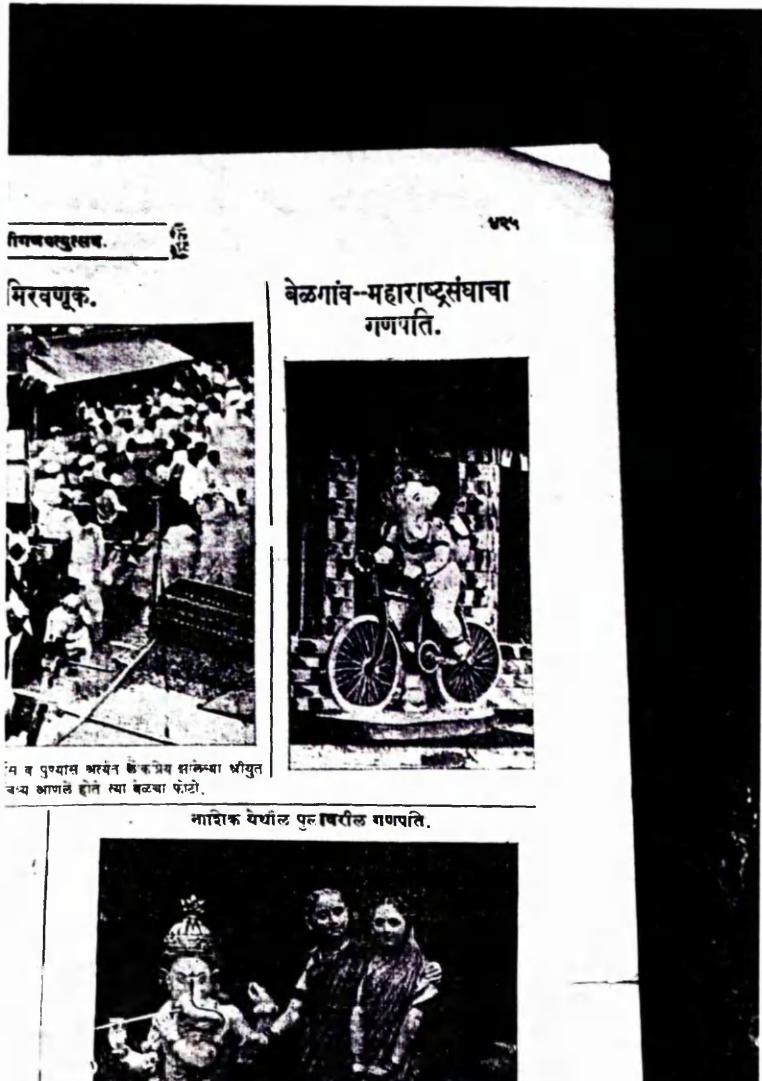


અંગરચ્છાનિ ડેસરચાયે બેદી ખાલુંના કદરથી પણ કાઢીની જરૂર હતી.



कायं चम भाजन वरचारं चा पादी.





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Chapter Six

The Performative Milieux of the Contemporary Ganapati *Utsava*

The Ganapati *utsava* is a discursive arena of devotional, entertaining, and socio-political facets. Yet, this ambivalent space is also influenced and characterised by the effects of hegemonising strategies to regulate and monopolise festival praxis, particularly with regard to organised competitions, and political parties with their Hindutva or ‘secular’ nationalist agendas. Socio-political aspects are most conspicuous with the involvement of politicians, debates and functions, participants’ reception of *rashtriya* (nationalist) or ‘topical’ *mandap* displays, and during the festival immersion procession (*visarjan*). In this chapter I concentrate on the discursive arena of the festival, noting of course, some of the effects of hegemonising strategies as they pertain to the rubric of nationalism, but reserving a more thorough investigation of the latter for subsequent chapters. Thus, I consider the performative aspects and participants’ engagements with the Ganapati *utsava* rather than the use of the festival by political parties and protagonists. The multiperspectival overview of the devotional, artistic, entertaining, and political aspects of the festival complements the next chapter on media and decision-making realms pertaining to the festival in the public field.

I begin by considering the significance attached to ritual practices associated with the festival at home and in public. In the process, I consider *puja* as a means of activating the imagery of the tableaux, particularly the *murti* of Ganapati. This leads to an exploration of the multi-sensory and performative occasion of the Ganapati *utsava*. Within this context, I elaborate on the reception of *mandap* tableaux in Mumbai and Pune with particular reference to the Rameshvar Mitra Mandal tableau in Pune. I describe beliefs, practices and verbalisations of participant-spectators in the Ganapati *utsava* as a route to explore the cusps between language and visual forms - an inroad into a debate on religious ethics, aesthetics, and nationalist sentiments. I end with a discussion on the immersion procession and its socio-political implications.

Whilst ensuing chapters focus on political expressions within the festival, this chapter concentrates on religious and aesthetic appreciations of the festival activities and displays, starting from a consideration of religious transactions between devotee and deity. In this way, I investigate the degree to which religiosity lends itself to political ideology. In critique of Nandy, Bharucha undermines dualist assumptions between faith as a plural discourse, and ideology as a hegemonic and monolithic discourse (Bharucha 1993: 11-14). Bharucha points out the finer gradations and dynamic flux between these poles of debate, preferring to see faith and ideology as ‘variables in a dynamic relationship that changes according to the mutations in history’

(Bharucha 1993: 12). Bharucha's proposition parallels Bhabha's narratives of the nation providing 'a *discursive* conception of ideology' (Bhabha 1994b: 308, his italics) to account for the articulation of elements within the nation-space, but significantly, at any one temporal moment rather than due to just historical contingencies. The Ganapati *utsava* provides an appropriate example with which to explore these dynamics further through a consideration of festival praxis, artworks and the wider political culture of the region.

Activation of the *Murti*

The Ganapati *murti* is the central most important element of the *mandap* display. Aside from the *mandir*, *pujas* are performed in the home where there is a domestic shrine installed, and in the canopied *mandap* in front of the Ganapati *murti* for public participation, usually twice daily during the duration of the *utsava*. The first *puja* on the first day of the festival, the *avahana puja*, is the trigger for the sacralisation of the Ganapati *murti* in its installation as part of a decorative display. Although the *murti* is treated with respect and ceremony before this point in time, it is not until the rite of *pranpratishta* (literally, instilling of breath) on the installation of the Ganapati *murti* on its pedestal, that the *murti* and the *mandap* of which it is a part is seen to be enlivened.

The most popular form of Ganapati is as a benign deity sitting holding an elephant goad (*ankusha*), noose (*pasha*), a vessel of *modaka* sweets, with the fourth hand in the protective *abhaya* pose. The image or icon (*pratima*) installed for worship is not taken to be the divine itself, but is the *pratika* or symbol of godhead. This is not to infer that the *pratima* is not treated like a god once it is installed for worship. After the installation of the *murti*, a Brahman priest (*pujari*) puts 'life' into the sculpture with the rite of *pranpratishta* in the *avahana puja*, and Ganapati is invited to 'occupy' the *murti*. On the last day of the festival (Anant Caturdasi) before immersion of the *murti*, the *pran* is taken out again in the *uttara puja*. This is believed to release the 'breath' or *pran* from the *murti*. Therefore it is not important to consider the sculptures as godly in all circumstances. However when *pran* enters the *murti*, the image is said to be alive. I refer to this phenomena as activation.¹

I account for *puja* as a conceptual and gestural idiom which describes the thoughts and actions accompanying the worship of the god, as well as the enlivening of the *murti* (Ostor 1982: 4). The *puja* consolidates the transaction between deity and worshipper with verse, devotional singing, *arati*, gestures, and *prashad* offerings (Courtright 1985: 173). The Ganapati *murti* sits royally whilst believers engage in a private and intimate transaction with him, such that 'the deity receives homage and

food; the worshipper gains spiritual and existential enhancement' (Courtright 1985: 173). The *prashad* acts as:

'...the edible symbol of the 'real presence' in the image: an assurance to those who eat it in the company of the god that their undertakings will be successful and encounter no obstacles. In this way *pujas* create their own realities' (Courtright 1985: 175).

Aesthetic appreciation of the *murti* is deeply imbued with ideas of religiosity and ethical conduct. Such beliefs and lived praxis constitute the paradigmatic component of the aesthetic/ethical domain which lies beyond syntagmatic analysis (Pinney 1995b: 100). The paradigmatic points to realms which do not always inform the discussion on *mandap* tableaux in Mumbai or Pune, but constitute part of 'the inner realm of moral values' in the believers' lived praxis (O'Hanlon 1989: 17).

However, as I have found amongst festival participants, the contours of 'latent' or 'deeper levels' of meaning do not just lie still as a substratum of experience for which the analyst is considered best disposed to extricate, but are themselves changing and informing part of the exegesis of indigenous participants. Whilst some spectators prefer to do *darshan* in silence, some make straightforward comments about the appearance and content of tableaux, whilst others take more time to think, critique and reflect on wider issues raised by the tableaux relating to notions about the significance of Maharashtrian culture, history, religion, philosophy and politics. These levels of differing analysis are significant as they point to variant degrees of education, awareness, religious sensitivity and experience of the spectators. The contours of the syntagmatic against the paradigmatic flow like waves in ethnographic praxis, as the more articulate and reflective describe the significance of festival components. Indeed, the performative context of the festival and its constituent activities undermine dichotomies which might be held between thought or lived praxis and exegesis, the paradigmatic and the syntagmatic. Further, in the performative context, there is a fusion between the religious, social, aesthetic, nationalist, and ludic, attributing such labels, even if indigenously articulated, as only of heuristic or partial usage in making inroads into the complexities of festive experiences, concepts and opinions articulate amongst participants.

On the other hand, the performative context also accentuates the significance of constituent activities and displays of the festival. Citing Eco, Pinney comments on the increased propositionalty of images during highly-charged contexts. He describes the process as a ' "syntagmatic concatenation imbued with argumentative capacity". It is the concatenation which reduces ambiguity, both in film and in a variety of other expressive media' (Pinney 1995b: 100). Subjects and issues topical in current affairs

are re-articulated with intensity in the festival context through song, display, narrations and debate. Visual representations alone are silent and anaemic unless activated by song, recitation, music, performance and audience reception. This is an example of the animating and activating circumstances for festive displays, where the processes of 'syntagmatic concatenation imbued with an argumentative capacity' (Eco cited in Pinney 1995b: 100), and simultaneously, contexts where paradigmatic experiences are intensified and articulated.

The heightened syntagmatic elements of religious and aesthetic discussion in a festival context are pointers to the realm of belief and experience, even though as I account below, words of description were cited as inferior to the experience of the mind (*man*). Informants' comments about the Ganapati *murti* were conveyed in the idiom of faith and homage for what the *murti* embodied once activated in the festive context. Concepts such as *shobha* (grace/beauty), *sundar* (beautiful) and *juna* (old) or *paramparika* (traditional) were frequently articulated amongst respondents in relation to the *murti*. *Shobha* and *sundar* were concepts deployed to convey satisfaction with the appearance of the *murti* and its compatibility with beliefs about, and associations of the Ganapati deity. If all was satisfactory, the *murti* was rarely analysed in more detail in terms of its formal components by the layman, although qualities such as the lustre of the colours, artistry in execution of the eyes and trunk designs, and nature of pose and surrounding attributes were pointed out when questioned further. Otherwise the overall qualitative experience of pleasure in the appearance and divine embodiment of the Ganapati *murti* was the considered core to religious and aesthetic sensibility by devotees in the festival.

Juna which means old carries notions of respect and auspiciousness attributed to *murtis*, rather than aged or obsolete. The term was encountered more in Pune than it was in Mumbai, due to the fact that city residents differed in degrees of historical consciousness, and the degree of grand aspirations and innovation for *murtis* in the respective cities. Mumbai was populated by many more professional *murtikars* whose living was to make *murtis* and innovate in a highly competitive cultural economy. Large *murtis* of up to twenty five feet, as annually displayed by *mandals* in Chinchpokli (Lalbaug) particularly *Lalbaugca Raja* (*The King of Lalbaug*) or *Girgaumca Raja* in Nakkervadi Lane, were points of attraction, and have acquired *shakti* as many people go to see these *murtis* in Mumbai. However, there is contestation here, as the more humble or discerning of participants consider grandiosity as pomposity - opinions which are represented by discussions amongst *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges (see Chapter Seven). The concept of *juna* was epitomised by *murtis* in Mandai, Budhwar Peth, Heerabagh, Natubagh, Kharakmal, Dhakya Maruti and Kasba Peth *mandals* in Pune. In addition, these

Ganapatis are the oldest 'festival' ones in Maharashtra and as a result have acquired *shakti* through their historical significance. 'Festival' *murti* is distinct from the *murti* which is annually immersed. It is notable that *shakti* is not only an intrinsic power attributed to the *murti*, but is also accumulated by way of the number and strength of devotees' engagements with the *murtis* over the years.

Interestingly, popular generalisations about the city - that is, of Mumbai being the more commercial and competitive, and Pune the more cultural and historical centre in Maharashtra - also translate into predominant representations and receptions of Ganapati *murtis*: large and innovative models in Mumbai, and historically venerated models in Pune.² Both types are valued, but one may be more preferable than the other according to informants with more particular opinions. This is not to presume that the cities' residents are poles apart in their way of celebration of the *utsava*, but residents show particular emphases as well as overlap of opinions in the two cities.

It appears that the attributed powers of the *murtis* through their historical associations and fame, enhanced the beauty and lustre of the *murti* in the eyes of the believers. This was also the case at the point of activation of the *murti* in the *pranpratishta*. Courtright (1985) makes similar observations with his research on the Ganapati *utsava* in Ahmadnagar. Courtright notes that informants mentioned the *murti* as becoming more lustrous, radiant and even physically larger after the rite of *pranpratishta*:

'This perceived transformation of the material form of the image does not take place for the devotee in any other context than that of religious beliefs, assumptions and expectations...For those who come to the rite prepared for a transformation to take place between themselves and the deity, the ritual effects it' (Courtright 1985: 183).

As Courtright points out later, the *murti* does not undergo a physical change, but a conceptual change which is nurtured by a matrix of belief, faith and expectations. The more sceptical point to the increase of *bhava* (religious sentiment or experience) which enhances perceptions of the *murti* (Courtright 1985: 183). From my research, it is also questionable whether the *murti* changes size in the eyes of the believers. Nonetheless, it is, quite assuredly, seen to become more alive and lustrous after the *pranpratishta* as well as during subsequent *pujas* where the heightened relations between worshipper and deity leads to a more detailed awareness of the Ganapati form. This is alongside an increase in religious sentiment and intimacy with its divine embodiment in a state of bliss, optimism and celebration. One respondent likened the experience to seeing a friend dressed up as a bride before her wedding ceremony - a familiar person, but seen as radiant, bejewelled and dressed up in her best on her marriage day.

There are immediate parallels to be made with the notion of *pran* as activating a deity form, and by way of extension, the *utsava* as a revitalisation of society. Additionally, parallels with Babb's proposition of *darshan* as an 'extrusive flow of seeing that brings seer and seen into actual contact' are notable (Babb 1981: 387). However, the transaction is not just aided by experiences and notions about vision, but a whole range of sensory domains and artefacts. For instance, in the *pranpratishtha* of the Ganapati *murti*, the use of *mantra* and *durva* grass (sound and substance) is primarily responsible for conveying the animating power of the *pran*. This exchange from mortal to god is reciprocated by blessings and *prashad* sanctified by the god. Thus, there are other beliefs, concepts, artefacts and sensory experiences, as with sound, taste and fragrance (Shulman 1987) that supplement and consolidate the visual experience of *darshan*. The *pujas* as a constituent part of the festival, alongside other activities, provide for a multi-sensory occasion.

The Festive Context

The eleven day duration of the public Ganapati *utsava* forms a major point in the Hindu calendar, particularly in Maharashtra. The event falls on the fourth day of the bright half of the lunar-solar month of Bhadrapad. However, its importance is not just confined to those eleven days of celebration. There is a whole industry of people involved in preparations for this major festival. Full-time artists begin the manufacture of Ganapati sculptures as soon as Durga *Puja* is over around the month of October, in preparation for the next year's Ganapati *utsava*. Laymen and professional artists discuss possible scenes for the next year's *mandap* displays as and when topical issues significant to Maharashtrian society surface. Several *mandals* have an all-year round programme of events dependent upon the degree of funds raised and social work commitment the members have. Months in advance, meetings take place amongst Police, district officials, and *mandal* representatives to facilitate a trouble-free festival. Permits must be obtained for setting up public *pandals*, and sponsoring programs and participants are required to wear identification tags to assist Police in crowd control. Careful and intensive preparations help to create an arena where celebration along with public safety and crowd control can be smoothly effected.

The immersion of the Ganapati *murti* on the last day is a call to Ganapati to come back quickly the next year: '*Pudhacya varshi laukar ya*'. There is a kind of anticipatory waiting for the next festival to come, whilst permanent installations of Ganapati *murtis* particularly in the Siddhi Vinayaka Mandir in Prabhadevi, Mumbai and Dagdu Seth Halvai Mandir in Pune report all-year round traffic of devotees laden with coconuts and donations and coming away with *prashad*, particularly on Tuesdays, the

day associated with Ganapati's worship. Thus the crescendo of 'collective effervescence' - to borrow Durkheim's (1915) expression - does not necessarily come as a spontaneous outburst at the onset of the festival.

Before the festival begins, frenetic activity, feelings of excitement, anxiety, and anticipation buzz around the various *mandals* in the city. *Mandal* members and contracted workers prepare the stage and canvas and bamboo construction (the *pandal*), ensuring that it is sufficient protection from the fierce lashings of monsoon rains as well as in anticipation of hordes of people in popular precincts during the festival. Now the whole residence participates in constructing the *pandal* and other related activities such as preparing *prashad*, flower decorations and so forth. The more adept members or professional contract workers mill around the *mandap* stage, organising the artistic activities to prepare the tableau, usually surrounded by a gaggle of children on their school holidays. Background walls are spray-painted or canvas is laid down on the ground in order to be painted before its installation. Two- or three-dimensional models of humans and animals, foliage, buildings, and other props are installed, whilst a space for the Ganapati *murti* is defined and decorated, ready for the installation of the *murti* on the first day of the festival.

Bamboo barriers are constructed around the *pandal* to demarcate the space and allow for a means of co-ordinating the vast number of devotees expected to see the scene during the festival. Cloth banners are strung up and posters pasted advertising sponsors - banks, businesses, politicians or their parties - alongside those that advocate 'social upliftment' by way of educational remits to increase literacy rate, polio camps, save water campaigns, *rath yatra*, information about the *mandal* and so forth.³ Cloth banners of entered competitions are also strung up in visible places around the *pandal*. Loud speakers and public address systems are connected - blasts of music interspersed with tentative 'Testing! Testing!' cries. Decorative lights are pinned down around main entrances, fences, and across causeways in a criss-cross ricochet-effect. As with material and electronic bunting for a mass parade, the generally mundane and grey area of the town comes to life in a display of invigorating colour. On the night of the festival, the city seems alive with 'running' lights, splashes of colour, large banners, posters and entrance displays amongst a animated melange of men, women and children dressed in their modest best to do *darshan* of Ganapati and his entourage.

Banners litter the outside of the *pandal* proclaiming not only advertisers and sponsors but competitions which the *mandal* has entered. This allows competition organisers to verify the locale of competition entrants. All *mandals* with these banners need to be visited by the competition organisers. In the early days of the festival, not all the displays are finished due to inevitable hiccups such as the lighting not being organised, taped narratives not completed, P.A.'s not installed and so forth. But

definitely by the third day, all the *mandaps* stand tall, either open or behind a canvas barrier.

Daytimes during the *utsava*, present a comparatively sober picture when lights and sounds are not on, and the majority of tableaux are covered with tarpaulin. It is a placid time, with the majority of visitors being women and children, most of the men being at work. Although the safer time to do *darshan* of the *mandaps*, the experience pales in comparison to the night-time with the dazzle of lights and clash of sounds - considered to be the best time to see Ganapati in his tableau setting. The city comes to life at night, literally and metaphorically, creating a tinsel town effect with a visual and aural feast of delights. The electronic paraphernalia charges the atmosphere with on the one hand, excitement, sounds, pleasure and sweat, and on the other hand, tension and apprehension, particularly in view of robbing and rioting in the city in former years. Lines of trickling lights pave the way to *mandal* entrances leading the queues of people onwards. Neon, tube-lights illuminate the *mandal* arena. Large pools of light and sound provide for an intensity of garish and clamorous effects. Devotional music meshes with other kinds of sounds including Hindi film music, the shrieking of children, the sound of laughter, the performance of *pujas*, and the sound of traffic bleating its way through the crowds at a snail's pace.

In the media world, newspapers announce the year's routes and policing arrangements - a warm-up to the saturated, picturesque coverage they provide during the eleven day period. Cassettes of Ganapati *bhakti* songs blare out of every music kiosk as people do their shopping for the goods they require for their domestic shrines - materials, garlands, streamers, fruit, sweetmeats, new clothes and so forth. These are supplementary to their storage of platforms (wood, metal or precious metal), a mirror at the back, perhaps a decorative umbrella, joss stick holders, brassware such as *samays*, *kailash*, and *puja* trays, lights and other electronic items with which devotees customarily decorate their shrines.

Devotees learn about public *mandap* decorations in the city at large through media coverage, word-of-mouth as well as familiarisation of the *mandap* landscape from former experiences. Most visitors tend to confine their Ganapati *darshan* tour to nearby *mandaps*, although the more enthusiastic would visit areas renowned for their Ganapati *murtis* and spectacular and innovative decorations. In Pune, these include *mandals* in Budhwar Peth, Kasba Peth, Shukarwar Peth, Ganesh Peth, and Deccan which run alongside the immersion procession route of Lakshmi Road in the centre of the city. In Mumbai, popular areas include Lalbaug in central Mumbai, Khetvadi to the south of this area near Girgaum, and various other suburban constellations of renowned *mandap* tableaux.⁴

Intense protectionism and competition is evident between *mandals* in these amusement arcade-like zones. This is particularly notable in Khetvadi and Lalbaug which are famous for their decorations in Mumbai. Compared with Khetvadi and Lalbaug, Girgaum *mandals* demonstrate less commercialised and competitive practices. They erect less elaborate sets with the stress laid on family-oriented, devotional and traditional presentations. As the night goes on, the streets became increasingly peopled by men in all these districts - some intoxicated with drink rather than religious devotion. *Mandals* tend to close around two or three in the morning. Tarpaulin covers to the entrances of the *mandaps* are brought down, and occasionally some of the *mandal* members sleep inside the *pandal*.

Ways of Engaging with *Mandap* Tableaux

When entering a *mandap* enclosure, a relatively subdued atmosphere was observed against the muffled wall of noise outside of chattering people, bleating traffic, and blaring music. This was the moment that the devotees had most waited for in their participation of the *sarvajanik utsava*. Serenity was ideally observed in this kernel of sanctity. The canopied space enabled an intimate encounter with the deity, as well as a time to appreciate the tableau which they might have already heard about or seen in media representations. Silent prayers might be made. Occasional comments and questions were asked about the scenery, particularly by the younger members. Children, not surprisingly, were the most animated, pointing out outstanding features in the tableau, whilst parents guided and instructed them about their significance. But generally, devotees observed and were absorbed in their *darshan* of the *murti* and its surroundings. On the other hand, there were those visitors who did not share such strong religious sentiments, and participated in the *utsava* primarily for the sake of free entertainment. These people were in the minority for the Ganapati *utsava*, however. The majority of the populace participated for combined motivations driven by religious sentiments, entertainment and, sometimes, the socio-political value and potential of the *utsava*.

So far, my concentration on the Ganapati *murti* and surrounding decorations as distinct entities has been a heuristic one to aid my exposition. *Pujas* are a time for concentration on the *murti* alone rather than to be seen in a distracted state alongside the other surrounding decorations. At other times, spectators do not always tend to make this differentiation. Either they go to visit a *mandap* tableau to view the scenery and do *darshan* of the *murti* simultaneously; or they recognise that doing *darshan* of the *murti* is the most important, next to which entertainment (*manoranjana*) provided by the tableau is pleasurable - an activity which itself is provided for the glory of

Ganapati. Whether it be the Ganapati *murti* or the tableau that acts as the main pulling factor is determined by the degree to which the spectator considers the occasion as primarily religious or as an opportunity for entertainment.

As with conceptions of *murti*, religious ideas which suffused discussion and practice surrounding the Ganapati *murti* were sometimes evident in opinions of decorative tableaux. As one participant commented, 'The decorations are to the glory of god. You cannot differentiate between the two' ('*Devacya vaibhavaci sajavata. Vegle karva yenyasarkha nahi*'). Activation of the *murti* is also seen to 'energise' the surrounding tableau, such that the representations are given heightened significance, subject to variant interpretations.

The character of the *mandap* theme classifies the whole display in terms of religious (*dharmaik*), social (*samajik*), nationalist (*rashtriya*), 'topical', political (*rajnaitik*), historical (*aitihasik*), and purely decorative (*phakt sajavat* or 'simple' or 'plain'). The categories themselves are subject to some variation amongst festival participants. Some people preferred to use the word 'topical' to describe scenes of contemporaneous matters which others might designate social or political. 'Topical' was generally expressed in the English, or connoted in the Marathi with phrases such as scenes 'which are based on today's situations' (*ajca paristhitivar adharit aslele*). Others distinguished *rashtriya* from *rajnaitik*. *Rashtriya* lay in recalling the glories of the nation's past, its key figures and events, whereas *rajnaitik* was about the dirty and corrupt world of contemporary politics considered by some as unsuitable for a religious occasion.⁵ Comments as to preferences of types of tableaux were fused with observations on artistic features, the moral message of the tableaux, their entertaining value as well as their role in edifying and educating the populace, particularly the youth. Scenes which raise national consciousness were especially commended (*desh/lokjagriti*, literally 'awake the nation/people'). In addition, tableaux were valued most if they were easily understood by everyone (*samanya lokana*) and looked realistic (*naisarjika*). One participant mentioned the need to have:

'authenticity or sincerity of religion (*dharmaikiteca sacepana*), modern presentations of the various arts (*vividh kalanca adhunik avishar*), 'pleasant' mention of patriotism (*rashtriya premaca god ulekh* -literally 'sweet mention of love for the country' as opposed to aggressive nationalism) and all this for the attainment of mental peace (*manaci shantata nirman hone yasathi*). For the tableaux, in particular, I would like to see various aspects encouraged - spectacular ideas (*bhavyadivya kalpana*), religious and social awareness properly portrayed (*dharmaik samajikiteca nikhel ulekh*) and sceneries which involve innovative thought (*dur vicarsarnece* - literally 'far-sighted thinking')' (Vijay, Commerce Student, 20s, male, Pune).

This is of course one view amongst a plurality of opinions, but succinctly covers many recurrent themes in respondents' discussions.⁶

For some of the more elaborate *mandaps* with sound and light shows, chairs or benches might be lined up inside the *mandap* to allow visitors to sit, rather as one finds in a cinema. The majority of attendants were men who might point out the key components of the stage tableau. The shows began after the house lights were dimmed, co-ordinated by a few men sat at a control panel to the side of the *mandap*. Sound leitmotifs were used on pre-recorded tape tracks, including conch calls which recalled the war-cry of Shivaji's armies; flute music to invoke an idyllic scene or specifically, to announce the call of the god, Krishna; songs from Manoj Kumar's nationalist movies alongside stories about freedom fighters; the theme music from Mani Ratnam's film, *Bombay*, to talk about communal riots and the general state of affairs in Mumbai and so forth. Associated sound framed the respective images so that even sound had a 'picturing' quality through its connotative references. In some *mandap* tableaux, special effects of moving imagery, described as 'tricks' or 'trick-scenes' were aided by mechanical gadgetry, and lighting effects. They were received with much delight adding to the memorability of the tableaux. Such observations were common amongst 'masala' *mandap* tableaux - that is, displays employing a multitude of vignettes, and indebted to the public idiom of popular film format and content.

The synaesthesia (by which I refer to the multi-sensory synthesis of various art forms) of sound, light and sometimes motored movement in this ritual and entertainment space created effect and affect. Some shows, particularly those provided by elaborate 'masala' *mandap* tableaux, incited a film-viewing atmosphere as *talis* were made, songs were sung along to the tracks, and, for unapproved references, whistles of disapproval were blown. These features are not surprising as Hindi film culture is pervasive throughout the area, not least as Mumbai is the site for the most prolific Hindi film production in India. Thus the influence of film format, content and themes are also evident in *mandap* tableaux. A euphoric feeling was conveyed at the end of the shows when the music and narration intensified, feelings were heightened and Ganapati was communally venerated with the cry of '*Ganapati Bappa Morya*' at the end of the show. House lights were immediately switched on followed by anything from fervent discussion to pensive silence as people made their way out of the *pandal* to let in the next batch of people. Feelings of unity in a shared matrix of belief, experience and practice were created, brought to a head by call-and-response cries of '*Ganapati Bappa Morya*'. The show narratives, with their recognisable imagery and sounds, particularly those taken from well-known films, be it in the form of music, song or dialogue, enhanced this feeling of festive collectivity. Thus the sentiment of unity was consolidated amongst participants as well as with a synchronicity of visuals,

songs and special effects - a means of engagement with a tableau which was later mobilised into the streets during immersion processions (see below).

Many visitors dropped money into the fund box placed in front of the *mandap* tableau. After receiving *prashad* of bananas, pieces of coconut in a palm leaf, sweets (*modaka*), coconut water and, often, a *kunkum tikka* on the forehead, visitors walked out. Occasionally they were moved on quickly by attendants due to the pressures of crowds. Commonly, visitors would discuss what they have seen in more detail - generally in terms of the beauty or distinctiveness of the Ganapati *murti* or the extent to which the scene around the Ganapati *murti* was stimulating or innovative. Novelty of the tableau was commended, as it was rewarded by extensive media coverage. Thus *mandals* sought to create distinctive displays in order to gain more publicity. Often newspaper articles on *mandal* members or *mandap* scenes were cut out and pasted outside the *mandap* enclosures. Such post-show discussions might lead on to a variety of conversational topics triggered by the activities around them. Otherwise, spectators moved on to the next *mandap* enjoying and participating in the festivities of the fair, stalls, cultural programmes and crowds.

Although it is difficult, if not impossible, to account for the multiplicity of spectators' comments on the various tableaux in cities like Mumbai and Pune, it is at least possible to note certain patterns and recurrent themes. The degree of discussion amongst festival participants is to a large extent conditioned by the kind of tableau presented. Aside from the prevalence of types of thematic displays, three models of tableaux presentations can be noted, each of which is an influential factor on the nature of spectator receptions. A distinction tends to operate between simple decorations (*arasa*) to embellish the space around the *murti* of Ganapati to enhance the display as with flowers, lighting, streamers, lighting and so forth; and thematic tableaux (*dekhava'* scene') which contain themes of a religious, historical, social, nationalist or topical nature presented in either a static or a 'theatrical' manner.

The first type concerns tableaux with Ganapati alone surrounded by decorative, though not representational, imagery of various kinds, such as flowers, artworks, mirrors, glass, and lights (*arasa*). These are generally received with quiet appreciation and reverence, along with adjectives of praise, most commonly *masta* (intoxicating, plentiful, fascinating, attractive) and *sundar* (beautiful). More specific comments are made if something is considered as incorrect about the Ganapati model as with the deity's stomach being too flat, or the spotlight not being in the right place, focusing on the torso rather than the face, or if flower garlands around the deity's neck cover too much of the *murti*'s face. It is evident that aesthetics here is entwined with the proper appearance and prominence of the deity in the tableau. Interpretation and evaluation of the forms in these instances is less a discursive field, veering towards the 'figural' lying

on the perimeters of discourse, or as Carroll notes for Lyotard's views on the 'figural' in the reception of art, 'a disruptive element that is the same time within and outside discourse in general' (cited in Carroll 1987: 23).

The second type are tableaux with Ganapatis in the centre surrounded by a static iconic or representational display, without the use of taped narration or special effects. In addition to types of responses in the above *mandap* type, such displays encourage a thoughtful dialogue with spectators, especially when labels of key figures, blackboards with an explanation of the depicted story, or cartoon balloons painted on backdrops are used. Explicit correspondences can be made between visuals and the story or ideas that they represent. Tableaux of these kind instantiated an ethics/aesthetics which was more discursive, particularly appropriate for their pedagogic functions.

The third type are tableaux which relate a story through the use of sound, light, narration and special effects, which I have referred to as 'masala' *mandaps*. Such tableaux are sequential in their coverage of various themes and the particular highlighting of various aspects of these generally multi-vignette tableaux. These types of tableaux have immediate parallels with film-viewing and indeed tend to be received in the way of devotional-cum-entertainment movies. Therefore their reception is centred on the performative effects of the total show, where the displays are lent more propositionality due to the conjunction of image, sound, narration and the festive context. The tableaux encourage a dialogue amongst spectators after the event - based more on the sedimentation of the effects of the show, or memory of particular components of the whole show. Elements of novelty and surprise are particularly remembered as are musical sounds from famous films.

Admittedly there are slippages between these three models of displays and engagements. Nonetheless, dominant features about each type are notable. Translation or transposition from one style of representation to another generated variant types of engagements between scene and participants. However, spectator engagements are not just contingent on formal differences between media forms, for the content of *mandap* tableaux are also influential. The dialogue between tableaux and spectator constitute and are constitutive of a moral universe based upon religious premises, popular entertainment idioms, and effected by the contemporaneous political culture. Furthermore, a 'toxic' collective performative context lends the artworks considerably more vitality and relevance to audiences. *Mandap* tableaux are lent further argumentative capacity in the festive context; those displayed with narratives even more so.

The different kinds of engagements between *mandap* tableaux and the audience range from concentration to distraction. Similar observations are notable in Benjamin's comments with the examples of engagements with painting and film:

'The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations. Before the movie frame he cannot do so' (Benjamin 1936, 1992: 231)

Benjamin elaborates on the characteristics of engagements with a single piece of artwork and mass-mediated images, describing the former as concentration, and the latter as distraction:

'A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it. He enters into this work of art the way legend tells of the Chinese painter when he viewed his finished painting. In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art...the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction' (Benjamin 1936, 1992: 232).

However, there are a couple of points of differences between Benjamin's formulation and the Ganapati *utsava* to be acknowledged here. The kind of concentration that Benjamin discusses concerns more a cerebral activity, whereas in the Ganapati *utsava* case, concentration involves a fusion of intellectual and emotional sensibilities, as it is premised upon a belief of religious narratives and values. Furthermore, concentration in the *utsava* can be attained, and even heightened, when there are distractions in the sense of excessive noise and movement. *Shanti* can be achieved in a noisy environment. That is why, in the midst of *utsava* proceedings, with thousands of people all crowding around to see various Ganapatis, it is still possible for the devoted to attain some kind of *shanti* in the *darshan* of the *murti* in the *mandaps*, however eclipsed this might be in comparison to *darshan* of Ganapati in the home or a permanent *mandir*. Distraction, in the sense of diversion or disturbance as Benjamin proposes, for the case of the *utsava* involve elements that were not strictly about the worship or reception of Ganapati as a focus-point. This arises with contestations over drinking, gambling, and sometimes, the playing of Hindi film music at *mandaps* during the *utsava* (see below).

The question of the lost 'aura' or the 'traditional status' of the original work of art in the mass reproduction of images as argued by Benjamin (1992) does not correspond to the reproduction of images in the Ganapati *utsava* in a straightforward manner. Firstly, the *puja* and the festive context imbue a kind of 'aura' into the images of the tableaux, despite the fact that they are not unique models. The intricate entwining between aesthetic and religious discourse with regards to the *murti* necessitates that concepts of the 'aura' be considered in view of both a religious and artistic originary moment. On the other hand, when the tableaux are reproduced in the media, the 'aura' is dispersed as Benjamin argues, but the original is still venerated as the original source

of *darshan*. Nonetheless, it appears that the reproduction of the image does not always lend itself to a democratisation of the arts per se, for as I note in Chapter Seven, mass-mediated images have been appropriated by militant movements of Hindutva in the 1980s and 1990s. One can make sense of this apparent contrast with Benjamin's argument, if democratisation is taken to mean an involvement of the populace in the nation-space - apparently democratic, but also prone to the dynamics of exclusivist politics. Furthermore, taking heed of the temporality of Benjamin's reference points, one notes the different nature of the use of the mass-reproduced image and aggressive nationalism in 1990s India, and the antagonistic relations of mass-reproduced imagery and an elitist, 'pure' and classical art in 1930s Germany. I shall return to political considerations of festival imagery and praxis in Chapter Eight.

Rameshvar Mitra *Mandap* Tableaux

In a large and busy place like Mumbai, it is only local residents that have the time to visit nearby *mandaps* at leisure. Large attractions such as Lalbaug, Dadar and Tilaknagar exist for participants' '*darshan* tours'. Such *mandaps* construct spectacular displays - ones that aim to impress in size and splendour rather than engage in a substantive dialogue with spectators, as viewers are hurried along by *mandal* attendants. Situating the investigation into audience responses to *mandap* tableaux in Pune, therefore, has enabled me to provide a more thorough account on spectatorship due to the relative ease of *mandap* access, and comparatively more time on the hands of visitors in the city.

The Rameshvar Mitra *mandap* displays in Pune corresponds to the second type of *mandap* model delineated above - that is, a tableau with a representational scene but without taped narration or elaborate sound and light effects. The model-type represents the middle-ground between purely decorative tableaux and 'masala' tableaux which depend for their full efficacy upon their integration with a sound and light show. Reception in this case demonstrated *in situ* and immediate comments about the image seen and what it means to the spectator, accompanied with frequent comments made on its pedagogical value for the community, if not nation. By concentrating on a particular *mandap* tableau, I aim to investigate the syntagmatic disclosures present in discussion as indicators to aesthetic and socio-political sensibilities of the tableau as a whole. Meaning as expressed and explored through spectators' verbalisations were fuelled by their views and participation in the *utsava*. Spectators' discussions, if articulated at all, ranged from transcendent exegesis to very mundane interpretations, which also characterised discussion about the *utsava* itself. The nationalist orientations of the Rameshvar Mitra Mandal displays are representative

of the kinds of displays constructed by several *mandals* in the city of Mumbai and Pune, but as I have noted in Chapter Five, are supplemented by a variety of other types and themes of displays. Space does not permit me to concentrate on them all, but to select those with nationalist themes which suit my investigation of the effects of discursive nationalism on the life-world of festival participants.

The Rameshvar Mitra Mandal (established 1967) in Pune has developed a track record for making large models of famous monuments in India, finely sculpted out of thermocol.⁷ The *mandal* is largely composed of male members resident in the vicinity. They are not publicly partisan to any party, although the main sculptor who is also resident in the neighbourhood expressed Congress sympathies.⁸ Their latter-day intentions were to represent the grand and beautiful buildings of India in *mandap* tableaux. Not only did this offer an opportunity to display local artistic skills, but also it provided a means of mapping out the nation in a series of representations over the years. Since 1988, they have presented finely sculpted thermocol models of the Shri Vitthala Mandir in Thane, the Taj Mahal in Agra, the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta, the Vishva Shanti Bhavan at Mount Abu, the Svaminarayan Mandir in Baroda, and the Ramkrishna Mandir at Belur Math in Calcutta (illustrations 26-27).

The scene presented in 1996 was of an elaborate Aga Khan Palace, intricately carved out of white thermocol with a small *murti* of Ganapati inside the foyer and a picture of Mahatma Gandhi to the side. These were all placed in front of the main *murti* of Ganapati who was in a sedentary pose (illustration 28). The model of the Aga Khan Palace was constructed by the male *mandal* members from a photograph of the building which was displayed to the side of the tableau. The Aga Khan Palace is also known as the Mahatma Gandhi National Memorial, as Gandhi was imprisoned in the building for his involvement with the Non-Cooperation Movement from 1942 against British colonial rule.

Words and the Beyond

Many visitors to this *mandap* expressed how in their efforts to comment on the displays, certain artworks were so beautiful that they were beyond articulation in words (*shabdat sangta yenara nahi*). The implications of such comments are those displays that are less outstanding lend themselves to description; whereas those that incite wonder and awe raise the level of spectatorship to a different plane, beyond their powers of description.⁹ The discussions on the *mandap* tableau allude to the fact that feelings were not just internalised, nor amenable to verbalisation, but that the ecstasy on seeing the scene was beyond their attempts at articulation. Visibly, it was a sensory perception that was incapable of translation into words as it lay beyond mundane

description. Such feelings were lent sustenance by the religious beliefs and disposition of the spectator-participants of the Ganapati *utsava*.

This gives another dimension on the hypotheses that 'art is, by its nature, not reducible to words' (O'Hanlon 1989: 18), or that art surpasses the realm of propositions. In this case, however, it is not to say that all art is beyond verbal descriptions, only that greatly evaluated artworks are ones most likely to surpass verbal articulations. *Kalpanashakti*, the power of artistic imagination, is very much appreciated by the spectators in the displayed artworks, and it is this that overwhelmed the festival participants. On a parallel note, Babb comments on the devotee's engagement with the *murti*:

'The efficacy of *darshan*...depends...on the worshipper/seer's own belief that there is indeed a powerful other whose visual awareness the worshipper has entered; a conviction that is probably powerfully buttressed by the worshipper's own awareness of himself as surrendered, each gesture of homage being a further confirmation of the reality, superiority, and power of the deity' (Babb 1981: 400).

Babb's point about *darshan* of the *murti* alone seem also to extend to reception of the artistry around the *murti*, where artworks are lifted to other planes due to their associations with divinity and the finesse in artistic execution.

Imagination or idea, in this case, are not distinguished from passion and emotion - a dichotomy which infuses a lot of Christian as well as 'secular' ideology in the west. Here the notion of idea and passion are fluid, polymorphous and partake of each other. Words are considered inferior to the experience of the person. Mind (*man*) is considered to be the ultimate decider of the scenery in terms of aesthetic evaluation, but significantly, *man* here is not just used to refer to the mind as in western thought, but also the heart for the work's emotional impact and, on more metaphysical planes, to a moment, however brief, of 'transcendence' of the mundane - that is to say, mind and body as understood in western discourse are entwined in the indigenous notion of *man*. For this to be realised, a disposition to believe in the divine is necessary, which is encouraged by socialisation, practice and media articulation of aspects of the Hindu religion.

There were several phrases used that conveyed satisfaction (*samadhana*) and joy (*ananda*) to *man* which the scenes evoked: *manala aladayak vatnara ahe* (imparts joy/pleasure to the mind); *manamohak* (fascinating, charming, captivating); *mano ka mana* (from the heart); *pahun manala samadhana milale* (after seeing this, the mind is satisfied); *apan manasana ved lavtat* (people will go crazy [on seeing this]).

Various fluid metaphors were in articulation - where the eyes were but a conduit to *man* (heart and mind): *saric sajavat dole nivavun takanari ahe* (the whole scenery gives full satisfaction to the eyes); '*Dolyance parne phitle*': *mhanje nakki kay hote he. Ha dekhava pahun vate* ('Eyesight is well satisfied': the meaning of this phrase is well exemplified by this scene). Comments on the 'whole scenery' implied that a distinction was not made between the *murti* and the tableau of which it was a part. Yet, the presence of the *murti* was significant in that it gave a rationale to the whole display, and differentiated the display from a theatre set or art installation.

Satisfaction, *samadhana*, was often mentioned in terms of reception of the tableau. Satisfaction as conjured by the phrase, *parne ferne*, was about a gratification of the senses - a reconciliation of an intense longing of the heart, mind and sight. Satisfaction implied a search for something idealised, or pre-meditated expectations to be met. On the other hand, surprise, *vismaya*, was also commended. Tableaux designs that lay beyond expectation (*apekshepekshahi*) was another way of demonstrating admiration for uniqueness, innovation (*navinya*) or novel ideas (*navin kalpana*) amongst the sea of *mandap* tableaux constructed for the *utsava*.

Seemingly paradoxical, beliefs form the premises for a moment of *disbelief* or wonder. Such expressions allude to the display's physical manifestations and conceptual associations. Some of these reactions were bodily displayed in spectators' homage to the gods in whose benefit the scene was created, and expressions of humility and awe felt in front of the scenery. This kind of sentiment also extended to reception of sacralised human beings, such as Mahatma Gandhi, which I return to below. Wonder was expressed in reference to the skill of the artworks - in awe of the finesse of artistic imagination and execution, and elements of ingenuity expressed in re-workings of familiar narratives, and use of lighting and mechanics to effect movement and dramatic impact. These sensibilities were infused with respect and homage to the god who instilled a sense of *shanti* (repose or peace) in the worshipper's mind. He was the point of concentration, even if thousands of distractions rested alongside him in terms of visual spectacles or noise and music. Cries at the end of *mandap* viewings of '*Ganapati Bappa Moraya*' were to focus the mind back on god.

Artworks were considered to be dedicated to a higher cause - for the benefit of Ganapati who in turn will benefit his worshippers and society. The *mandap* tableau was considered the temporary home for Ganapati's visit to earth. Ultimate credit for the excellence of the tableau was given to Ganapati. After all, it was Ganapati's presence that, on the one hand, would rid the obstacles presented to him by way of display narratives and devotees' prayers; and, on the other hand, bless those commendable gains and achievements that had materialised in society. So spectatorship was not just about seeing but also about arousing the emotions. It was

not just about observations of an artwork, but the 'mind-food' that the scene provided for the spectator involving a fusion of intellectual exercises and emotional or religious attachments.

Whilst the above commentary concentrates on the reception of *mandap* displays as it pertains to critiques of art-language, and mind-body dualisms, there were other aspects on the kaleidoscopic concept of aesthetics that were evident during the festival. There were at least two trends of artistic preferences - ones that stressed simplicity (*sadhepna*), especially in relevance to the Ganapati *murti* with connotations of humility and truth; alongside those that stressed brightness and dazzling displays or a richness of colours and lighting (*bhadak*) which were realised in bright colours and elaborate lighting. The two strands of aesthetic preferences were compatible to, on the one hand, purist preferences which were also expressed in preferences for devotional music; and, on the other hand, ones that emphasised a playful celebration along with various celebratory music, perhaps the latest in film songs often adapted with lyrics in dedication to Ganapati. However, there are no neat correlations to make here; only to note the compatible articulation of various strands of artistic preferences both in image and sound.

Elements of 'excess' or pious 'discipline' are but two intermingled components of the same aesthetic complex. The former pertains to emotional effects; the latter highlights attention to the more formal and technical elements of display. This apparent contradiction has also been noted in a slightly different variation for the prevalence of excess and discipline, pleasure and constructive agendas such as educational and revivalist plans, and notions of transience and transcendence (Miller 1994: 82) in the *utsava* at large (see Chapter Four). There seems to be a mutual dependency, if not overlapping of the two components, which run through sensibilities of participants as manifest during and around the *utsava*, and its component elements, such as *mandap* tableaux spectatorship.

Revivalism and Vitality

Propelled by centennial celebrations of the *utsava* which began in Pune and Mumbai from 1992 onwards, a strong revivalist streak was notable in festival participants' motivations. This is, to a large extent countervailed, perhaps even sustained, by the entertaining and ludic life that the festival has assumed, although not to the same extent as Holi as described in Marriot's and Miller's accounts (Marriott 1966; Miller 1973). This internal contestation is represented in the comments made about the Ganapati *utsava* - ranging from the importance that Tilak has in its revival and its continuing need for contemporary times, to its efficacy in promoting national unity, to

its celebratory and religious qualities, to comments that complain about its latter-day degeneration to commercialisation, corruption, and excessive competition between *mandals* which act to undermine any consolidatory role the *utsava* might be held to serve between the divine and social worlds.

Historical memory and accounts of the *sarvajanik utsava* are saturated with references to the considered great deeds of Tilak. People also talked about the need to revive Tilak's principles for contemporary problems, particularly socio-political injustices and social fragmentation. It was argued that the festival was started for unity (*ekata*) and should continue to be like this.¹⁰ Similar comments in terms of what the building connotes in nationalist history as a site in memory of Gandhi's freedom fights were frequently made in the reception of the Aga Khan Palace at the Rameshvar Mitra Mandal. As one visitor deftly put it, '*Nationalist sentiment (rashtriya bhavana) + excellent specimen of art (kalakratica utkrashta) = national unity (rashtriya ekata)*'. It is apparent that tableaux were not just appreciated for their demonstration of skill in artistry, or the faithful resemblance to the original as an act of associating oneself with the nation, but participants also elaborated on the continuing significance of the scene to the history and culture of the Indian nation. Associations of Gandhi's freedom struggle were recalled; Gandhi's importance for the nation as the *Rashtrapita* (Father of the Nation) were cited; and his principles of non-violence and peace were noted as a message for the contemporary world. As a result, the *mandal* members were often congratulated for their active role in promoting good principles for the nation and educating the public (*lokjagriti*) with their skilful work of art by spectators.

Feelings of pride (*abhimana*) were expressed if spectators were enthused by particular scenes - pride that the artwork instilled in the youth who made it, in the locality and personnel of the *mandal* if the respondents were from the area, and in Maharashtrian culture. Some respondents were more than explicit about their regional adherence ending their comments with '*Jai Maharashtra!*' if not '*Jai Hind!*'. Members from neighbouring *mandals* also shared in the solidarity fostered by such public occasions. There is a prevalent supportive spirit especially between producers and spectators. However, this sense of unity is to some extent disrupted by competitive drives to win praise and prizes (Chapter Seven), and the political appropriations of *mandals* and contestations to enlist public empathy and support (Chapter Eight) - both factors prevalent in both cities, but to a sharper degree in Mumbai than in Pune.

Reviving national memory ensures not only the vitality of the memory, but also consolidates its relevance for injecting meaningfulness and a sense of purpose into contemporary life - vitality being used in its sense of energy and vigour, and in its related form, as vital or essential. The *mandap* display provided triggers for the remembrance and further valorisation or approval of key figures, sites and events - in

this case, that of Mahatma Gandhi and his public life as moulding the nation's history. Legends are of most significance when they are constantly reproduced through narratives, such that they become part of lived praxis - 'living' legends reactivated for contemporary scenarios (see Chapter Nine). These might take on a collective or social tenor, but could just as well, bring to the fore more individual memories as with one old spectator who recalled the time he met Gandhi in the Aga Khan Palace. Such memories about the history of the nation and its idealised leaders are coloured by emotions of bliss, humility, pride, celebration as well as the educational potential of such displays. As one visitor commented, 'Heroes of the nation that are forgotten are recreated and brought again into the public's memory with the excellent display' ('*Loksamor vismrana jhalele adarsh purushay samor anyasathi kelele karya pharac apratim ahe*').

Nation-oriented statements were not just those that looked inwards towards the history and character of the nation, but also outwards as well in terms of worthy presentations of Indian culture to the world. Thus nationalist consciousness was not just about an imbibing, and its effects on thought, speech and action. It was also a self-reflexive and relational category of thought in its self-conscious presentation on a global stage. Consequently, the notion of the Other in defining the parameters of the nation need be considered in terms of two main arguments - one in terms of how the nation defines its contours and boundaries in relation to perceived enemies or subversive elements; the other in terms of how the nation sees itself next to 'other' nations by the presentation of its prided activities and achievements for 'others' consumption (see Chapter Nine).

It might be added that unlike the case of Mumbai where the Shiv Sena have most strength and despite the fact that there has been a BJP-Shiv Sena state government since 1995, Congress strength continues to be widespread in Pune. This is why figures like Mahatma Gandhi continue to be highly venerated by large numbers of the populace. Even though Shiv Sena and their affiliated *mandals* idolise Hindu militant heroes such as Shivaji and Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, they occasionally pay token respect to Mahatma Gandhi in their *mandap* tableaux narratives of the freedom struggle. However, they do not wholly endorse the 'non-violent' strategies characteristic of Gandhi's public career. From this perspective, the memory of Gandhi is appropriated for his part in fighting for the nation's freedom, rather than seen as part of a specific Congress political outfit (see Chapter Eight).

Pleasure-Principles

Pleasure is more importantly a component part of the festival phenomena for the participants, colouring much of the spectators' perceptions, experiences and discussions. As I have already mentioned, this rests alongside moves to use the festival for educational, revivalist or political agendas. Rather than contradicting each other, these various aspects seem to lend sustenance to each other - entertainment being given a socially beneficial purpose, and didacticism made more pleasurable through entertaining devices (see Chapter Nine).

Hansen explicates the idea of enjoyment as 'the expression of the national "Thing"' (Hansen 1996b: 152). Enjoyment is also a prominent part of the Ganapati *utsava*, and a key to an understanding of its success in nationalist campaigns celebrated by the populace. However, as opposed to Hansen's more psychoanalytical approach to enjoyment, I prefer to look at this as a discursive category, the pleasure-principle, as initiated by participants' discourse.

There is a spectrum of permissible and impermissible pleasures - stimuli for the intellect or the body each attached to a particular moral valency which varies from person to person, and moment to moment in terms of which kinds of pleasures are encouraged or discouraged. Richards notes how pleasure spans its official endorsement and its transgressive potential of the 'moral universe' in relation to Hindi film:

'...the need for mass viewing from audiences of all ages so that profits are maximised calls for a delicate balance between cultural propriety and sexual titillation or between 'official' ideology and 'unofficial' pleasures' (Richards 1995: 11).

Notions of pleasure are not only multivalent and contestable, but also historical and cultural constructs which are linked to socio-historical construction of subjects.¹¹ There are a number of valencies to the pleasure-principle as a component part of *utsava* celebrations - overlapping categories which range from:

- (i) satisfaction (*samadhana*) - that is, pleasure in something done well and a good example set for others. It is an example of 'responsible' pleasure, as distinct from the Indological notion of *samadhi*, which describes a state of deep and intense meditation reached after divine ecstasy. The Ganapati *utsava*, unlike some other religious occasions or rites, is too entwined in the mundane to provide an ideal occasion for endeavours for *samadhi*;
- (ii) bliss (*ananda*) - a more religiously attuned concept of pleasure which concerns a spiritual intoxication - a thirst and satiation of the soul very much located in the person, but a concept of personhood that is indivisible from divine presence. Even though *ananda* has its religious resonance, it is also a concept which is articulated in

more mundane contexts to describe those aspects of the social which stand out from the quotidian;

- (iii) ludic and entertaining notions of pleasure (pleasure - *masta*, play - *lila*, entertainment - *manoranjana*) which is less 'responsible' than *samadhana*, and more about stimulation and pleasure for collective participation, and could splinter off into more self-centred motives; and
- (iv) what might be called 'timepass' or *maja* (pleasure) or *karamanuka* (less thoughtful entertainment than *manoranjana*) which can also be about pleasure. However, this type of pleasure rests precariously on the borderline of what others might describe as bad habits (*vysasan*), vulgarity or obscenity (*ashlilata*) as exemplified by the playing of 'obscene' Hindi film music, obscene dances, drinking, and gambling during the *utsava*. This is an example of pleasure pursued by the more irreverent men, and very much eclipsed by other aspects of pleasure adumbrated above, particularly as efforts have been instigated to clamp down on this kind of behaviour by the likes of the BSGSS and organised competitions. So rather than this being seen as another example of the 'moral majority' turning a blind eye to transgressive pleasures as in Richards' analysis of the heroine in Hindi film, the *utsava* is very much about retaining and renewing a sense of the 'moral universe' which has its socio-political manifestations and ramifications. Effectively, the contemporary *utsava* is less and less a release from the 'moral universe', but rather a bulwark of ethical conduct where efforts are made to expunge subversive pleasures from the *utsava*. This is not to say that permissible pleasures are also discouraged. In fact, as I have argued above, there seems to be a complementarity between aspects of the socio-political, pedagogic and pleasure realms - the success of the former very much hinged on the latter, and the credibility of the latter, very much justified by the former.

The discursive categories of pleasure-principles thrives on a synaesthesia of sentiments and events. This synaesthesia ranges from visual, oral, aural and even fragrant sensibilities, manifest most notably in the visual displays and sounds in this vast urban ritual. Pleasure-principles derive not from the *mandap* tableaux alone, but their component part of a dynamic festival - that is, the performative milieu. As I have already argued in Chapter Four, the Ganapati *utsava* is an expressive intensification of and part of socio-political values which, due to the festival's performative, multi-sensory and media connections, can enhance the unity of participants and intensification of community sensibilities.

Invariably, songs formed a significant part of the experience of evaluation and appreciation of Ganapati mandap tableaux. Babb (1981) notes this in his essay on the subject of *darshan* as seeing, but relegates it to a footnote, not to return to it again. A comparable argument can be made on the primacy of sound in worship to Babb's

attention given to sight as articulated through discourse on *darshan*. In Hindu religious traditions, sound is what the universe is made of - *Aum* is the archetypal concept to represent Brahman. With the influence of the *bhakti* tradition on Hinduism, particularly important in the religious history of Maharashtra, sound through devotional songs and accompanying bells, played a prominent part in the attainment of *shanti*. In contradistinction to Christian expectations succinctly expressed by the proverb 'quiet as a mouse in a church', peace and quiet in the literal sense is not required for communion with god. As I have already argued, *shanti* can indeed be achieved in a noisy environment. That is why in the intensity of the *utsava* proceedings with thousands of people all crowding around to see various Ganapatis, it is still possible for the devoted to attain some kind of *shanti* in the *darshan* of the *murti* in the *mandaps*. The focus remains on the eyes of Ganapati depending upon the devotional dedication of the visitor - a visual transaction which is enhanced by the sounds and practices around him/her

The fusion of visual spectacle or *darshan*, music and song is notable and is often remarked upon by spectators. Spectators note how appropriate the songs selected were in, for instance, a Shivaji scene, or a patriotic scene, or they would recommend other types of songs to be played. Often, their evaluation was based on the moment they decided to make the visit - thus, views were circumstantial as many tapes were played throughout the festival. Nonetheless, care and attention was given to the sound, as it was to the narration where, frequently, actors were chosen for their resonating voices, and juxtaposed with suitable background music. In narratives that go from historical subject matters, to the contemporary ills of society and future hopes, appropriate musical leitmotifs were used, often influenced by Hindi film. A single shriek of the *shehnai* was an aural metaphor for Shivaji and his times, whereas songs from Manoj Kumar's films emphasised a nationalist message. Songs lent further force to the affective sides of the *mandap* tableaux. If they could evoke a time and inspire collective singing from the audience, which often happened, familiarity and empathy could be effected. Appreciative comments were made by spectators if the music fitted the mood of the display.

Courtright too notes the applicability of songs to the kind of tableaux constructed - from simple, decorative, religious, to the more innovative and socio-political (Courtright 1985: 192-3). However, the neat links he makes with types of songs and scenes did not apply to the city of Mumbai and Pune. *Mandaps* in Mumbai tend to make use of 'filmi' music much more than their Pune counterparts. *Mandal* members noted the way Hindi film music can add to the evocativeness of the *mandap* tableaux, as well as provide an entertaining environment to educate the public.

Participants generally considered the music to be permissible in a religious occasion, so long as they did not contain obscene lyrics. In Pune, many of my respondents were disapproving of Hindi film music being played in *mandaps* as it detracted from the religiosity of the occasion. Some mentioned that it ‘polluted’ the religiosity of the atmosphere and occasion (*vatavarān dushit hote*). Such sentiments were also expressed by Mumbai respondents, particularly the elder devotees and those active in preserving traditional forms of *utsava* celebrations, who I refer to as revivalists. Revivalists are as preoccupied with the question of whether Hindi film music should be played at *mandaps* as they are conscientious about upholding the religious, educational and socially useful aspects of the *utsava*. For these reasons, opinions of Pune devotees can reflect those of Mumbai devotees as well.

As with various aspects of the *utsava*, the question of playing Hindi film music at *mandaps* is open to debate. It ranges from those vehemently opposed to its playing (the view of most *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges as well), to those who realise its value and approve of it so long as it is suitable, to those that think it is great as part of the general mood of celebration in the *utsav*. Within this continuum, it is the former end that seems to be the most dominant in setting the tone for *mandap* sounds. This is an observation that is supported by moves to ban Ganapati cassettes using lyrics in praise of the god against popular film theme tunes, and its disapproval by most *Girnar-Loksatta* judges. Yet this is not to say that the enjoyment aspects of the *utsava* are also curtailed, rather efforts are made to control the excesses of enjoyment so it remains more about *samadhana*, *ananda*, and to controlled extents, *manoranjana*.

The Immersion Procession

The celebratory tones of the festival reached a crescendo on Anant Caturdasi, the final day of the *utsava* when the Ganapati *murti* was taken to the waters and immersed (*visarjan*). Commonly, this is on the eleventh day after the installation of the *murti* for public *mandals*. However, private households sometimes immerse their *murti* on the first, fifth or seventh day after the beginning of the *utsava*.

The Ganapati *utsava* as a platform for education, enlightenment and enthusiasm, was given more performative potency when this platform was mobilised through the streets of the cities in its final farewell to people. Eleven days of public preparations, maintenance, visits, and worship of the Ganapati *murti* along with all other artistic works and programmes put on for the event, came to an end. The final rite of releasing the *pran* from the *murti*, the *uttara puja*, was conducted. *Murtis* were lifted on to a decorated vehicle, be it bullock cart, trolley, car, van or truck, and the *pandals* were

dismantled. The *pandals* become skeletons of their former selves as most of the decor was placed on the procession vehicle depending upon convenience. In Pune, only corrugated metal remained standing around wooden platforms as the procession *rath* were decorated much more elaborately than Mumbai *raths*.¹² The immersion procession was more of an event unto itself in Pune than Mumbai. Some of the displays were kept intact and placed on to the *rath* for the procession.¹³

Similarly, inside houses, *uttara puja* was performed to Ganapati. The *murti* was then carried around the house before being placed on a decorated wagon or vehicle for the procession. Pockets of wandering families walked alongside the main processions to their place of destination with devotional eagerness. Some men pushed Ganapati on a cart normally used for selling fruit. Others with smaller Ganapatis carried the *murti* snuggled in their arms followed by their relatives and friends. *Sarvajanik mandals* converged with private households. Since 1993, Mumbai processions have been telecast into homes as a result of live coverage by Doordarshan - another way the public and private realms were merged as indeed, the performative and its live media coverage converge.

Procession routes were regulated by a vast body of Police and crowd control volunteers, as the march to the waters began. Immersion processions crawled down the side streets and main roads with destinations in mind - in Mumbai, the Arabic Ocean and, in Pune, the River Mutha or Mula. The main sites of immersion in Mumbai are Chowpatty Beach, Shivaji Park, and Juhu Beach on the Arabian Sea coastline (illustrations 29-34).¹⁴ The main site of immersion in Pune is along the River Mutha nearest the main bazaar street, Lakshmi Road, although since 1995, the parallel arterial road, Tilak Road, is also used for immersions to accommodate the increase in *mandals* over the last few years (illustrations 35-36). In contradistinction to the ordered manner of immersion (*visarjan*) in Pune where the last Ganapati *murti* to be immersed is given most importance, Mumbai's immersion processions do not follow a strict pattern. Police and traffic patrols try to ensure smooth progress to immersion locations in both cities, its presence more visible in Mumbai.

Carts, trucks and other vehicles that moved were decorated with flowers, leaves, cloth streamers, electric lights, banners as attendants either sat or walked along. Characteristically, the drummers and other musicians led the way whilst dancers followed and mingled with the thumping of the drums. In Pune in particular, dramas of nationalist histories and themes were also performed in the procession routes (see Chapter Nine).

Tapes of devotional songs meshed with actual singing by some of the participants. This was pierced by the beat of drumming, and warcry-like shouts of jubilation to Ganapati. The thundering of drums interspersed with melodious *shehnai*

sounds reeling off the latest Hindi film track also greeted the ear. These clashed with the shrieking of horns - cars, taxis, buses and trucks all trying to inch their way through the congestion, clogging up the arteries of the road systems. A wall of confrontational sounds was created with the people and vehicles on the streets, each competing for airspace.

Red *gulal* was thrown into the air, landing on the ground, cars, people, playfully sometimes aggressively.¹⁵ Along with the saffron flags attached to vehicles and street sides, the whole presented a glorious picture in technicolour. The procession went on steadily. The smell of sweat and firecrackers pervaded the atmosphere. Sweaty and wet bodies mingled with each other as they hopped up and down with arms and legs akimbo, in time to the beat of the drum. Although mainly men, a few more adventurous women thrust their hips to the tempo, whilst others in pairs swung round and round holding hands in a game called *phugdi*, and children skipped around delightedly in a gauche manner. They danced with whoops of joy to the craze and dementia of the drum beat whilst the odd cry of *Ganapati Bappa Morya* recalled their reason for such revelling.

Despite this seeming abandonment, great care was taken by the more sober members to protect the *murti* from any breakage on the journey. Sometimes *mandals* cordoned off their group as they slowly proceeded, so as the dancers, particularly the women, were not harassed. When it rained, as is likely during the tail-end of the monsoon months, a sea of umbrellas rose up and swamped the cityscape. Even Ganapati *murtis* were covered with their special umbrellas, which was particularly important if the *murti* was made of clay. Some of the bigger ones were transported with their own plastic transparent coverings, the elephant head sticking out of a make-shift mackintosh. But downpours did not in any way dampen the spirits of the observing, walking, singing, and dancing crowds.

The visual arts, deities, music, parades, crowds all came together in this most exhilarating part of the festive phenomena. Even the architecture around the processions came to life as people hung out of windows and balconies throwing streamers and *gulal* on to the procession. Political party *pandals* representing the Shiv Sena, BJP, VHP and the Congress party had been constructed at main junctions on the sides of the road. Members sat at tables whilst supporters supplied cold water and sherbet drinks to the participants. Doordarshan crews also had their own platforms on the sides of the roads. Whereas Mumbai is renowned for the innovation and size of its *murtis*, in Pune the procession is more of an mobilised artistic display, as their *mandap* tableaux are adapted for the floats themselves (illustration 36). Thus, newspaper-run competitions had *pandals* to view the *rath* for the judges' evaluations in the Pune procession.

Murtis of all shapes and sizes vied for attention, as human and camera gazes zoomed in on them. Large Ganapatis did indeed stand out like *rajas* amongst the sea of minions around them in Mumbai. As Courtright writes for the Ganapati *utsava* in Ahmadnagar:

'It is a grand spectacle for those who observe it from the sidelines and balconies along the parade route. Emotions run high at this time of greatest unity and collective enjoyment' (Courtright 1985: 195).

Similarly Freitag notes how in Agra festivals, neighbourhood or patron-based parties come together to form a whole (Freitag 1989: 131-2). Any competitive spirit that might have existed between separate *mandals* largely breaks down in this phenomena which Turner has famously called *communitas* (Turner 1969). The coming together of various groups is also notable between performers and spectators, and represents a heightened convergence between the indistinct boundaries between processionists and observers, producers and spectators of the arts which I have already noted above. Freitag comments:

'There was, working on the psychological level, much to knit both onlookers and processionists into a meaningful whole. This integration worked in spatial, temporal and cognitive terms' (Freitag 1989: 133).

The *Ganeshotsava* immersion procession was also a moment when the intensity of participation was most enhanced. The synaesthesia of senses provided a powerful integrative link by bringing people together in a statement of, albeit momentary, collective solidarity. However as Courtright points out:

'It is also a dangerous time because the unity that is sought is so fragile. Irritations and conflicts must be suppressed at precisely the moment when one is least inclined to suppress anything' (Courtright 1985: 195).

Such tensions arise not only from problems consequent of large collectivities in a state of exhilaration, but also in terms of aggressively asserting a Hindu performance and public space. Tensions based on religious communal lines were most marked on passing through Muslim enclaves where a mosque was situated. Even though police efforts were made to circumvent such potential trouble zones, tempers could still be volatile, particularly in periods after communalist violence.

Despite the fact that the procession started early in the morning, it is in the night time when fireworks were lit and lighting was at its most dramatic, that electricity truly charged the air. In Mumbai, processions came to a halt at the sea front - the human sea seeming to be as powerful as the Arabian Sea. The two seas merge as some people wander in to the ocean, and the more adventurous men in swimming trunks, brave the forces of the cold and restless waves to immerse Ganapati, with others trailing behind. A festive atmosphere pervaded the grounds, and hawkers made a field day out of selling knick-knacks, silly hats, balloons, and sparklers on the beach or river banks.

Before immersion, a final *arati* was performed in front of the *murti* amongst lit fires on the shore, and fireworks all around. Flower garlands were taken off the Ganapati *murti*, put to one side and carried by one person to take to the sea. Coconut and banana leaf in a *kailash* were also taken, as was the *puja* tray. Effectively:

'..the festival accomplishes a heightened level of solidarity among people. At the domestic level, family and friends come together with the focus on the *murti*, receives *prashad* together, share a feast and a sacred time together, and then return Ganapati to the primordial source from which it emerged' (Courtright 1985: 199).

The effervescent, ecstatic and grotesque features of procession activities are countervailed by purists wishing to keep to the religious nature of the *utsava*, and state control through Police regulation and surveillance. The grotesque body (Bakhtin 1968) is not left to gay abandonment, but anamorphising, interacting and ultimately succumbing to the controlling forces of the revivalist and civic bodies. Solidarity is expressed by participating *sarvajanik mandals* which represent neighbourhoods throughout the city. Momentarily, in this liminal space, communal sensibilities are reinforced and 'the awareness of the common relationships to the deity is enhanced' (Courtright 1985: 199). In the worship, they also 'assert their common bond as Maharashtrians, a bond that unites them beneath the divisions of caste and class' (Courtright 1985: 251), however transient this sentiment may be.

The exhilaration in participation of the event led to a kind of sadness and emptiness following the immersion of the *murti*, but nonetheless, a sharpened sense of revitalised community. The next morning, beaches and river banks lay empty, except for bright clutters of litter. In Mumbai, the occasional Ganapati *murti* which had returned with the tides was duly immersed again by beach attendants. Only tired memories and eager anticipation of the next visit of Ganapati for the next *utsava* remained.

'Saffronisation' of Public Space

In the festive occasion, saffron flags festoon the city - tied to poles, banners and welcome arches. Just as saffron speaks of religious associations, so too does saffron connote militant Hindu politics. Increasingly, in a political climate of militant religion, saffronisation has become used to describe the adoption and propagation of Hindutva politics as Lele describes in his article on the Shiv Sena (1995). There is a blurred line between the two, which is replicated in the argument over whether sacralisation of public space lends itself to religious or Hindutva associations.

The politics of the moving image of a deity entail a set of *murtis* which go around the city in procession, in the course of which territorial and social statements are made. In Mumbai, more so than in Pune, there are several areas where communal tensions run high wherein such activities take on a portentous note. The Sardar Vallabhai Patel Road is one of the main procession routes for the Ganapati *utsava* in Dongri and its neighbouring district, Girgaum, in Mumbai. On opposite sides of this main road in Dongri live Hindus on one side and Muslims on the other. A former resident who still has his artist's studio in the area, likens the situation to the border between India and Pakistan. Communal riots have occurred in this area, but surprisingly, not during the Ganapati *utsava*. This is largely due to the heavy precautions that the Police authorities take on such occasions. Nonetheless, routes of the procession, although more or less the same from year to year, are a sensitive issue for the two communities. Whereas earlier, making such a territorial statement was a sign of community bravado, nowadays Police authorities have clamped down on such ambitions by either making diversions such that the procession does not pass a mosque, or posting heavy patrols in the area to curb any likelihood of violence.

Contestations during the *utsava* were possible along issues of a communal nature and public space, the two generally being related. This situation is particularly sharp in an urban space due to the fact that, firstly, there is massive congestion of traffic, buildings and people in places like Mumbai; and secondly, urban space can have just as much communal or regional identifications as migrant communities into the city assert their place in the city. Additionally, Freitag notes:

'The use of urban space proved especially important in expressing community...Use of the main thoroughfare ensured the maximum audience, always an important consideration for the public exercises of religion. More significantly, it established community claims to the center of urban locale, implying the centrality of the group to city life' (Freitag 1989: 134).

Here, the issue at stake is not just about the use of public space, but reasserting the importance of Hinduism to the city, if not nation, effectively contributing to the

phenomena of a sacralisation of public space. The process is similar in intention to Tilak's aims to politicise the festival by bringing it out into the public realm.

Just as public religious festival are likely to foster social solidarity, so they are also prone to aggravate the awareness of difference in the city. Communal tensions reach a peak at such religious events, but due to increased Police and voluntary vigilante brigades, they have not as yet flared into riotous activities during the festival. Moreover:

'it would be a mistake, however, to leave the impression that the festival is a tinderbox of communal hostilities. It is rather a barometer of communal pressures' (Courtright 1985: 199).

Communal pressures in society at large are likely to effect the character of the festival itself. Since the 1992-93 riots in cities throughout the country and the series of bomb blasts in Mumbai in March 1993, relationships had become much more communalised in Mumbai. If not through violence during the events themselves, members of both communities have shown less tolerance of each other's religious events.

Such public processions as a means by which public space is sacralised, lending itself to communalist politics, need to be seen against the emergence of other kinds of religion-based processions up and down the country. This includes not only religious festivals such as Durga *Puja* and Jagannatha, or indeed religious pilgrimages, but what might also be specifically arranged for electioneering purposes, as with Hindutva politician's *rath yatras*. Even though the official explanation of the *rath yatra* is seemingly religious, instrumental purposes for political gains of various sorts are also evident. Assayag summarises such processions:

'This patterned activity - but it is also invented anew as it happens because the meaning of the event is inscribed in its performance - constitutes a tremendously important arena for the cultural construction of nationality and the dramatic display of the social lineaments of power. By a way of politicisation of ritual or ritualisation of politics, the ritual action of *hindutva*'s procession is a crucial site of nationalist struggle, indeed communalism' (Assayag 1996: 1).

The politicisation of public space as exemplified by the Ganapati *utsava* in Mumbai is particularly vehement with Shiv Sainik *mandals* (see Chapter Eight). Just as 'the capillary network drawn by the militant cartography of the *hindutva* processions periodically revitalises the body of India' (Assayag 1996: 10, his italics), so too are the sinews of the city and state revitalised with the support and promotion of the Ganapati *utsava*. With the Shiv Sena and like-minded Hindutva parties, this assumes overwhelming communal dimensions.

As the festival is an expression of public devotion, it is also a means of inclusion within a community of interest, which certain instrumental organisations have channelled into their own case, claiming to represent the community of interests. ‘Tame’ - that is, less communalised or ‘secular’ - sentiments of group identification based upon participation in a religious event complement rather than challenge these assertions in the performative event to take *murtis* to the place of immersion. By demonstrating a common point of interest in worship of the same god with force of numbers, one could argue that they even, albeit unintentionally, contribute to the Hindutva brigade’s opportunist campaigns. Indeed, the ‘tame’ version of community solidarity based on Hinduism - what I have referred to as Hindu secular - differs from militant Hindutva aggression by degrees rather than kind. On the mass-mediated images disseminated through television particularly as happened with Doordarshan’s broadcasting of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, Rajagopal comments:

‘A highly disciplined and organised force like the RSS, which has overseen and propelled the growth of communalism, can exploit this altered form of commitment to present its own politics as representing those of the public at large’ (Rajagopal 1994: 1660).

It appears that the public festivities too provide conditions for the public event to be appropriated for instrumental ends, albeit instrumentality premised on religious grounds. However, Bharucha comments:

‘...every devout Hindu is not necessarily a VHP activist, though the possibility of his or her devotion becoming ‘activized’ cannot be ruled out. But then neither can the possibility of those residual elements of faith resisting the new ideologies be ruled out’ (Bharucha 1993: 12).

As Bharucha points out, participants’ agency needs to be taken into account. A public festival such as the Ganapati *utsava* is officially open to participation by all, but nonetheless dominated by Hindu believers. These participants include ‘secular’ Hindus who oppose the communalisation of politics. They are also those groups of people whose discussions are limited to the entertaining potential of the collective event. Others are less agnostic, and more vehemently against the direction such *utsavas* are taking. They realise the premises such festivals provide not for national integration, but, decimation and disturbance due to unmitigated religiosity encouraged in urban tinder-boxes of communal relations. There is also disapproval vented in view of the vast expenditure, corruption in the form of donation rackets, and critiques of the communal monopoly of public space which is increasingly defined as a Hindu public space.

Antipathy or resistance against the forces of Hindutva does not, as Nandy argues, 'lie in a glib secularism hoping to supplant ancient faiths. It lies in alliance with formations that have risen in rebellion against the social forces and the ideologies of dominance that have spawned *Hindutva* in the first place' (*The Times of India*, February 18, 1991). Albeit to a lesser degree of analysis, sites of resistance, non-acceptance and contestation of the saffronisation of the festival are represented in the festival period by the apolitical *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition process, which I elaborate in the next chapter, and contested by other parties which forward alternative politics, which I describe in Chapter Eight.

Communal contestation is not only evident in public space, but also over public media - effectively conjoined in the public field. The *Ganapati utsava* is not only characterised by record amounts of people participating in celebrations, particularly in Maharashtra, but it is the annual festival that receives most media attention. Thus space - both geographic and media networks - is dominated by the majority religion, Hinduism. The competition for sacralisation of space is, through majority force, won by the Hindu contingent, despite the fact that both Hindu and Muslim communities officially rely upon state authorities for non-sectarian approval of events held in a public space. The combination of state, party politics and festival praxis acts to cumulate in the oppression of other religious communities and their public events.

Conclusion

It is apparent that the above discussion leads to an understanding of artworks which lend themselves to both cognitive and emotional effects. In so doing, the mind-body dualism which pervaded a lot of the arguments on meaning (Sperber 1974; Forge 1979; Hobart 1982; O'Hanlon 1989) was countervailed. Artworks particularly when installed and mobilised for public events such as a festival are lent 'argumentative capacity' by being part and process of a variety of beliefs, thoughts, statements, practices and socio-political utilisation in a time of intense activities during the *utsava*. This is the 'syntagmatic concatenation' which Eco and Pinney refer to, and which allude to a heightened paradigmatic sense of aesthetics as well. The pluralities of festival activities and interpretations seem to converge on certain points - first, the religious basis for the occasion, and second, the festival's benefits to the nation in terms of reproducing its histories and character for collective celebration in the nation-space. Above, I accounted for the various sites and textures of the festival - from attention to the interpenetrating spheres of religious practice and worship to the festive context to the tableau and its variant interpretations in terms of the wonder it ignited in spectators, patriotism, pleasure, to the multi-sensory occasion ending in the procession

through the streets of the cities. I then noted the potential of the festival to lend itself to Hindutva ideology from the perspective of its multiple constituencies of participants.

It is evident that the festival is reliant upon a number of activities of a religious, artistic, entertaining and socio-political nature. The performative event is characterised by a multi-sensory synaesthesia, providing for multiple sites of readings, which are conditioned yet necessarily unbounded, due to the limitations and contestation of hegemonic processes in the social space. I have noted that certain aspects lie on the perimeters of language, such as the practices associated with belief, ideas and enjoyment, but nonetheless, are partially linked to the discursive field. The various activities of the festival provide for a field of discursivity with a 'surplus of meaning' which contradicts or resists the effects of totalising hegemonic forces (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 111).

Tensions are evident of various sorts between revivalist and licentious aspects, apolitical and political connotations, the consolidation of society yet teetering on the edge of subversion or disruption, and Hindutva and secular Hindu politics. Following Bharucha's (1993) critique of Nandy's separation of religion as faith and religion as ideology, I prefer to see the way the two components of faith and ideology feed off each other, and note the kinds of metaphysical, social or political discourses, in which faith is enmeshed. The *utsava* does not only demonstrate the intermeshing of religious praxis and ideological formations, but also provides succour to them by the process of mass annual revitalisation. But this is not a straightforward equation of a diversity of religious practices being channelled into a unilinear ideological movement. For as is shown by the comments about the Rameshvar Mitra Mandal's work lending itself to 'secular' nationalism, and demonstrated more vividly in Chapter Eight, there is a contestatory arena between propagators of variant hegemonic strategies. For many, nation-oriented politics (*rashtriya ekatmata* or *desh bhakti*), rather than partisan politics (*rajnaik*) seem to be normalised in lived praxis. Further, there does not seem to be a site in the performative milieu which is not effected by politically motivated ideologies. This could even apply to assumptions that the ontological essence of the festival lies in the *murti*, for the significance of the deity has arisen through a history of nationalist politics, some of which have been mobilised against British, if not Muslim communities since the festival's mobilisation in the 1890s. Further, recourse to an even more purist sense of Hinduism and 'traditional' appearances of the *murti* form has been one of the characteristics of the Hindutva political movement since the 1980s. This has had its impact amongst those that do not necessarily agree with Hindutva politics, but nonetheless, observe Hindu religious practices. It is not possible to pinpoint when Hindu faith and practice becomes communalist, but only note the visible overlaps in the public field, alongside participants' viewpoints. This is a phenomena

which is similar to the discrepant relationships between politically motivated displays and their reception by participants in the festival which I account for in Chapter Eight.

As with the pervasive influence of politics on the festival, so with the observation that aesthetics is by no means confined to reception of artworks alone, but pervades socio-political areas. For the Ganapati *utsava*, aesthetics is a constituent part of evaluative and affective schemas, which will be further outlined in the next chapter on the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition. The focus on media and decision-making realms complement this chapter on the collective participative component, which together exemplify my argument on the public field as it pertains to the Ganapati *utsava*.

¹The vagaries as to when the *murti* is considered to have become deified and when the *murti* is considered more as a vessel for the deity as in the pre-*pranpratishta* stage are inversely paralleled by the final rite, *uttara puja*, on the last day of the *utsava* when the *pran* is ritually released, yet the *murti* continues to be treated as a deity with special auspicious powers in its immersion procession. There seems to be a cloudy envelope around these ritual points of *pranpratishta* and *uttara puja* which signals, respectively, both the expectation and arrival of the deity on earth, and the departure and a 'ghost' of its presence in the *murti* form. Generally, thoughts are so suffused and confused with ideas about the *murti* form as a vehicle of godhead, that beliefs about the divinity of the actual form take on their own realities even before the installation of *pran*, and on the other hand, after the release of *pran*. The explanation for this conundrum was given in the fact that if god has not entered the *murti* form through the *pranpratishta*, then he is everywhere around it especially in a place where his name is remembered and worshipped. As long as the modelled form has the appearance of a Ganapati and particularly with the painting of the eyes, the Ganapati *murti* is treated with the utmost care and respect. That is why, even during immersion processions, if the Ganapati *murti* should be damaged in any way, compensatory *pujas* have to be made immediately to ward off any inauspiciousness.

²Large *murtis* in Mumbai are only possible by the fact that the Arabian Sea is used as a site of immersion. The commercial climate of the city intensifies the drive for more striking representations of the deity, and indeed tableaux (see Chapter Seven).

³The posters of *rath yatra* refer to BJP campaigns of taking elaborate chariots around the country for enlisting support for their cause (see below).

⁴Khetvadi is a notorious place for prostitution, gambling dens and gangs. Yet, as it is near the area of Girgaum, many families venture out to see the more glitzy side of Ganapati festivals, particularly as it is nearer than Lalbaug.

⁵This was a viewpoint that was apparent amongst purists or participants with 'secularist' leanings, such as *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges accounted for in Chapter Seven. In Chapter Eight, I discuss the political co-option of festival *mandals*.

⁶I return to variant views as represented by the promulgation of nationalist ideas by politically partial *mandals* in Chapter Eight.

⁷Thermocol is a white form of polystyrene which one will be familiar with in its widespread use of packing electronic items in boxes.

⁸This is not rare in the city of Pune, for Congress continues to have strength in the city, even though Shiv Sena associated *mandals* are also present in the city. See Chapter Eight for more on the political appropriations and affiliations of *Ganeshotsava mandals*.

⁹It might be mentioned that such analysis need not be specific to the Indian context, as similar expressions are also evident in English usage, such as, 'It left me speechless!' or 'I was lost for words' and so forth. However, the difference here is that such expressions in the English might not just convey a feeling of awesome wonder, but display a polyvalency which could also connote expressions of shock and horror. It bears interesting parallels with David Parkin's semantic excursion into changing notions of 'fear' from 'god-fearing' to the more commoditised notion of 'dread' and 'horror' as encouraged by horror movies in contemporary life (Parkin 1985).

¹⁰This was also the main impetus for the *Loksatta* editorial board to set up a *Ganeshotsava* competition in 1986.

¹¹Hansen notes expressions of triumphalism and joy amongst Hindus after the destruction of the Babari Masjid in 1992 (Hansen 1995: 30). However, this 'communalisation' of enjoyment was not apparent amongst participants in the Ganapati *utsava*, despite the fact that several *mandal* members saw the festival in a communalised light contingent upon communal sentiments running throughout society at large. This is most probably due to the temporal gap between the mosque's destruction in December 1992 and the Ganapati *utsava* in September 1993, and the caution, despondency and anger unleashed after the series of bomb blasts in Mumbai in March 1993.

¹²Corrugated metal rather than canvas is used in Pune as it is more waterproof. This is to protect against comparative more rains in Pune than Mumbai due to its higher location above sea level in the Deccan.

¹³The Pune processions are a lot more ordered, the most important Ganapatis - that is, those from the older *mandals* - immersing their *visarjan murti* last. The *Girnar-Loksatta* competition organisers in Pune consider the procession *rath* as contenders for a separate prize category in place of the category of Best *Murti*. See Chapter Seven.

¹⁴Immersion sites in Mumbai in 1997 were largely located on the western coast of Mumbai except for ten areas lying towards Thana Creek or inside tanks or ponds.

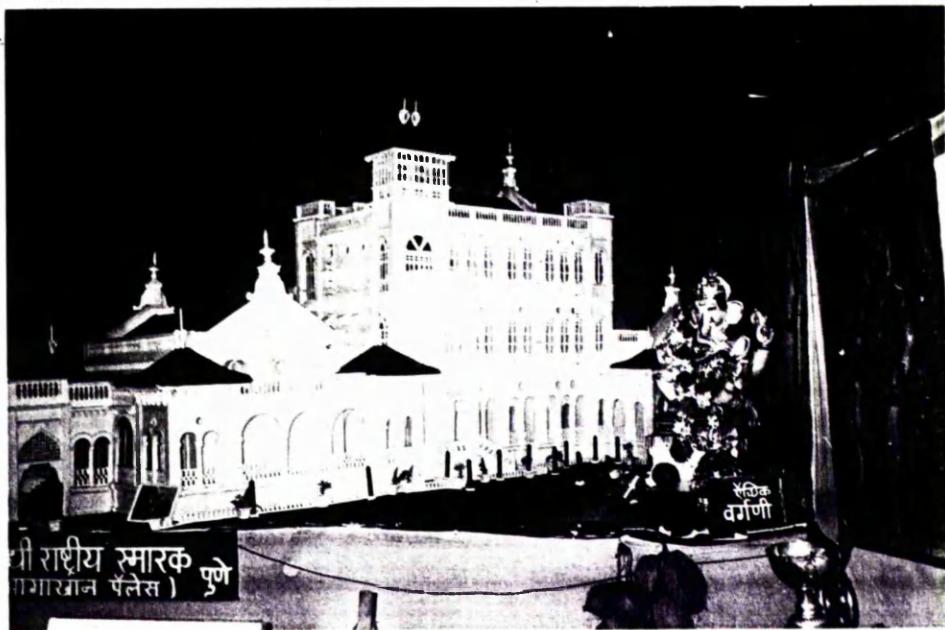
¹⁵Courtright informs us of connotations of throwing *gulal*: '..a practice reminiscent of the squirting of colored water during the Krsna festival of Holi. The vermillion color of the powder corresponds both to the color of Ganesa's images and the powder rubbed into the unbroken rice grains (*akstata*) offered to Ganesa during his *puja*. In a larger symbolic context, red is the color of vitality because of its associations with blood, and it generally represents a symbolic transition in an auspicious direction (Beck 1969). *Gulal* symbolically distributes Ganesa's graceful presence much as does the *prashad* of the *puja*' (Courtright 1985: 197).



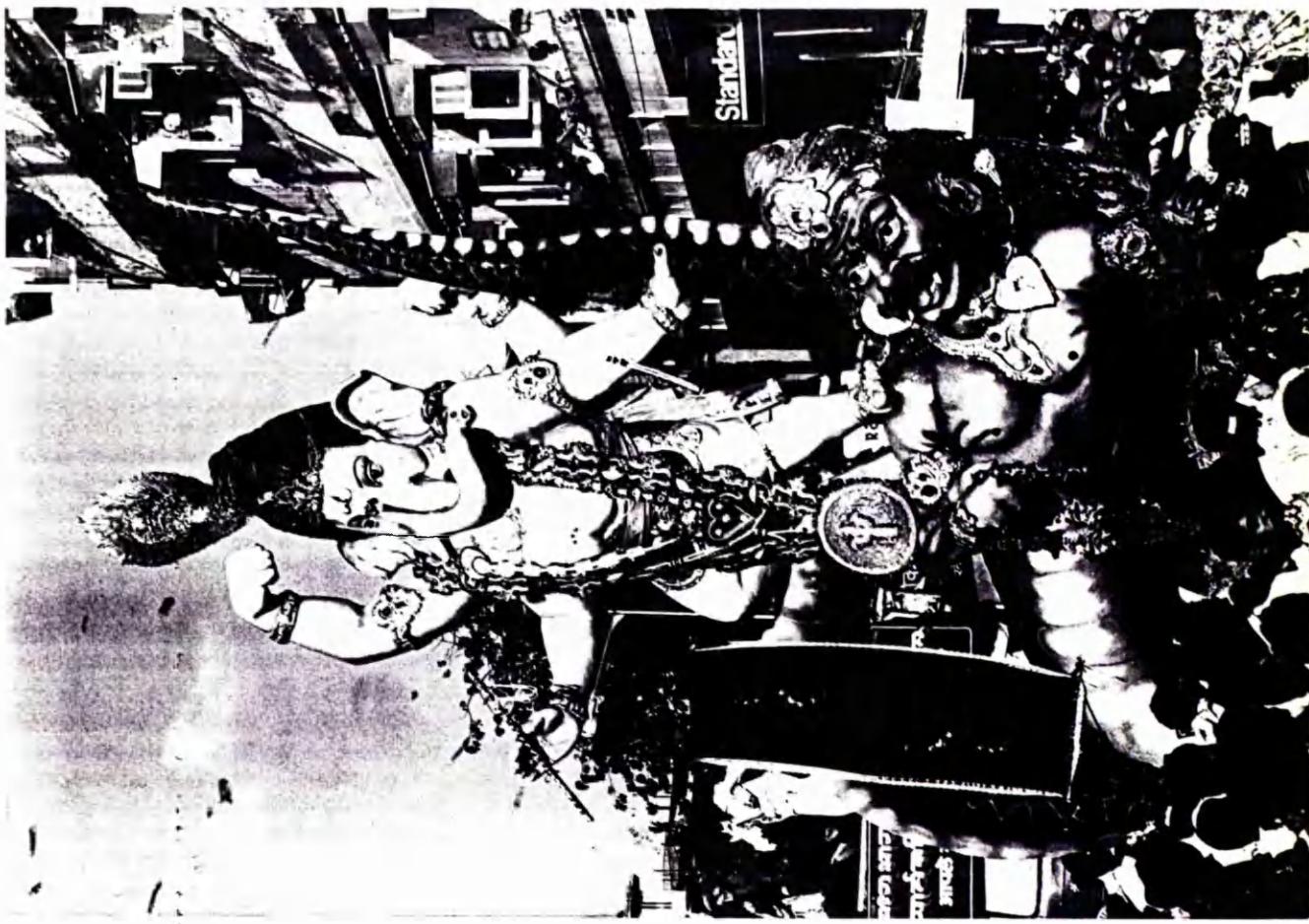
26



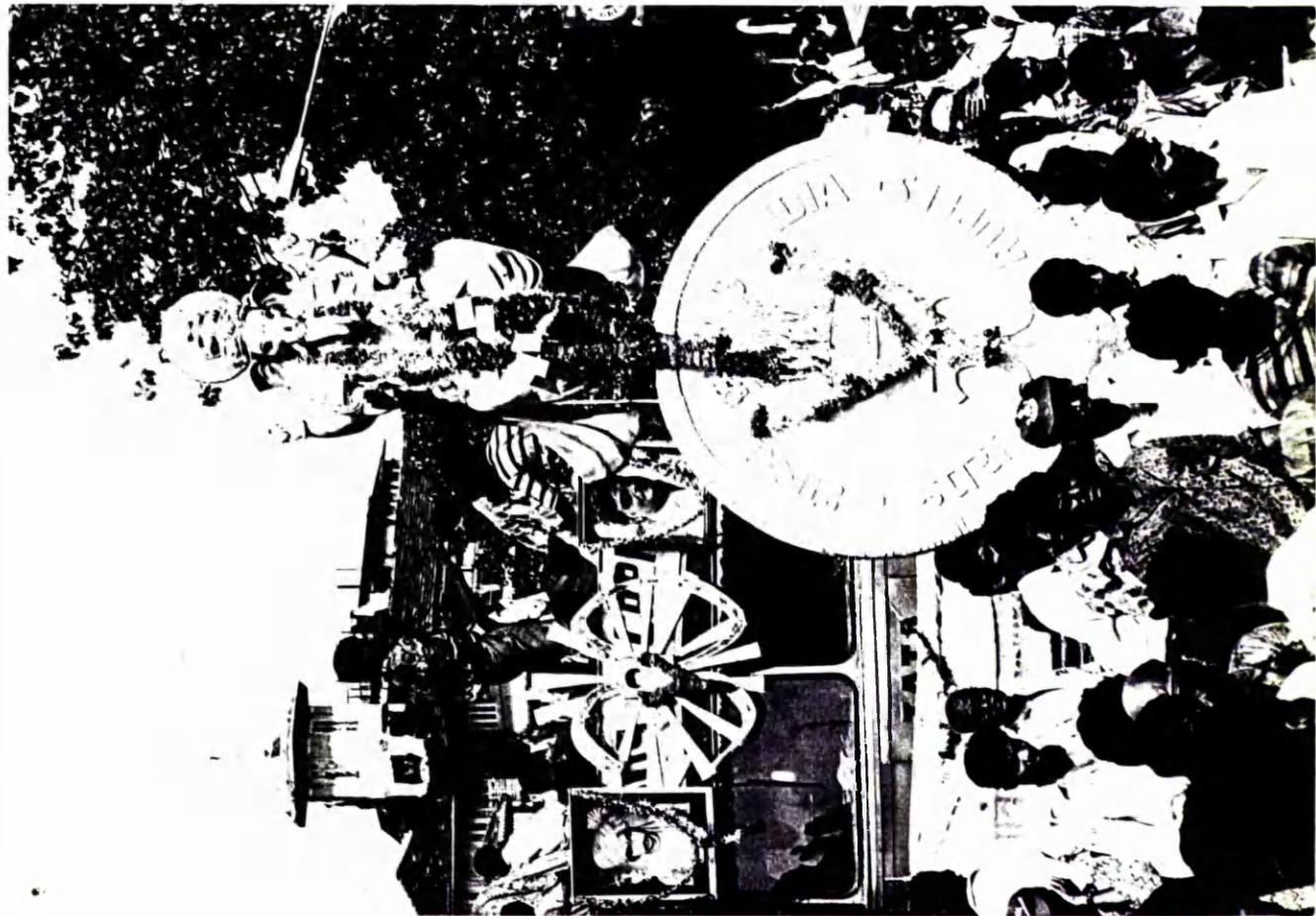
27



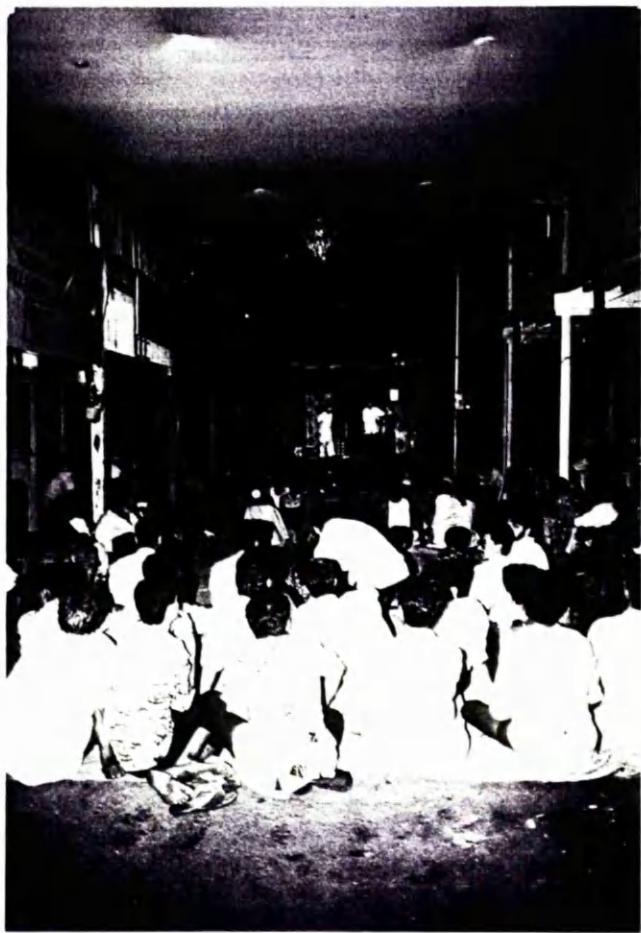
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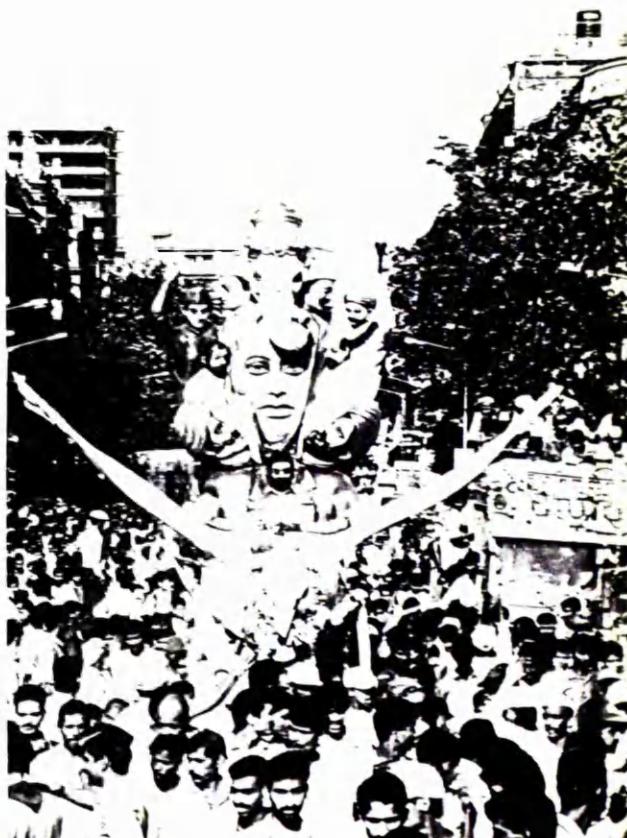
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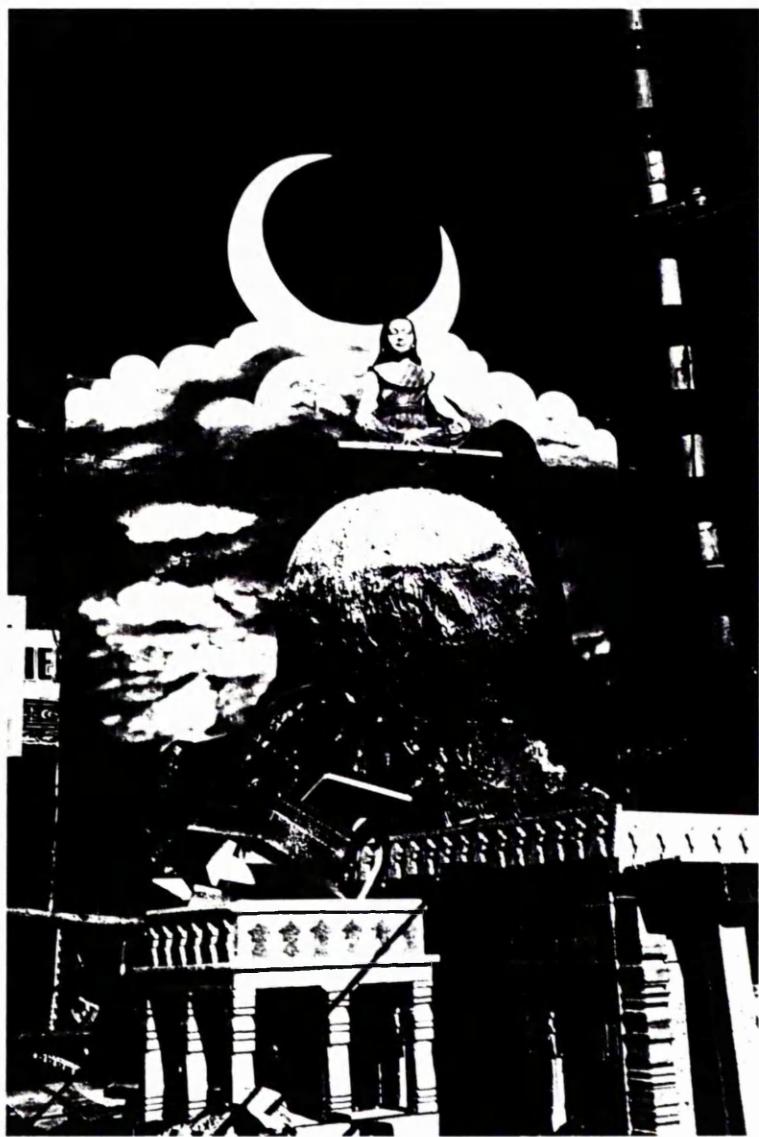
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Chapter Seven

Mandals, Markets and Media

In this chapter, I discuss the interconnections between the festival *mandals*, the world of business, and media networks. This is exemplified by a focus on an organised competition sponsored by a well-known tea company, *Girnar*, and the most widely read Marathi language newspaper organisation, *Loksatta*, for the evaluation of *mandal* activities and their *mandap* displays - a tripartite relationship expressed in the title, *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava Spardha* (Competition). One aspect feeds off and informs or supports the other in a multi-directional dialogue. Businesses sponsor religious activities as well as attain publicity for themselves through their banners and adverts being featured around *pandals* and in *mandal* souvenirs. On the other hand, *mandals* accrue finance for grander displays and social welfare work in the community. Media organs too gain finance to co-ordinate their operations in covering and sending judges out to *mandals* in the city. On the other hand, businesses as with *mandals*, get further publicity in the widespread media dissemination of festival praxis. Media organs serve the additional purpose of recording, monitoring and evaluating *mandal* activities and displays. In the process, they serve a regulatory role as their categories of evaluation influence competition contenders. It is notable that whereas media organisations are funded by generally official corporate sources of finance, *mandals* are supported by a range of businesses, from large businesses, banks and small shopkeepers. However, sometimes *mandals* engage in protection rackets and 'black' market sources. This is particularly the case with *mandals* with Shiv Sena or underworld connections in Mumbai. Such malpractice is one of the features which *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges look out for, in their role as guardian regulators of the festival's religious, artistic and nationalist ideals. Effectively, the consociate of business and newspaper allow for the management and evaluation of festival praxis, representing hegemonic strategies of constraining as well as encouraging participants to do valuable work. The competition has also unleashed contestation with the organisation of other organised competitions, as with the Shiv Sena associated *Samna-M. R. Coffee Ganeshotsava* competition. However, in this chapter, I focus on the evaluative and consensual sphere of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition, reserving the site of contestation amongst political parties in the festive context for the next chapter.

Along with the preceding chapter, this chapter provides a further illustration of the argument for an integrative public field - that is, the integration of collective gatherings and events with media networks and debates. In Chapter Four, I proposed

that the public field be considered as an integrative space which encapsulates media networks that inform debate and are interconnected with performative events. It is the site within which hegemonic strategies for promulgating principles of national integration (*rashtriya ekatmata*) amongst other values are effected. This chapter goes on to demonstrate the special interests of *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition organisers to promote efforts of national integration and social awareness amongst the participants, thus giving a premium to exemplary work for the community and the nation.

First, I provide a brief discussion of consumer culture in Mumbai and how the Ganapati icon has most obviously manifest itself in the commercial world; then, I discuss the involvement of businesses, newspapers and television, and the implications of this for the public domain. It is shown that for the running of a large-scale competition in an urban environment, business sponsorship and the co-ordination and publicity provided by newspaper organisations are important criteria for its continued success. This exposition is followed by a brief account on competitions, with coverage of one of the competitions organised in Mumbai, the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition. I look at the First, Second and Final Round contenders for the categories of Best *Mandal* for Overall Performance, Best *Murti*, Best Art Direction, and Special Prize for National Integration and Social Awareness, and make an analysis of the judges' motivations and decisions. Finally, an overview of the findings are made and discussed in relation to India's metropolitan culture as exemplified by Mumbai.

Consumer Culture in Mumbai

Often cited as the 'commercial capital of India' or the 'gateway to modernity', Mumbai is the subcontinent's bid for competition with other mighty economic centres around the world.¹ It has been so for at least a century when it formed a crucial channel of trade, and the city was seen to be receptive of western innovations in administration, education, religion and technology (Kosambi 1995: 9). The city was characterised by capital growth and intense union struggles and inter-union rivalries. By the mid-1980s, most class-based unions had been destroyed with a combination of political campaigns, activities, corruption and management buy-outs (Pendse 1981). In contemporary times, there is a pervasive air of rampant commercialism in the city - also symptomatic of India's other towns and cities but not to the same degree. I use the term commercialism to describe a number of interrelated phenomena. This includes the increase in consumer society goods and their influences on daily life; the influence of monetary decisions and gains in public life; the fever of success and competitiveness

in a capitalist society; and the pervasive influence and acceleration of media organs such as newspapers, television and film.

Since the economic liberalisation programmes instituted by the former finance minister, Manmohan Singh, in the beginning of the 1990s, many multinational houses have opened shop in the port city, vying for scarce space along with other Indian businesses and migrants into the city. Visual data bombards the senses in intensified campaigns of advertisements, film hoardings, commercial complexes, newspapers, magazines and so forth, influencing all sectors of society.² Yet the emiserated conditions of most of Mumbai's residents cannot go amiss, nor be entirely wiped out, for as is often the case in an intensely capitalist society, sharp polarities continue to exist for the system's own sustenance. However, this area of investigation lies outside the main scope of this thesis.

Theories about consumer culture are generally founded on the assumption that there were once social categories divorced from social life, as with religion and art, for instance. Nowadays, it is argued, in late capitalist society with the boom of consumer goods in urban spaces, there is a breaking down of enclaved categories of activities, such that there has been an 'aestheticization of everyday life' - one in which:

'the overproduction of signs and reproduction of images and simulations leads to a loss of stable meaning, and an aestheticization of reality in which the masses become fascinated by the endless flow of bizarre juxtapositions which take the viewer beyond stable sense' (Featherstone 1991: 15).

It is argued that this has been largely aided by two main factor: firstly, 'the migration of art into industrial design, advertising, and associated symbolic and image production industries' and, secondly, 'an internal avant-gardist dynamic within the arts such as Dada, surrealism and 1960s post-modernism which sought to show that everyday objects could be aestheticized' (Featherstone 1991: 24). Evidently, this proposition is steeped in a particular history and cultural viewpoint. For the case of western India, neither art nor religion, (for which purpose art still remains integral despite the influence of western canons in the country), can be asserted as separate from everyday life, but suffuses it in a myriad of ways. Featherstone writes:

'Art objects, or objects produced for ritual, and hence given a particular symbolic charge, tend often to be ones excluded from exchange, or not permitted to remain in the commodity status for long...' (Featherstone 1991: 16).

In many ways, however, the *Ganeshotsava mandals* that make elaborate decorations for participation in competitions, do have materialistic interests in mind, which rather

than existing in place of religious interests, rests alongside them. Thus, it is quite common that *mandals* openly vie for commercial attention from sponsors and competition organisers, yet they also cite the religiosity of the activities for festival celebrations geared for the community. The placing of the *murti* of Ganapati in the decorated *mandaps* is the crux of the matter - it is the lynchpin for the decorations acting as both a commercially-oriented artefact, and having a religious purpose.³

The proliferation of signs due to a burgeoning consumer society has transplanted itself on to the profusion of religiously-oriented imagery prevalent in urban and rural India. Indeed, present manifestations of the cultural economy have built upon a fuzzy area of religion and economics, as exemplified by the goddess, Lakshmi's role in opening the new Hindu financial year, the use of calendar art of deities to advertise businesses (Uberoi 1990), and the long-dated pilgrimage sites festooned with markets selling goods of all descriptions. Festivals like the Ganapati *utsava* have been fuelled rather than weakened by the accelerating wave of commercialism.

Rajagopal (1994) notes how commercialisation, on the one hand, has led to competitiveness in contemporary India. On the other hand, the economy complements the community and nation in which commodity culture is linked with ideas about the progress of the nation, and calls for Swadeshi become rhetoric for the indigenisation of the processes of liberalism. The nation is effectively defined by market forces, despite the fact of privatisation and increased competitiveness (Rajagopal 1994: 1659). A similar tension is notable in the festival. An intensive competitive spirit, as one of the outcomes of commercialisation, pervade and influence religious festival events, yet the constituent activities are valued most if this is demonstrated to show work for community welfare and the country's progress. Indeed, one often finds Nehruvian narratives about the progress of the nation (*desh pragati*) visualised in *mandap* tableaux peppered with dams, industrial growth, innovations, alongside narratives which uphold the values of community-oriented nationalist work (see Chapter Nine, illustrations 113-114). Increasingly, this version of commodity culture is given a Hindutva gloss in contemporary India (Rajagopal 1994). However, the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* is an example of what might be described as Hindu secularism, inflected by liberal politics articulated in the context of a religious festival associated with Hinduism. It is essentially pitted against Hindutva secularism, as I argued in Chapter Three, and further elaborate below.

The Business of Religion

The emergence of *Ganeshotsava* competitions in the 1980s is indicative of the urban cultural milieux in which politics and practice exist in a commercial and media-

saturated environment. Festival praxis in general is contingent on the political and economic climate of the city. When more money became available to *mandals* through on the one hand, business sponsorship and, on the other hand, racketeering, larger and larger *murtis* along with extravagant displays became commonplace. The nineties demonstrated more investments in the festival's celebration as India experienced an economic boom as a result of economic liberalisation programmes. The slight downslide of 1997 as compared to the previous year was also noted by festival celebrants in less extravagant overall expenditure in the city of Mumbai. Competitions whilst being an outcome of the commercial environment, seek to manage the excesses of the festival, in terms of excess expenditure and irresponsible conduct. Competition organisers are interested in opinion-making and regulating, and encourage social responsibility and control, which has influenced many of the *mandal* members in their view to please and impress the organisers. Competition organisers have the added remit to retrieve devotional sincerity, and encourage artistic creativity and social and national awareness. Organised competitions add to the continued interests and revitalisation of a religious occasion in society at large. Competitions promote ideals of the integration of the community if not nation, particularly manifest when judges are asked to look out for social work and decorations that uphold the principle of 'national integration' (*rashtriya ekatmata*). With the encouragement of the arts and social welfare work in the public realm, self-advertisement of the competition organisers and sponsors is also effected.

It is not generally considered as odd for a religious icon to be used for a clearly commercial gain. It is well-known that Lakshmi, the 'goddess of wealth', is often used in *pujas* to sanctify and make auspicious account books for the new Hindu (lunar-solar) year. Ganapati, not directly associated with wealth, but propitiated for blessings and overcoming obstacles, is also seen in this capacity to some extent. He has become the Maharashtrian god par excellence, and, according to his devotees, helps in a number of ways, including ones that involve commercial gains of one kind or another.

The fact that consumerism has transplanted itself on to, rather than replaced, a religious culture, is made vividly clear by the use of images of gods for advertising campaigns - the frequency of their use being increased for periods around their associated religious festivals. Ganapati's characteristics of being one of the most 'approachable' or 'human' gods, along with his attributes of auspicious sanctifying of new ventures, allow for an easy transportation into advertising strategies in contemporary Maharashtra. The deity appears in a number of newspaper advertisements; examples of which are as follows:

An advertisement for Philips appliances showed a dancing Ganapati holding out portable Audio Systems in his hands and the caption, '*Some more sound reasons to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi'* (*Sunday Mid-Day*, September 15, 1996)

A Whirlpool Home Appliances advertisement showed a sitting Ganapati surrounded by a washing machine and a refrigerator: '*Ganapati Bappa Morya! This Festive Season, Make an Auspicious Start...*' (*The Times of India*, September 16, 1996).

Another one for BPL electrical goods, namely Frost-Free Refrigerators, showed Ganapati's face made out of fruit, with the statement: '*Often, our frost-free brings you warm moments. Buying a BPL Frost-Free this Ganesh Chaturthi is an auspicious thought indeed. The different temperature zones will not only keep all the fruits for the pooja (as well as the sweets and ladoos) fresh for days but also continue to serve you faithfully for many Chaturtis to come....*

BPL Frost-Free. The only thing international is the technology.'

(*The Times of India*, September 16, 1996).

Banners festoon street sides during the time of the festival. One with '*Ganesotsav SERVOjanik Lubricants*' were plastered everywhere in 1996, making a witty adaptation on *sarvajanik* to insert the oil company name, Servo.⁴

The above are just the tip of the iceberg on the numerous usages of religious icons and themes to promote commercial goods in present-day Mumbai. It is thus not surprising that Ganapati *mandap* tableaux show an intermixture of religious, topical, and commercial concerns, but several degrees less blatant than the above advertisements. The use of religious themes presents a means of indigenising modern conveniences, sanctifying them with the god's blessings, as well as making the foreign seem familiar - all of them combining to make the goods more accessible to the average Indian, thus facilitating advertising campaigns to sell goods.⁵ The logic of advertising strategies works on associating one's goods with a popular god as well as an 'auspicious' season for buying new items, which provides a profitable motive for intensifying advertising campaigns. Along with Gudi Padwa, the start of the Hindu new year, and Divali, the start of the new financial year, festive seasons such as Ganapati *utsava* are extravagant for their expenditure and gift exchanges, and ideal opportunities for increasing advertising campaigns. Thus, the religious and the commercial is not generally seen to be incompatible with one another, but, instead, influence and modulate one another such that business becomes more sanctified, and religion becomes more commercialised. Both these dynamics are articulated for defining the nation-state economy as Rajagopal (1994) argues, but this time not just for a Hindutva cause, but,

as I elaborate for the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition, the views of Hindu secularists as well.

The Public Field in Mumbai

Of all the cities in India, it is Mumbai that is most saturated with media coverage and goods - newspapers, magazines, radio, television (terrestrial and satellite) and film. This is due to the fact that the city is swamped with newspaper organisations, film studios, television stations, and advertising agencies, alongside business organisations - from small to giant, household to corporate, Indian or multinational. Here, I concentrate on the area of newspapers, for that is the medium that is most obviously connected to the competitions I am considering, in terms of their influences, festival coverage, and festival competitions.⁶

Newspapers, both in English and the vernacular languages, are widely read in India, particularly in the cities. Not surprisingly, Marathi language newspapers have most extensive and in-depth coverage of the Ganapati *utsava*. This is ostensibly the case with the *Loksatta* (circulation of approximately 250,000 daily in Mumbai), *Samna* (60,000), *Sakal* (45,000), and other more smaller newspapers such as *Sandhyakal*, *Mahanagar*, *Navsakal*, *Asur*, and *Navbharata*.⁷ Special issue magazines are also published during the festival. The English press, particularly *The Times of India*, *Indian Express*, *The Asian Age*, and *Mid-Day*, report on the *utsava* in as much as it is a notable occasion, including any unusual incidents, and present innovative and dramatic *murti* forms and tableaux suitable for colourful photography.

It is only the Marathi newspapers that co-ordinate festival competitions, of which *Girnar-Loksatta* is the biggest in terms of coverage, prestige and cash prizes. The competition organisation which is considered at length below concerns the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition - Girnar, the tea company provides the necessary cash to run the competitions, whereas *Loksatta* provides the personnel, co-ordination and publicity for the event. Thus we have a good illustration of the collusion between not only religion and commercial interests, but also articulate in a realm which Habermas (1991) has called the public sphere. A unison of two public organs in the form of a business sponsor and newspaper 'spokesperson' influence, inform and channel the activities of the festival period in what I have termed the public field, to describe the discursive practices - both mediated and performative - that shape and inform the public festival (see Chapter Four).

In his overemphasis on the media, Habermas neglects the continuing occurrence of speeches, gatherings, marches, festivities and so forth, as continuing to be a potent means of communication and debate. Another criticism of Habermas'

notion of the public sphere is the assumption that 'rationality' is opposed to religiosity, and never the twain shall meet in the debating forum. From a consideration of the *utsava* competitions below, it is quite apparent that 'rational' opinion-making and judgement rests alongside a devoted and affective relationship with the religious material in question.⁸ There is a certain utopianism in Habermas' theory of the public sphere which generalises about human interests and, in the process, has a very unitary conception of the self and moral agency based on rational egoism (Baynes 1994). The only note of pessimism is brought out by Habermas' observations that this public forum could become infused with instrumental action whereby the forum of debate becomes monopolised by a propagandist, commercial and partisan press. Yet, this critique continues his *a priori* assumptions about a 'rationalist' debating forum, rather than tackling the premises of debating *fora per se*.

As I have already argued, the public sphere need be conceptualised in a way that gets away from the monopoly of Habermas' ideas on the phrase for a consideration of the Ganapati *utsava* in the Maharashtrian context. Freitag (1989) provides another, communication and exchange of information and sentiment in this intense moment of communion with the concept of public arenas. However, on the other hand, public arena does not effectively deal with the spread of the press and public opinion, as in Habermas' view, nor how the impact of other technologies such as television, and film with these spheres. Freitag's emphasis remains for the most part on the visceral, and does not consider how within any public arena one could imagine a suffusion of media as informing, influencing, colouring as well as disseminating information to a public gathering.

In late twentieth century India, the public sphere shows an intermeshing of print, celluloid, television, and in more privileged circles, satellite, and the internet. This need be considered with the public arena aspect of sociality in Freitag's sense for the case of *Ganeshotsava* competitions in Mumbai. In such competitions, we have opinion-forming judges who influence the direction of the public arena by making aesthetic and value judgements on their work through media and business backed organisations, which interact with the public arenas in which the festival *mandals* are situated. Theoretically, one needs to consider a revised form of Habermas' views on the public sphere in interaction with Freitag's conception of public arenas for a fuller consideration of *Ganeshotsava* competitions in the public field. Whereas newspapers have been influential opinion-making organs, they still have not replaced the discussions, meetings and gatherings that primarily happen on a face-to-face level. *Utsava* competitions demonstrate the interplay between business interests, newspaper coverage, judges' opinions, festival activities, artistic canons and aesthetic judgements in a dynamic way.

To sum up this section, the public field derives from Habermas' notions of the public sphere about public debate and opinion-making, but differs in that it takes into account religious culture as a constitutive element for a focus on the festival. The public field is also informed and structured by state politics such as campaigns of national integration, and attempts at appropriating the festival by political parties (see Chapter Eight). Furthermore, with this proposition, I do not intend to oppose rationality against religiosity. Public participation and events are as important in the public forum as is 'rational' debate based on newspaper reportage. It is in this wider sense of the term that any discussion on public sphere can become useful for the subject in question. Public arenas are useful for the subject of the Ganapati *utsava*, but do not adequately take into account other public organs useful for the subject matter here. As newspapers play a substantial part in competition organisations, it is instructive to hold on to some concept of the public sphere but with the provisos outlined above.

Ganeshotsava Competitions

Since the mid-1980s, there have been a number of competitions that have been launched concerned with the organisation and judging of *sarvajanik mandals*, such that nowadays, competitions have become a staple part of the festival. Several *mandals* have caught on to the sheer exhilaration of participation in prizes. Gaining prizes, just as with a good qualification, adds reams to the reputation and self-esteem of the *mandal* members. It was in Mumbai that the first *Ganeshotsava sarvajanik* competitions took place in 1986. Due to their vast popularity, the competition fever has spread to other cities in Maharashtra, namely Pune, Aurangabad, Nagpur and Ahmedabad, as well as other cities in other parts of India. Other smaller towns and villages also tend to have district-run or village ward competitions.

Whereas the more orthodox participants mourn the excessive commercialisation and expenditure competitions have spawned, considered to be at the cost of the religiosity of the occasion, most consider it as a catalyst for innovation, involvement of the community in an artistic way, grounds for channelling the festival into a more socially and nationally useful way, and the sheer exhilaration of winning of prizes as significant impetus for the festival participants to act in a socially responsible way. The increased awareness of topical, historical and cultural matters that the festival can foster is another positive aspect of festival competitions. Notably, *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges are only too aware of religiosity being sacrificed to commercialism, or put under the service of political agendas, and thus discredit any *mandals* which show such proclivities.⁹

Social awareness or conscientiousness is a consideration on the part of the organisers and thus has filtered down into competitors' thinking where more and more tableaux on social, environmental and historical or religious stories are erected for the festival. It is well-known, for instance, that tableaux on the theme of national integration are going to be considered favourably by the organisers and judges. Those that integrate a religious scenario with the theme of national integration are commended even more. There is a special category to the project of national integration or variations thereof with most competition organisers.

Evidently, both of these main strands prevalent in competitions can be manipulated for other gains - notably for commercial gains by business sponsors, and for the strategies of political opportunists who might use the festival platform to show concern for the community by allying themselves with *mandals*, especially the more popular or famed (see Chapter Eight). Whereas this is recognised, festivals nonetheless, continue to be important arenas for competitions, and funds of anywhere up to Rs. 15 lakhs are used to organise the competition in Greater Mumbai. The advantages of the festivals competitions - of prestige, social responsiveness and community encouragement - jostle alongside the disadvantages, namely inordinate materialist obsession and cheating, and sometimes susceptibility to political manipulation.

There are about a dozen types of competitions held over the *utsava* period in Mumbai. Of these, the *Girnar-Loksatta* competition is the most important in terms of coverage, expenditure, prestige and popularity amongst festival participants. It has been running the longest of all newspaper-run competitions since 1987, although the competition organised by the Sri Sitaram Deora Foundation, under the initiative of its president, Murli Deora, who is a minister for the Mumbai Regional Congress Committee, was started a year earlier in memory to his late father.¹⁰ Other competitions include those organised by *Samna* (a newspaper edited by Bal Thackeray) and sponsored by M. R. Coffee; *Mahanagar*, an evening newspaper; the Mumbai Municipal Corporation; local Shiv Sena branches; and local Police Stations. Most of these competitions demonstrate an interest in furthering social responsibilities such as those to do with family planning, environmental concerns, polio dose campaigns, national solidarity, and educational or literacy campaigns, some of whom such as *Samna* demonstrate a less critical evaluation of the political and instrumental use of festival activities (see Chapter Eight).

In 1996, Philips India got into the act sponsoring competitions with larger prizes and In Mumbai cable television coverage. In addition to these, there are several competitions run on a smaller scale at the local level as with Shiv Sena *shakhas*, and *gharoghari* competitions where local political branches such as the BJP and the Shiv

Sena, as well as some of the smaller newspapers, have begun to judge shrine decorations in people's homes. These competitions all tend to follow the same criterion of judging as is shown for the *Girnar-Loksatta* competition, but carry different inflections and outcomes depending upon who the judges are. I now concentrate on the features and operations of the *Girnar-Loksatta* competition as it has manifest itself in the city of Mumbai. The procedures and categories of evaluation are similar to other media-run competitions, not least because *Loksatta* developed them over the 1980s and 1990s.¹¹ The *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competitions run in other cities follows a similar pattern, and the competition is even the prototype for procedures and categories of evaluation for other public *Ganeshotsava* competitions.

It is notable how themes commended by organised competitions, and previous competition winners have resulted in numerous *mandals* constructing displays and conducting work of a socially or nationally useful agenda. Further, *mandap* narratives are commended for disseminating not only socio-political messages, but also those of a devotional and entertaining nature - in short, the qualities expected of the festival at large. Having initiated the importance of the theme of national integration with the example set by Tilak's work, nationalist sentiments have become normalised, and almost taken for granted in the festival. *Mandap* tableaux showing their set formulas of heroic nationalist freedom fighters fighting against the British colonial powers, the decline in socio-political standards and principles after independence, the need to work against traitors and enemies of the nation, and build it into a better country, are ubiquitous, and the tendency of *mandals* to take wholesale ideas without applying sincerity, conscientiousness and genuine innovation is widespread. This, however, is a difficult area to ascertain for judges, and many times, due to the shortage of time for each of the contending *mandals*, their evaluations are based on judges' instincts and impressions.

Motivations of Festival Competition Organisers

A journalist responsible for co-ordinating the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition in 1994, explained the purposes behind the festival competition. When there was increasing 'vulgarisation' of the Ganapati *utsava*, a competition that could give the festival a firmer direction and social responsibility similar to Tilak's initiatives was envisaged. 'Vulgarisation' alluded to the tendency for an 'anything-goes' attitude to the festival - including wild dances, drinking, loutish behaviour, and Ganapati *murtis* fused with images of film actors such as Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan, and, in some cases, the playing of Hindi film music instead of devotional music. A need to promote solidarity and social awareness in contemporary times was felt. Hence one

sees many *mandals* displaying tableau with vignettes from topical news with which they hope to instruct people about the perceived wrongs of society. As I note in Chapter Eight, topical events could also be biased towards representing particular party agendas.

On the other hand, there was a commercial angle to the initiation of this competition. The sponsors, *Girnar* Tea Company, were behind this factor. Its director had noticed the large number of people that were queuing up to see *mandap* tableaux in the mid-1980s. He realised the great potential for the marketing of the company during the Ganapati *utsava*, and asked Jaya Advertising to help organise the competition. Later they teamed up with *Loksatta*, as the newspaper organisation was in a position to facilitate widespread publicity in Maharashtra. Thus was instanced a collaboration between a business corporation and newspaper organ to aid the funding, marketing, co-ordination and publicity of the competition in the public field.

The *Loksatta* journalist pointed out that whereas other competitions prefer to have set themes and topics to which entrants should adhere, *Loksatta* has open-ended themes, such as how to maintain the environment, social services and national integration. The later theme was introduced four years after the launch of the competition as it was felt necessary to promote solidarity amongst the populace, much along the lines as Tilak had attempted. The *Loksatta* journalist continued, 'The theme does not have to be as specific as say how India will be in the twenty first century as arranged by other competitions, but the successful *mandal* must cover three main issues of importance - environmental awareness, national integration and secularism'.¹² The process of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition exemplifies the 'management of values' to do with devotional, artistic and socio-political concerns.

If value is not attributed to a *mandal* by its historical age, another way for a *mandal* to 'buy' prestige is to demonstrate good social welfare work and creative displays. Such work guarantees media attention, and if entered into a competition, commendable praise, perhaps a prize, which is further fuel for publicity and fame in the region. On the other hand, economic notions of value are sanctified in the demonstration of channelling finance into religious and community-oriented work. Suspicions of 'murkier' sources of funds - that is, 'black' markets and extortion rackets - if evident are not valued, as is made clear by the competition process. Competition regulations of charity status of *mandals* go a considerable way to countervail this problem, but sometimes is not an effective guard as to the proper accountability of funds. Despite the commercial atmosphere, *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* judges try to retrieve a sense of the sacred and the moral with due concern as to expenses, and prefer creativity as exemplified by *mandal* praxis and displays, rather than displays of extravagant pomposity.

The judges were chosen each year for their background knowledge, wisdom and seniority, political impartiality, education, and familiarity with the language of Marathi, for this was the language that was most used by *mandal* members, as well as *Loksatta* journalists. These qualities along with an 'artistic eye' were rated as important criteria for effective judging of *mandals*. The religion of the judge was not deemed as important as the language they spoke, thus it was quite possible that Christians and Parsis, for instance, were selected by the *Loksatta* editor and organisers for the judging tasks - all of which were done without remuneration on a voluntary basis in the evenings during the festival.

To date, there have been no Muslims doing the judging, perhaps as much to do with the fact that it is rare they present themselves for selection. A sculptor judge pointed out the lack of an Islamic sculptural heritage with which to judge present-day forms, and, moreover, the lack of appreciation of idol-forms. However, to pursue this line of investigation where the religion of judges are prioritised was problematic, as in artistic-intellectual circles, intellectual capability and artistic suitability to the task at hand was cited as being of most significance. Nonetheless, considerations as to religious awareness and appreciation of Hindu festivals were, no doubt, borne in mind when thinking about inviting a Muslim to join the judging teams.

Female judges were also selected, but their numbers were hampered by the difficulties in staying out late into the night, sometimes as late as two or three in the morning, depending upon traffic congestion and the number and distribution of the *mandals*. Thus, the composition of judges was more to do with pragmatic matters than it was to do with a specific selection remit.

Judges could include artists that did not do any work for the *utsava*, stage directors, J. J. School of Arts professors, editors, playwrights, writers, composers, lecturers, art directors and so forth. The team I accompanied in 1995's First Round included a Guest House manager also a make-up artist and contractor for Mumbai Central Television; a sound recordist for film and video; and a proprietor of an advertising agency. In the 1995 Second Round, I accompanied a team consisting of a Maharashtrian playwright, an Economics Professor and an architect. Two *Loksatta* journalists from the Space Marketing Department accompanied the teams each time, to co-ordinate and keep a check on judges comments on sheets. They were known as the Executors. Teams of two or three judges, along with newspaper Executors were posted to sites away from their own residence in both rounds of the competition. An induction talk was given to all of the judges involved (see below).

Questions as to why people volunteered to do the judging were met with responses that focused on their social and religious duty, the need to give direction to

the festival for the nation's and society's welfare, concern about the next generation's knowledge of Indian culture, and the need to give encouragement to the arts:

'I do the judging out of social responsibility, and partly for the love of art and devotion for Ganapati.'

'If I am not a good judge, then what hope is there for the artist? If I don't exercise good judgement, then what hope is there for art?'

'Today everyone is 'paise ka bhakta' [devotees of money], and not interested in art. I want to do my little bit to correct this as best I can.'

'The festival has in the past lost its direction. It is up to us to put it back on the right tracks.'

'We need to imbibe the spirit of Tilak back into the festival.'

'There will be a lot of 'vulgarisation' in festivals if competitions like this one do not do something about it.'

'We should encourage the children of tomorrow to value their culture.'

Each judge in the First Round saw about twenty *mandap* displays in two or three days during the festival. Second Round judges saw approximately five *mandals* selected as the better ones from the previous round in one night. The final day of the judging process was spent in a *Loksatta* board room with all the Second Round judges and Executors watching *mandap* tableaux recorded by video camera men in the Second Round of the competition. In this way, all Second and Final Round judges got to see all the competition entrants' work. The teams that had visited particular *mandals* could report with further information if it was required. These three steps - the First Round, Second Round, then the final decision-making day - were all undertaken during the period of the Ganapati *utsava*. The winners were announced a couple of days before the end of the festival in the *Loksatta* newspaper, enabling people to visit the winning *mandals*. Prizes were distributed in a hired hall to the winners amongst much fanfare and celebrity attendance a week or so after the eleventh day immersions.

What Judges Look Out For

The judges were given forms, which were collected by the Executor to be checked in situ. One Executor discussed marks and noted that some judges just gave any old marks. There was also the additional problem of bias. Therefore he oversaw and, if need be, made comments on judges' decisions. *Loksatta* staff cannot be seen to be giving marks as it might give a bad impression of *Loksatta*. The Executor stated that his personal preference has been tutored by the editor's guidance and briefing, which was given to all the judges and Executors before teams left to see the *mandals*.

Several forms were given out to each of the judges to give ticks against a judgement of excellent (*attiuttama*), very good (*uttama*), good (*thik*) and ordinary (*sadharana*). There were three main areas that they were asked to focus on: (i) the theme of the *mandap* and surrounding *mandal* activities; (ii) the appearance of the *murti*, and (iii) the work of the art director who made the tableaux around the *murti*.

These areas roughly corresponded for categories of prizes in four main divisions of Greater Mumbai: (i) Best *Mandal* for Overall Performance, (ii) Special Prize for National Integration and Social Awareness and Awakening/Encouragement, (iii) Best *Murti*, and (iv) Best Art Direction.

The prizes were separated into various categories on which to give marks. These were:

- a) to what degree is an understanding of social awakening/encouragement and national welfare communicated through the scenery (*janjagraticya drashtine dekhavyatun pratit honare rashtriyahitace bhan*);¹³
- b) to what extent is social cohesion demonstrated through the decorations (*sajavatitil samajik bandhilkici janiv*);
- c) to what extent the selection of the scenarios is consistent with the general scheme of the *mandap* (*dekhavyacya sanhiteci nivada*);
- d) any particular outstanding aspects about the decorations (*vishesh lakshavedhi arasa*);
- e) the level of organisation, discipline and pleasant ambience (*vyasthapana, shista, vatavaranatil prasannta*);
- f) cleanliness (*svacshtha*) - that is, consideration of the cleanliness of surrounding roads and squares, dirt or gas pollution, and contribution to environmental measures such as tree planting. Thus this category considers actual cleanliness of the *mandap* place and their environmental consciousness and measures;
- g) the *mandal*'s all-year round projects (*mandalace varshbharatil samajik upakram*); and
- h) the scenery's total effectiveness (*dekhavyaci ekuna parinamkarikata*).

(ii) Categories on the *murti* were split into:

- a) traditional shape and beauty of the *murti* (*murtice paramparik svarup va saundriya*);
- b) innovations (*navinyata*);
- c) proportions (*pramanvaddhta*);
- d) harmony of colours (*rangsangati*);
- e) complementarity of *murti* and scenery (*dekhava va murti yamadhil vishyavya*); and
- f) any special points (*vishesh shera*).

(iii) Marks on art direction of the surrounding tableaux concentrated on:

- a) the beauty of the decoration and innovations in execution of it (*sajavatice svarup va kaushlyatil navinya*);
- b) the prominent placing of the *murti* (*pratimece darshan*); and
- c) any special points.

Each of these categories were marked out of ten by the Executor, on the basis of the ticks that the judges had given them, and then added up for total points for each of the three areas. The ones that fared well in all three went into the Second Round. The selection of *mandals* from the Second to the Final Round was done in a similar manner.

The Process of Competition Judging

A car or van covered in the *Girnar-Loksatta* banners meandered its way through the heavy traffic of Mumbai to find the *mandals* on their lists in their designated area. The *mandals* themselves have to put up banners in prominent places to ease the location of them, and for guaranteeing maximum publicity to the competition organisers and sponsors (illustration 39). Experienced Executors and judges were generally familiar with the topography of *mandals* as many of the *mandals* had acquired fame for their year-to-year participation in the competition.

At the *pandal*, judges with rosettes on lapels and pads in hands, proceeded towards their designated tasks. *Mandal* participants wished to leave as favourable an impression with the judges. So as with any other important visitor, members crowded around the judges enthusiastically, and gave special hospitality with drinks, *prashad* and places to sit. Conversations between judges and *mandal* members generally started off on questions like what social work the respective *mandals* did, who the artists and art directors were, how the tableau was constructed, its costs and any other relevant issues. Requests would be made for a *smaranika* (souvenir) which, if the *mandal* had one, gave details as to dates of establishment, names of *mandal* members, donations given, accounts of incoming and expenditures, social work practised, letters from dignitaries, advertisements and other verses or texts suitable for the occasion. Then the

judges proceeded to see the *mandal* display. Conversations about the social work executed by a *mandal* tended to come down to similar activities such as blood donation camps, eye camps, the supply of books and uniforms to impoverished families, gymnasiums, libraries and so forth. On average, the team spent about five to ten minutes in discussion, saw the tableau, then left for the next *mandal*, during which time they recorded marks on sheets and handed them to the Executor in the van. Debate about the *mandal* was generally carried out in the vehicle away from the earshot of *mandal* members. In a gentlemanly way, the judges tried to reach a general consensus of opinion before giving their individual marks on the evaluations sheets.

At the end of each evening, marks for *mandal* organisation, Social Awareness and National Integration, *murti* and art direction for each of the *mandals* was added up by the Executor. These were computerised along with results from other teams of judges posted out to other parts of Greater Mumbai and decided upon the following day.¹⁴ A detailed coverage of the First, Second and Final Rounds of the 1996 *Ganeshotsava* competition in the teams that I accompanied is provided in Appendix I, II and III respectively. They include the name and decoration of the *mandals*, along with judges' main comments and opinions. Here, I provide an outline of the general procedure, and draw out implications from judges' opinions into an overview on festival competition praxis and aesthetics in Mumbai based on three years of participation in the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competitions.

It is notable that judges' discussions with *mandal* members were generally instrumental and to the point. Certain information needed to be extracted about the *mandal* and their members, certain points to be noted about the *murti*, and special features sought in the *mandap* decorations. Thus their discussions were prefigured by the nature of the assignments given to them. Each judge had their special interests and comments to bring to the subject. It is also notable that the features that influence the judges' thoughts also filter into the *mandal* members, particularly those which have had years of experience as to competition evaluations. *Mandap* displays with substantial themes fare better than others. National integration is generally assumed as a bona fide theme to demonstrate by *mandal* members, even if this is not expressed or even felt in the liberal 'secular' way of most of the judges. Awareness of current affairs goes without saying, as is the intention behind a newspaper-run competition. Topical issues have proliferated with the onslaught of newspaper-run competitions. Before their instigation, they were displayed in a few *mandals* scattered around Mumbai, but comparatively more evident in Pune in earlier days due to their agendas to educate and propagate historical and national sentiments about the country and region's history, culture and politics.

Overview of the First and Second Rounds

There were general themes emerging in the judges' discussions and expectations, influenced by the competition instructions and categories, their beliefs in Ganapati, and their own training and appreciation of the arts and their social relevance (see Appendix I for a detailed coverage of *mandals* in the First Round of the competition, illustrations 40-67). Firstly, as far as *mandal* members were concerned, judges disapproved of sensationalist methods adopted by the *mandal* to draw more people in to the *mandap*. Nor were they impressed by those they considered were just trying to win a competition over and above their religious sentiments, and contrived their displays or exemplified aggressive or over-enthusiastic behaviour. On the other hand, judges were impressed by *mandal* members that showed good organisation, polite behaviour, good team-ship, a community spirit involving the youth of the area, concern about hygiene and cleanliness of the locality, and demonstrated knowledge and intentionality about the choice of the theme as could be ascertained when judges' posed particular questions as to why chose a particular theme for their *mandap* tableau, and for what purpose.

As far as displays went, the complementarity of *murti* and surroundings was well appreciated. The positioning of the *murti* was also noted if done to outstanding effect, such that the *murti* stood out in glory. The judges showed a keen interest in *pauranik* prototypes that were not well known. The 'grace' of a *murti*, as opposed to a 'heavy' or bloated look about the face of the *murti* or fingers which seemed as if they were stuck together (*cikatalele*) was preferred. Fine, realistic modelling of the arms and trunks was also appreciated. The *murti*, in its design and display should look as if it was exuding life and vitality (*pran*), which should be evident in the look of the eyes, as if light is shining from inside. This constituted an 'expression' of *shanti* capable of exuding the *murti*'s godly presence. Proportion of the *murti*'s stomach and limbs, along with the 'facing' (by which was meant the human features of the elephant-god) next to the body were also points of attention.

For the *mandap* tableaux, new features that demonstrated a thought-provoking fusion of both religious and social or nationalist concerns was commended. Decorations were most appreciated if they contained substantial themes, stories or inventive allegories. Unique interpretations of classical myths for contemporary times were particularly appreciated. The tableau theme had to have a degree of consistency, not 'scattered' or too gimmicky, nor be too derivative of former years or of other *mandap* displays. A concept was most appreciated if it was carried out to completion (that is, made socially relevant), factually correct and appropriate for a social message in contemporary Maharashtra. *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges

were nonplussed by openly propagandist use of the *mandap* tableau as a mouthpiece for political parties. Execution of artwork was also noted, with attention paid to the skill of the hardboard cut-out work, lighting designs, and any interesting use of modern art techniques in the tableau.

Out of the twenty four *mandals* that were seen in the First Round in the team I accompanied, only one went into the Second Round - the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 65). The theme of their *mandap* tableaux was *Halebid Shivmandir*, designed by the art director, Chandrakant Palo, and a *murti* made by Vijay Khatu. The *mandap* display was of the interior of a typical *mandir* found on the historical site of Halebid. The judges were struck by the finesse of the artwork and thought that the design of the *murti* suited the scene marvellously. There was felt to be a wonderful air of serenity which was skilfully created by the lighting design. Temple interiors had been executed by the *mandal* over the last few years, photographs of former displays hung on the outside wall. The theme of the Halebid Shivmandir had a historical as well as religious purpose, and served an educational purpose in that it informed people of Hindu relics of the past. The *mandal* was also commended for how well the *murti* complemented the surrounding tableaux, both of which were finely crafted without extravagant expenditure. Judges felt that *shanti* was experienced inside the *pandal*. Finally, the surroundings were exceptionally clean, and the *mandal* members were judged to demonstrate a genuine sentiment for the religious occasion. Thus the *mandal* fared well in almost all categories of evaluations to do with the *mandal*, *murti*, and Art Direction.¹⁵ The category in which the *mandal* did not excel was Social Awareness and National Integration.

Overall, twenty *mandals* were chosen for the Second Round from approximately three hundred *mandals* in Greater Mumbai - approximately a one in fifteen chance of entrants going into the next round. The team of judges I accompanied in the Second Round visited five *mandals* (see Appendix II, illustrations 68-79). Their displays were in general much more substantive. Four out of the five *mandap* tableaux were with audio-taped narratives. Three of them directly dealt with the rubric of nationalism, with narratives of the nation's history, contemporary concerns, achievements and glories. The fourth dealt with a Maharashtrian story about the founding narrative of a *svyambhu* Ganapati. A team of cameraman photographed and videoed all the Second Round contenders for the Final Round, which was held a day later with all the judges and journalists in the *Loksatta* building.

Overview of the Final Round

By a process of elimination, the order for prizes was agreed upon for Overall Performance (see Appendix III, illustrations 68-82). Each of the *mandals* were noted for their commentary, socio-political awareness and educational potential, but also for their artistic and entertainment features. The more unique and the more substantive the display and narrative, the more marks the *mandal* attained. The winner for Overall Performance was the Sri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal in Dahisar, north-west Mumbai (see Appendix III, *mandal* number six for narration, illustration 80). It also won the Special Prize for National Integration and Social Awareness, as well as attaining Second Prize for Art Direction. The theme of the *mandap* tableau was *Svatantrya Suvaran Mahotsav Varsh (The Golden Anniversary of Indian Freedom)* with a *murti* made by Vijay Khatu, and art direction by Digambar Chichkar. The *mandal* had shown a genuine and conscientious concern for both community work and social welfare. This was affirmed by the originality of their *mandap* tableau. In the centre, was a representation of the Indian flag which acted as a kind of narrator for the tableau. Around it were small vignettes - three long ones on each side, continuing the levels of the three colours of the flags, such that they became symbolic picturisations of the respective colours. The narrative spoke from the point of view of the flag which, it was claimed, should be held high and proud. In order for this to happen, people must respect their country and kin. Each of the colours of the flag symbolised something in particular. Saffron represented bravery, renunciation and knowledge; white represented peace, truth and holiness; and green represented the beauty of the motherland, its vegetation, fruit, rains and fertility. Each of the six scenes represented stories to illustrate these points. They were lit up as the narration reached the appropriate point.

The Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal tableau was appreciated by the judges for its unique look at the flag. Generally the colours are taken to symbolise the different communities of India, but this took a more poetic, yet equally valid, 'symbolic' look. The tableau was also represented in an interesting fashion, with the prime focus given to the flag flanked on both sides by three levels of vignettes. Then the sides of the flag opened up to reveal Ganapati.

The theme was considered varied enough to hold people's interest, but not sprawled all over the place including anything and everything without rhyme or reason. The tableau commentary did not just go through a litany of freedom fighters which is the case with several *mandap* tableaux, but brought the message down to the common person and his/her responsibility to keep the flag flying high. Thus it was not run-of-the-mill in its interpretation and promulgation of a nationalist message. There was no sign of political interference from the *mandal* so the contribution to social and national

welfare was seen to be from a sincere heart, rather than for opportunist reasons as happens with many politically partisan *mandals* (see Chapter Eight).

The prize for the best *murti* went to Vijay Khatu for his *murti* at the Patil Estate Sarvajanik *Ganeshotsava* Mandal (with the theme of *Halebid Shivmandir*), and a consolation prize to Ramesh Ravale for his *murti* at the Shiv Sena Sarvajanik *Ganeshotsava* Mandal in Andheri (with the theme of *Jyotiba Mandir in Kolhapur*). The Patil Estate *mandap* has already been accounted above (see Appendix I, *mandal* number twenty two, Appendix II, *mandal* number two, and Appendix III, *mandal* number twelve). The Shiv Sena Sarvajanik *Ganeshotsava* Mandal in Andheri presented the Jyotiba Mandir in Kolhapur (see Appendix III, *mandal* number fourteen). A large replica of the Jyotiba Mandir in Kolhapur lit up with an extravagant display of lights greeted the visitor. The interior was done out in the same way as the original temple, with a *murti* of Jyotiba, which according to the judges, was 'like the real thing'. In another section of the *mandir* replica was Ganapati almost lying to its side on some cushions. Visitors walked through the *mandap* as they would a real *mandir* to these separate sections.

The pose of the *murti* was considered as interesting but unconventional. For these reasons, the *murtikar* attained Second Prize. The judges were conscious of the fact that the *murti* was slightly unconventional, particularly in its pose, but still wished to give it credit for its boldness. It was still in the end a *dharma* pose, for there were several reclining Ganapatis in Pune, for instance. This one however was considered more graceful than the models found in Pune, and its colour scheme was also more 'modern' in its combination of orange, white and grey.

Even though an impressive realistic rendition of the *mandir*, its grandness did not seduce the judges. They were more conscious of the amount of funds used - Rs 1 1/2 lakhs, and not surprised that the art director was a professional from the cinema world. It was well known that the *mandal* was controlled by prominent Shiv Sena ministers. This allowed the *mandals* to accumulate funds from party operations and resources.¹⁶ Thus *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges did not consider it as a bona fide *mandal* for consideration for prizes in other categories. Prizes for the best *murti* went to the *murtikar*, with a trophy and certificate to the *mandal*. So it was quite easy for the judges to divorce appreciation of the *murti* from the *mandal* it was associated with. This is what happened for the evaluation of the Shiv Sena Mandal to get Second Prize in this category. There was little dispute between judges about who should get the First Prize, even though the Patil Estate Sarvajanik *Ganeshotsava* Mandal had earned a lot less numerically from the Second Round.

The winner of Best Art Direction went to Gulab Rao's work at the Akhil Shivdi Sarvajanik *Ganeshotsava* Mandal with the theme, *Encouragement in the Past and*

Development in the Present. A large *mandap* done out like the inside of a cave revealed four insets in the wall (illustrations 74-79). From left to right, they included:

- (i) a vignette with hardboard cut-outs of Shivaji and his men alongside builders and developers, amusingly called 'Ganesh & Ganesh';
- (ii) the next one showed Tilak in jail alongside a gangster phoning from prison on his cellular phone;
- (iii) the third inset on the other side showed Jotiba Phule and his wife teaching women alongside two men assaulting a woman whilst one videoed the whole affair (a reference to the Jalgaon scandal);¹⁷ and
- (iv) the final one showed Vinayak Damodar Savarkar longing for Bharatamata as he stands exiled on the Andaman Islands alongside smugglers shipping in RDX bombs.

The Ganapati *murti* was revealed inside one of the caves to much aplomb at the end of the narrative. In the middle of the four inserts was a small pool, which fountained out water as the *murti* was revealed. The narrative compared the glorious deeds of the past for the region, nation and its people, and the corruption and megalomania that had set in contemporary times (see Appendix II *mandal* number five, and Appendix III *mandal* number eight).

First Round judges had judged the *mandal* highly for its *murti*, Art Direction, and National Integration and Social Awareness. The Second Round judges were also impressed by the quality of the art direction. The costs of the *mandap* came to Rs 60,000 including Rs 10,000 for the *murti* - considered a reasonable sum for the locality. Gulabrao, the art director, was a professional artist who had done various art direction assignments for advertisements and films. His knowledge and experience of dramatic effects was well exemplified by the *mandap's* art direction as well. Everything was considered to be synchronised very well, including text, lights and movement of cave doors and fountain to make for a very satisfying experience. The comparisons between the past and the present had an interesting and fresh twist to them. The text was considered well-informed and intelligent. The effect of the *murti* was considered to be heightened by the wonderful effects of the cave opening and the fountain waters switched on. Later the fountain waters were left on whilst visitors could do full *darshan* of the *murti*. The surroundings and art direction made the *murti* look that much more beautiful in the eyes of the judges. Thus it is never always a technical evaluation of the *murti*, but one that also seeks some kind of soul satisfaction (*samadhana*) which is attained by full all-round consideration of its surroundings as well (see Chapter Six).

Overview of the Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava Competition

As is clear with the account above of the process of the competition, each round is like a screening phase through which all the entrants are taken, so as only the substantial and worthy ones are left to consider for the prizes. This, without a doubt, influences *mandals* such that progressively over the years, more and more *mandals* are considering social themes for their *mandap* tableaux in order to stand a good chance for winning recognition and prizes in competitions. It then becomes the task of the judges to work out which *mandals* are being sincere about their demonstrations and which are not. Criteria for evaluations of *murtis* remain slightly removed from 'social' and 'political' questions, so less innovation is demonstrated with their forms.

Based on judges' discussions and debates, there have been a number of recurrent themes that have arisen in evaluation of *mandals* and their tableaux. I list them for each of the categories, then elaborate further. The discussions were of course informed by the categories on the evaluation forms which I have already accounted for above, but there were also other considerations which were brought into sharper focus. Generally, the following are the key factors which went to make a *mandal* a winner for Overall Performance: the sincerity of *mandal* members and their community work; educational and other social work; concern for the upliftment of society and national integration; involvement of the community in its work including construction of the *mandap* tableau; minimal and accountable costs and fund collections and imaginative use of resources; no political party involvement or control of *mandal*; originality of work; and cleanliness of the *mandal*'s surrounding area during the festival.

For the prize of National Integration and Social Awareness, the following values were deemed important: a fresh approach to the subject matter without dogmatic approach; no political party involvement or opportunism; an insight into social problems; an encouragement of communal harmony and indications of belief in the nation (*desh manthana*); and actual social work to back up sentiments of the *mandap* tableau.

Judges' evaluations of the *murti* revolved around ideas such as beauty (*sundar*), the peace it conveyed (*shanti*), its proportions, pleasure on seeing it (*masta*) and sheer force of feeling experienced in its *darshan* ('solid'). For the prize of Best *Murtikar*, technical qualities which were sought in the *murti* included: a well-proportioned body and facial features; a quality of *shanti* in looking at the *murti*, usually attained through the eyes, the lighting and the setting; a feeling of vitality in the body, as if it was living and breathing (with *pran*) attained through the modelling and the setting of the *murti*; the complementarity of the *murti* with its surroundings so both, conceptually and visually, suit each other in size, colour and pose; good colouring and interesting colour scheme of the body, clothes, ornaments, and seat; good positioning in the *mandap* tableau so as it is the highlight of the show no matter what the surrounding subject

matter of the scene is; and innovative features working within the precedents set by traditional methods, rather than veering away from them altogether.

Traditional representations of Ganapati were preferred for they have the weight of religious verses in their favour. For instance there are *slokas* for Ganapati that explains his pot-bellied appearance (*lambodara*). This is very important for there is a philosophical reason behind it in that he 'eats up' all the bad deeds and evils that people do. The surroundings and art direction were considered best if they enhanced the beauty of the *murti* in the eyes of the judges. Values about sceneries revolved around ideas such as how interesting and original it was, the dynamic of its plot, its dramatic effects, an erudite yet entertaining script, good lighting, a consistent theme and so forth, in many ways paralleling discussion on film. For the prize of Best Art Direction, the following qualities and features were sought: a subject matter with a social relevance for today - that is, a topic that is interpreted and intended to provide a message for contemporary times - a combination of the mythological/religious and the socio-political was particularly appreciated. Other significant themes included an original topic and presentation without appearing gimmicky; a dramatic and performative quality about the piece, but not at the cost of becoming sensationalist and attention-seeking devices; an entertaining yet informed text for the commentary; factual correctness such that the display shows good research on behalf of the *mandal* and art directors; technical brilliance about the cut-outs and other devices used so as they look realistic; involvement of the community especially children in its construction, and thus a demonstration of good team-ship; not too extravagant a display which demonstrates money being squandered; the playing of music suitable to the occasion and scene, not the latest hits from Hindi films; and a consistency in theme with all the parts of the *mandap* - not too scattered or sprawled a *mandap* tableau.

Between the judges themselves, there were sometimes tensions that were revealed on qualities deemed important for judging. Some judges felt that costs should not be taken into account - the overall effects were of more importance in a competition that judges artworks. Others felt that the beauty of a certain *mandal* should not place it as inferior to ones that had more of a social message, for in the end, there were both in the name of religion, and thus served a useful social point here. A few judges cited that local community talent should be encouraged and not professionals, especially in the art direction of *mandap* displays. One person commented that a separate category be made for sound and audio effects, as well as for video/slide projections.

Even though a consensus was reached in a democratic manner in the manner of Habermas' opinion-forming public, there were still a number of unresolved points left to consider. Nonetheless, it was done in a healthy way such that judges were all on talking terms with each other, and happy with the overall results and the fact that they

were doing a public duty in informing opinion about what was good and what was bad about the festival. So in this chapter, we have a case of Habermas' public sphere commenting on an example of Freitag's public arena. There was a certain amount of paternalism with the judges who did not always attune themselves to popular needs but wished to elevate them. Their role was educational and regulators of devotional and good conduct in the service of religion, society and nation, as well as promoters of good craftsmanship.

As I have already argued religious respect, if not belief, was integral to the competition practices, discussions and debates. It is made explicitly clear in expectations about the presentation of the Ganapati *murti*. Religious belief was clearly apparent with judges showing their appreciation of the *murti* at the *mandals* by praying to him first. Other times, especially towards the end of the night, judges just observed. Sometimes they just sought a feeling of awe and *shanti* - that is, religious observance instead of analytical discussion. The two could be coterminous, but more often than not, religious observance was made first, after which the task of assessing the *mandal murti* and display was made. In the debating fora for deciding the winners, religious respect was assumed, rather than demonstrated. However, these are fine-line assessments, and in the long-run it need not be productive to think about the difference of religious observance and critical appraise in situ. It is clearly evident that Habermas' views of what constitutes 'rational' discussion needs to be critiqued for being too narrowly conceived and based on western epistemological canons. This chapter demonstrates the folly of separating realms of religiosity and what might be described as 'rational' decision-making. The judges exemplify decisions both of the heart and the mind. It is not a question of either/or, but of both. Ethical conduct is intimately entwined with aesthetics, particularly evident with representations of the Ganapati *murti*, but also with nationalist scenes. Competition praxis seems to exemplify the mezzanine between religion as practice or faith and ideology (Bharucha 1993) - entities on a variegated continuum where hegemonising strategies of the competition process and categories of evaluation are understood by *mandal* members to make for a productive terrain of consent and innovation within accepted parameters of the religious and national significance of the festival.

Conclusion

With the above account on the processes of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition in the city of Mumbai, it has been possible to outline the sinews of the

public field. The festival is the central event, around which and for which several preparations are made to report, record, assess and exert influence by setting examples of bona fide winners in newspaper-run and business-sponsored competitions. Media instigates and controls the debates and decision-making for the festival, whereas other participants in the event aspire to and respond to its decisions and expectations, hoping to excel and impress in all spheres. Not only is newspaper media involved here, but also the crucial role video and television recordings plays in publicising and recording the event. Video recordings allow another means of assessing the contending *mandap* when seeing all of the competition participants for any one team is practically impossible in the city of Mumbai.

Effectively the competition represents the process of hegemonising of festival praxis according to a 'secular' agenda valuing artistic innovation, devotional sentiments, social work and national integration. The brief of some of the newspaper-organised competition particularly the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition is less sectarian than most, leaning more towards liberal ideals of national integration. Yet, perhaps by the very fact that it is a Hindu festival which is being used as the vehicle for promoting such ideals, they present a variant, more moderate gloss on the same theme of Hindutva rather than a radical alternative from such religious chauvinism. Nonetheless, they demonstrate a site of resistance to Hindutva's co-option of the festival. During the 1996 prize-giving ceremony, the *Loksatta* editor queried why it was that a Hindu festival was utilised to mobilise a nationalist agenda? How do the participants conceive of Muslim communities, and what do Muslims feel about the enormous attention given to this Hindi festival? Whilst recognising the importance of the festival for devotional and nationalist drives, limitations were also noted in the fact that the competition relied upon the practice of religion, increasingly communalised, in order to enter into the realm of the public. Such questions, generally posed rather than answered, are most at issue during times of communal tension and troubles. They raise similar ghosts to ones that Tilak had to contend with at the turn of the century - whether the festival was nationalist, or whether it lent itself to communalist forces.

Nonetheless, the secular drive of the competition organisers represented a site of contestation against organisations which used the festival for more instrumental gains of propagating Hindutva politics as with the Shiv Sena backed organisations. Compared to the admitted tensions in liberal discourse about the use of a Hindu festival to accommodate the needs and pleasures of all communities, including Muslims, it would seem that the communalists have it much simpler - India for the majority - that is, Hindus, and the Ganapati *utsava* to encourage pride in Hindu culture again after a reign of Muslim and British 'alien' rule, and the 'minority pampering' of Congress 'secularism'.

One of the pertinent themes that has emerged in the above account is the perceived ‘dirtiness’ of political opportunism in judges’ discussions, and the value of nationalism or social welfare work, particularly with the examples of great merits of selfless nationalist work and social consciousness-raising as well as welfare work. In several cases, it is blatantly obvious that the *mandal* is working for a political party, none more so than with Shiv Sena sympathisers and supporters. The next chapter examines this ‘dirty’ terrain of political appropriations of the festival as part of hegemonising strategies to monopolise the public and performative space of the festival to spread consent for a particular party. It considers the political usage of the Ganapati *utsava* by examining the role of the Shiv Sena in co-opting *mandals* in Mumbai who present a particular and opportunistic brand of communalism with a parochial emphasis. This is considered as one hegemonic bloc in a contestatory field of several hegemonic blocs, for instance, as represented by Congress partisan *mandals*.

¹A popular adjective with which to describe the city, even in conversations in the Indian languages, is ‘cosmopolitan’. This persists to this day, despite sectarian violence and the enormous influence of regionalist political parties such as the Shiv Sena in the city, especially in the 1990s. ‘Cosmopolitan’ conjures up images of diverse cultures, a progressive and modern city with prominent international presence and connections. Sectarian riots in the city’s history are overwhelmingly seen as blips in its past, largely believed to be engineered by ‘evil’ foreigners. The Shiv Sena contingent claim Mumbai for Maharashtrians, but, on the whole, welcome the city’s international and modern image and connections in the interest of commercial gains for themselves.

²Croll (1997) discusses the selective, rather than promiscuous, adoption of western consumer capitalism in China. In this way, a new self-identity is built with the very goods which are symptomatic of the deterioration of a distinctive identity. This selective adoption of western consumer capitalism is only partially applicable to the case of India, for generally it is to the generic concept of the west (already an ambivalent relationship) rather than the ideology of capitalism that is opposed. Occasionally, Swadeshi (home-made) rhetoric is adopted, particularly by orthodox members of the BJP and other national chauvinists; but even its proponents recognise that true Swadeshi does not hold any water in contemporary times, due to the fever and pace of the economic liberalisation avalanche. The relationship favoured in multinational exchanges and liaisons is that Indians and the companies they represent have the upper hand, not that they do not deal with outside agencies at all. Thus consumer goods tend to have a transnational parentage, where western companies have their Indian partners. The goods of consumer capitalism are not necessarily seen as western, but modern.

³This situation invites comparison with the annual rite of Divali in which merchants celebrate the new financial year and open new account books whilst doing *puja* in front of Lakshmi, the ‘goddess of wealth’. It must be noted, however, that the more orthodox Hindus do sometimes complain of excessive commercialisation of religious festivals, but tend to be tolerant of moderate commercial influences when it is seen to not pose a threat to the religiosity of the occasion.

⁴All these advertisements were written in the English.

⁵Gods do not figure much on television advertisements, most probably due to the difficulties of presenting a deity in a convincing scenario for this kind of programme on the medium. However, their presence in film is ubiquitous, indicating some possible moral limitations as to the wholesale and blatant use of deities to sell commercial goods on television.

⁶This is aside from the fact that since 1993, the terrestrial television station, Doordarshan, began to have live coverage of the Ganapati *utsava* immersion procession, and that from 1996, satellite television channels such as In Mumbai began to organise competitions to judge the best *mandal*, display and *murti* itself.

⁷The figures of circulation are cited according to the information of press officers at the respective newspaper organisations.

⁸A more detailed discussion of the public domain with reference to the likes of Habermas (1991), Freitag (1989) and Haynes (1991) was made in Chapter Four.

⁹This need not hold for other organised competitions. Indeed, in light of the winning of prizes by Shiv Sena related *mandals*, the competitions organised by *Samma* and the sponsors, *M. R. Coffee*, do not tend to demonstrate such considerations.

¹⁰Here I do not focus on historical competitions held during the Ganapati *utsava*. These were largely held for Workers' Theatre, *mela* organisations and children's competitions since the turn of the century. I have not come across detailed information, and assume that they were particular to residential quarters or the local neighbourhood.

¹¹The Police Branch competitions tend to vary slightly from the template presented below in that they are more interested in the discipline of *mandal* members rather than aesthetic criterion or the social progressiveness of the *mandal* members. Instituted in 1994 after the Mumbai riots, and now under the heading of Peace Committee competition, these competitions look out for five main points:

- (i) whether all the *mandal* funds were collected from voluntary donations;
- (ii) that loudspeakers should not be too loud and disturbing to the residents;
- (iii) how and what kind of programmes are organised;
- (iv) the behaviours of the volunteers and the discipline of the queues of visitors; and
- (v) the discipline of the immersion procession.

¹²Secularism is invoked in the sense of treating all religious faiths equally. It is not to be taken in the sense of being non-religious. Yet as I have noted in Chapter Three, secularism in this context is in the hegemonic field of Hinduism.

¹³The concept of *janjagruti* recalls Tilak's times when it is said that with the mobilisation of the public

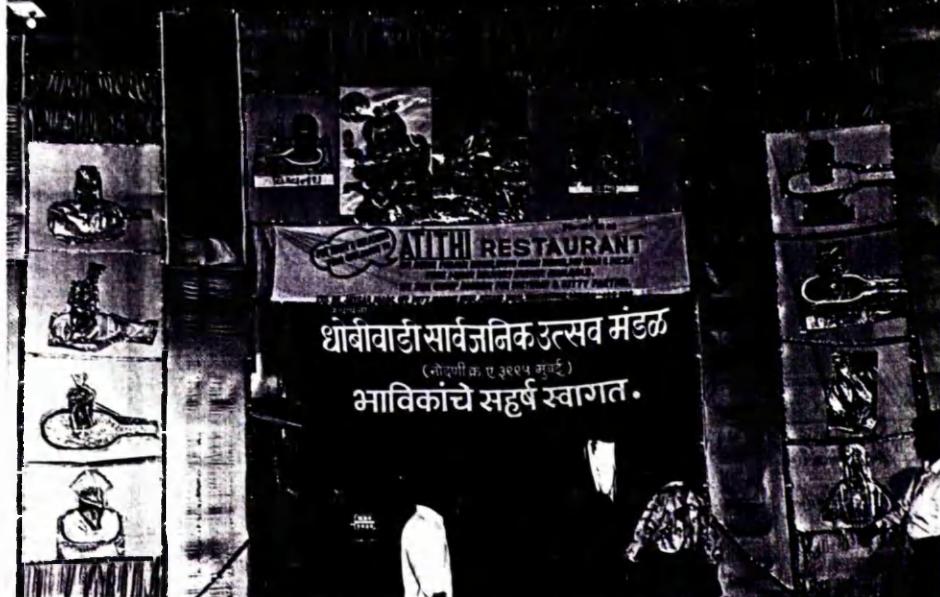
Ganapati *utsava*, he 'awakened' the people, or raised consciousness of social and political injustice.

¹⁴Computerisation of *Ganeshotsava* competition results was introduced in 1996.

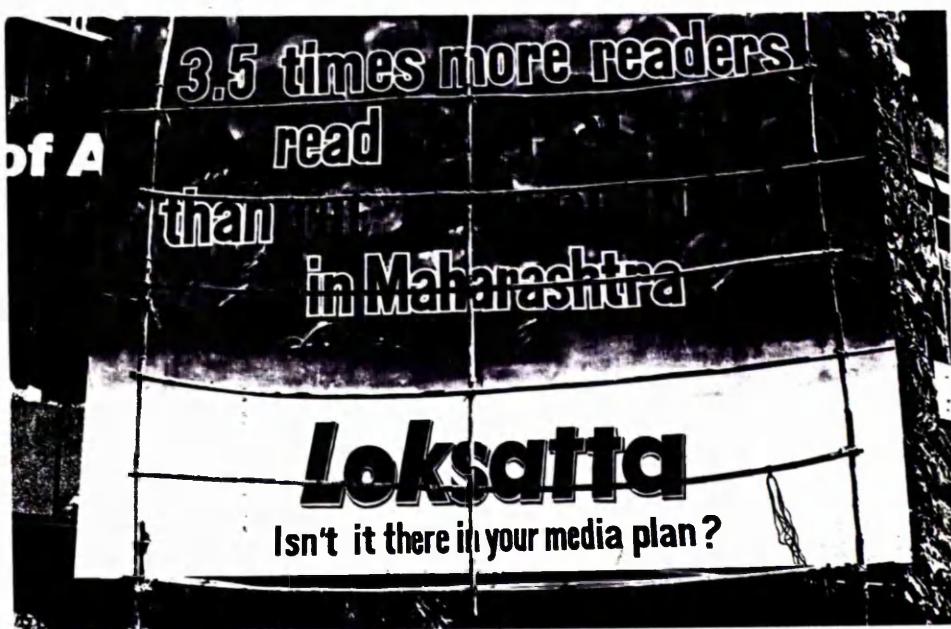
¹⁵It is instructive to compare the layout of the Slater Road Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 61) with the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 65). Both *murtis* were of similar design made by the same *murtikar*, Vijay Khatu. Yet, the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal had thought much more carefully about the complementarity between the sculpture and surrounding. It is also evident that the art director liaised more closely with the *murtikar* and his designed *murti*. In addition, the *murti* in the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal had a simple red and white garland around the neck, whereas the Slater Road Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal had an ostentatious garland made out of currency which looked cumbersome on the *murti*. Lights beautifully lit the *murti* on the face in the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, and thus enhanced the effects of the *murti*. Thus, it was evident that both the *murti* and the decorations benefit from thoughtful displays - the *murti* goes to enhance the significance of the decorations, and the art direction can work to enhance the quality of the *murti*.

¹⁶This is not to say that these kind of *mandals* were considered as unsuitable for prizes by other competition organisers, for some of these are not as stringent as *Girnar-Loksatta* in consideration of funds of *mandals* and costs of their tableaux.

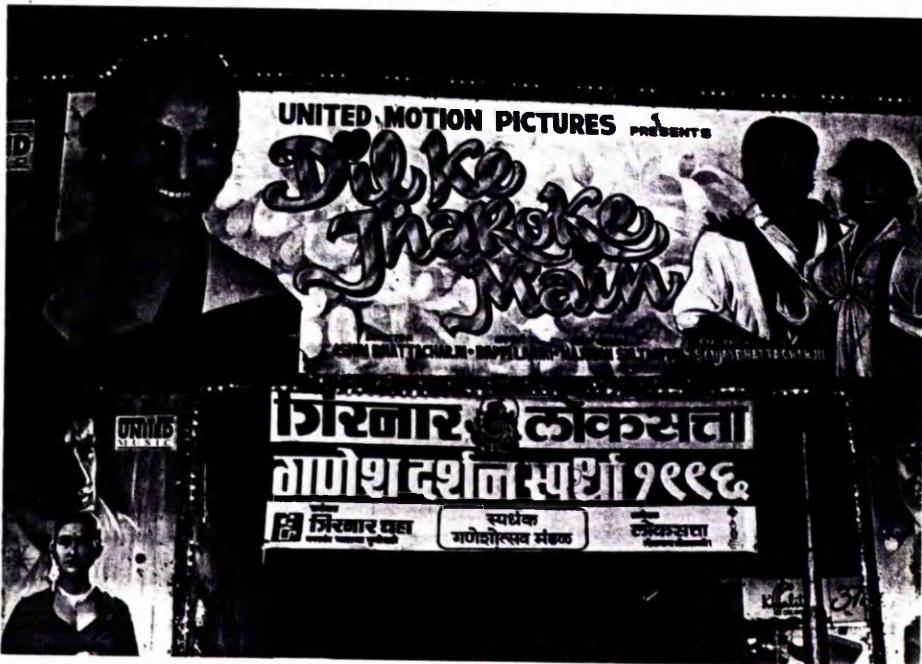
¹⁷The Jalgaon Rape Case refers to a series of notorious rapes committed systematically on girls and women and recorded on video in Jalgaon, one of the outlying suburbs of Greater Mumbai, in 1994.



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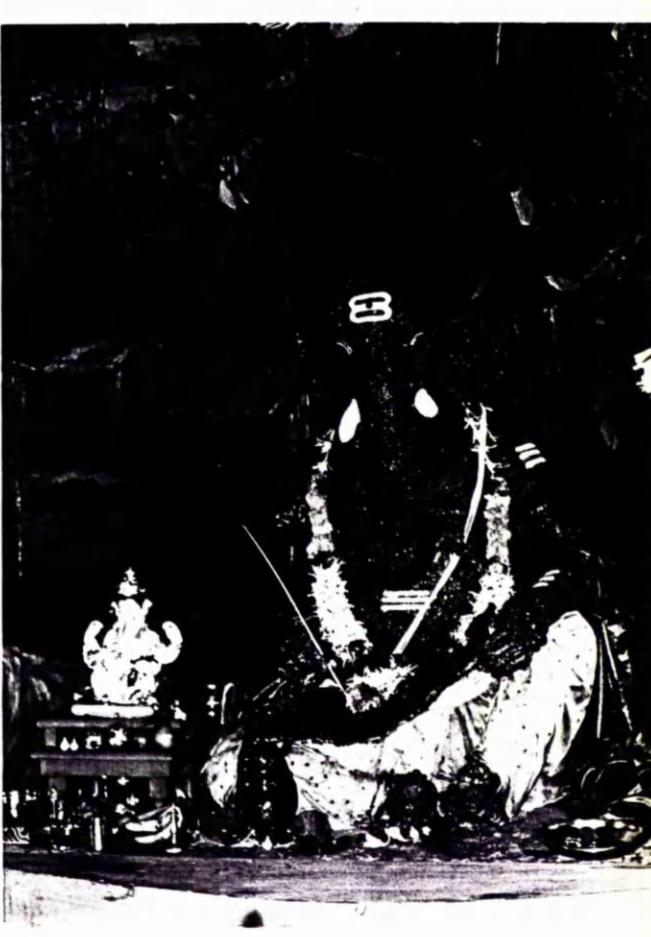
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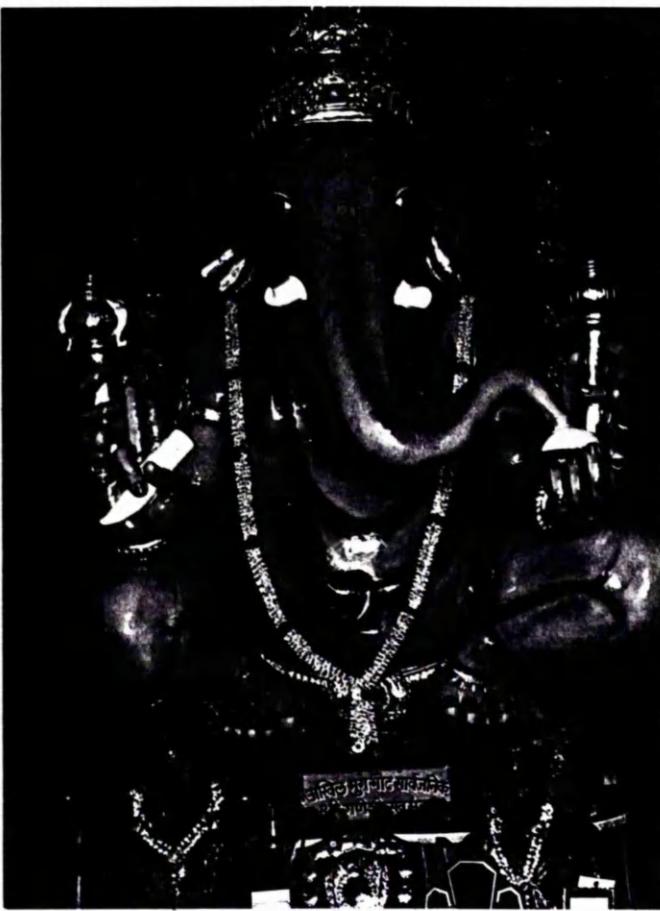
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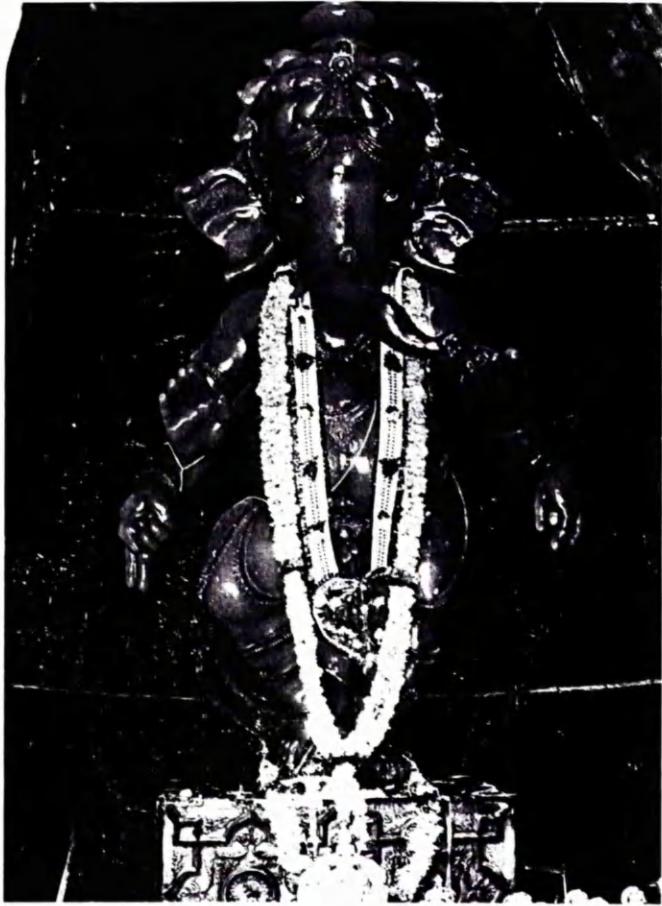
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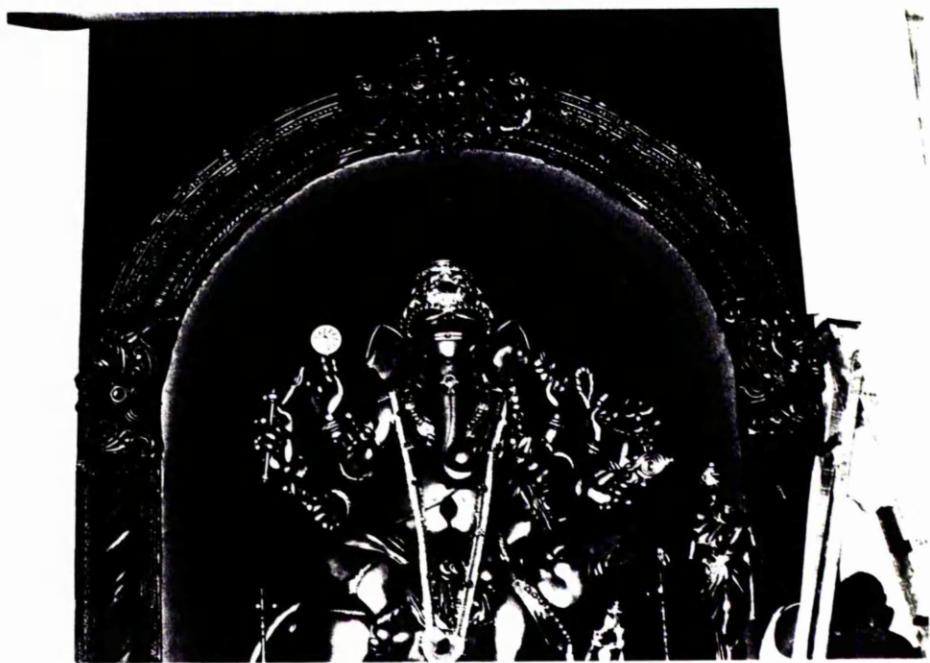
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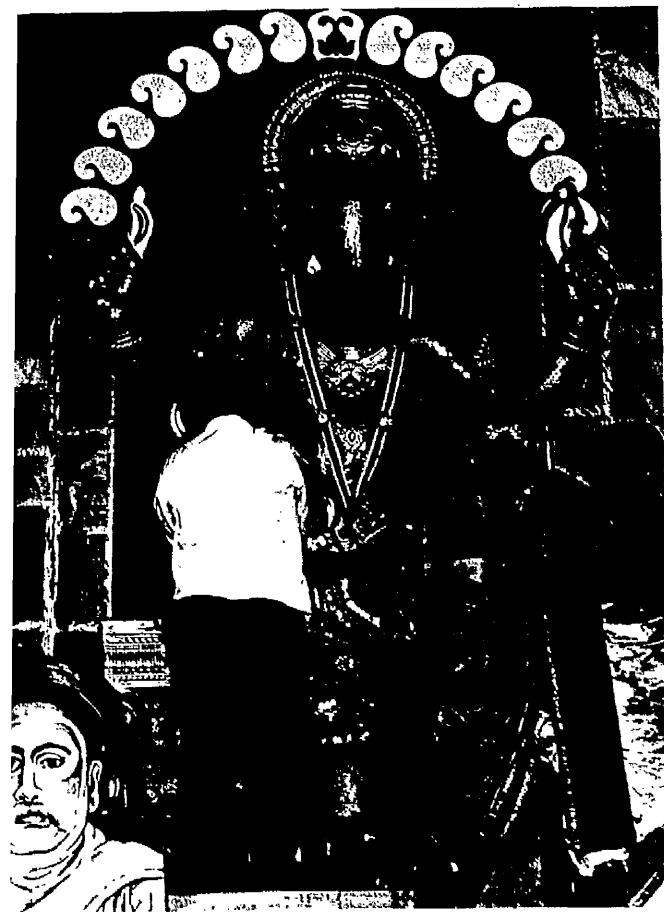
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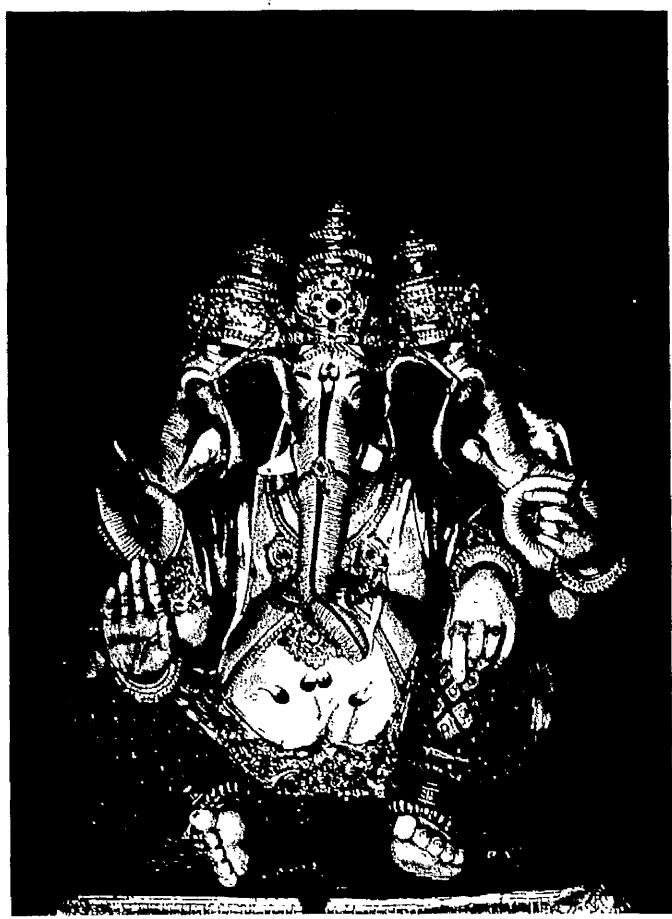
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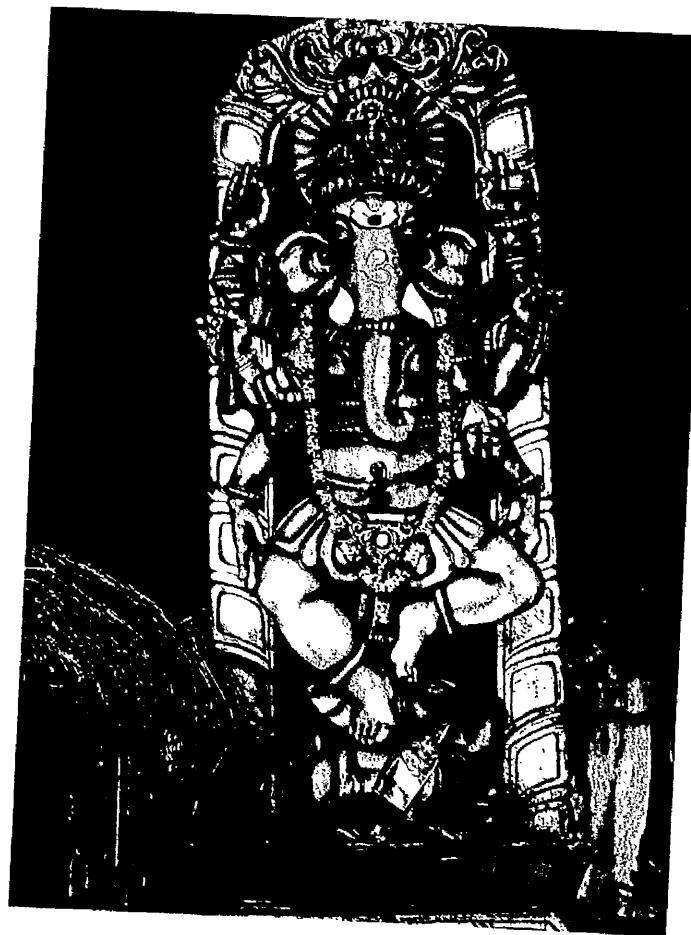
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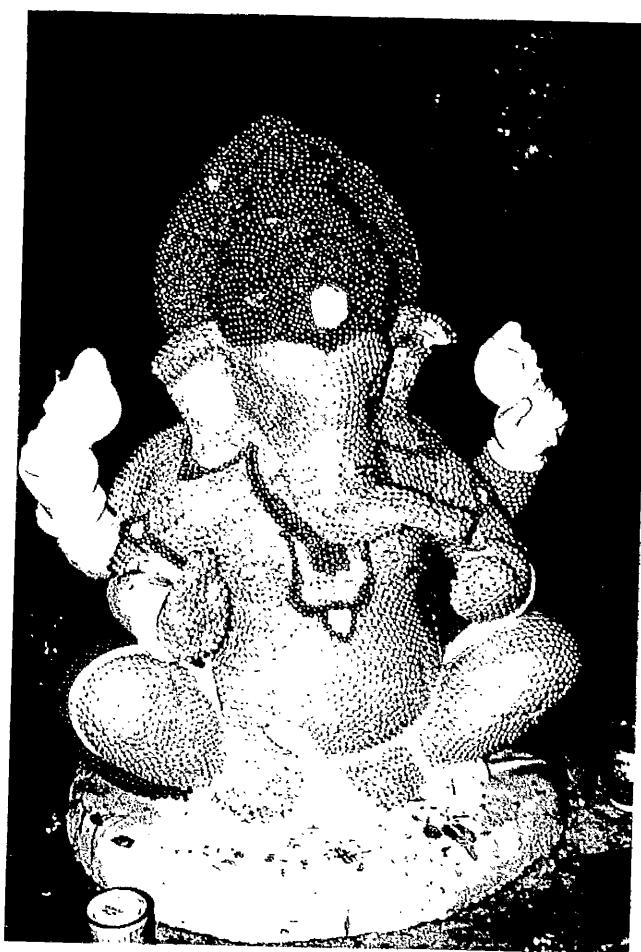
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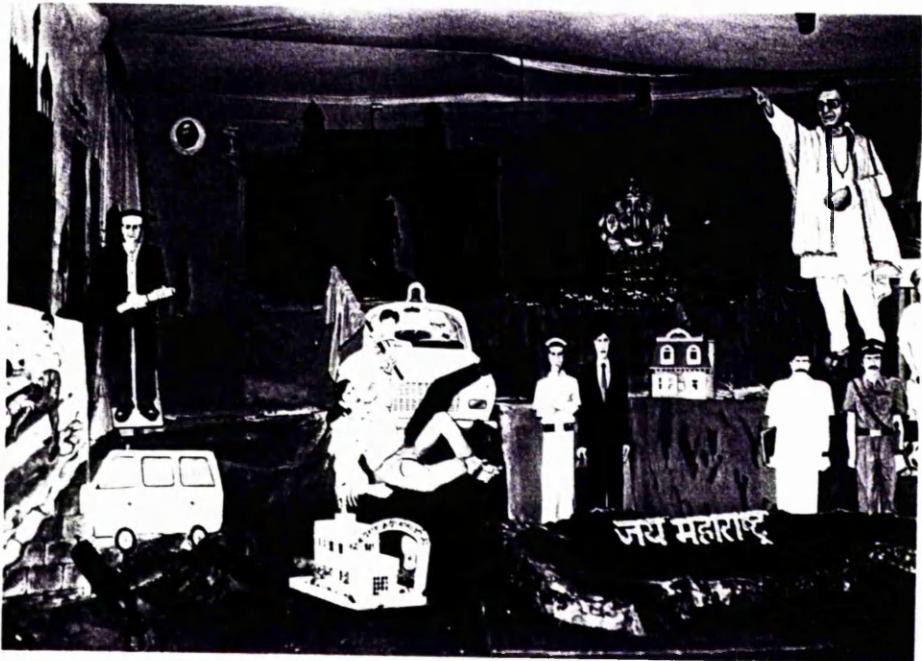
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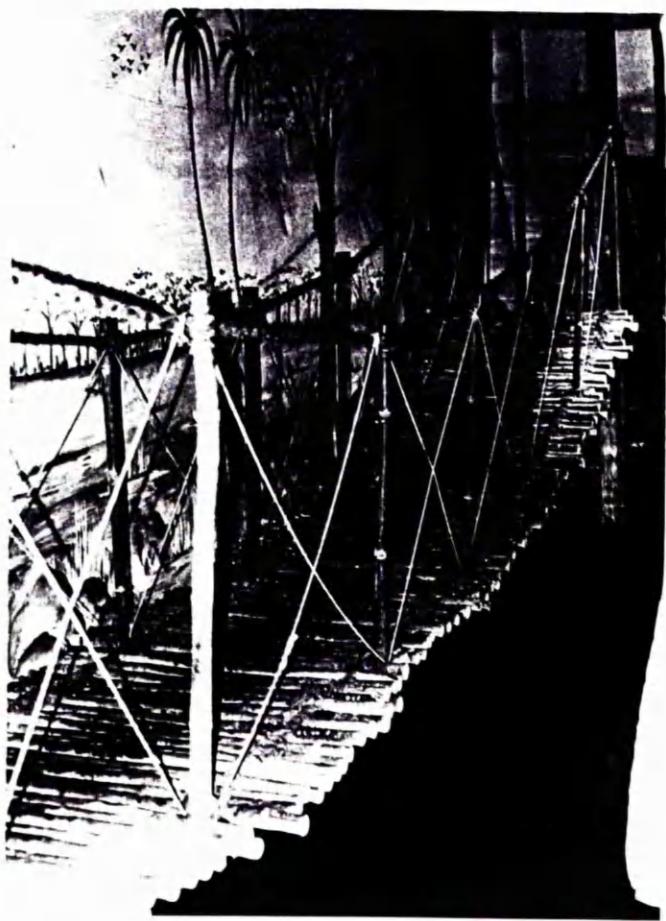
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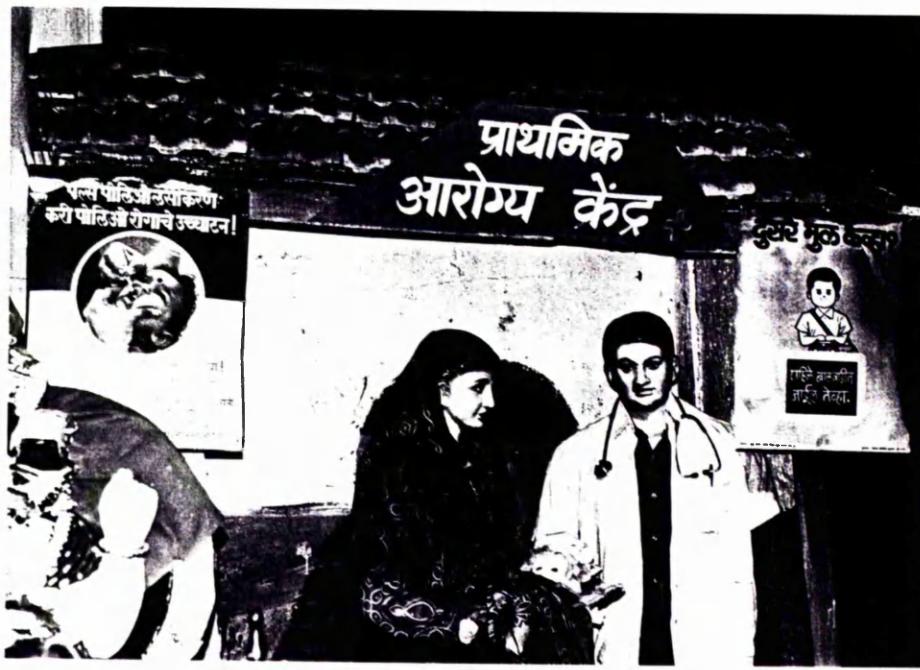


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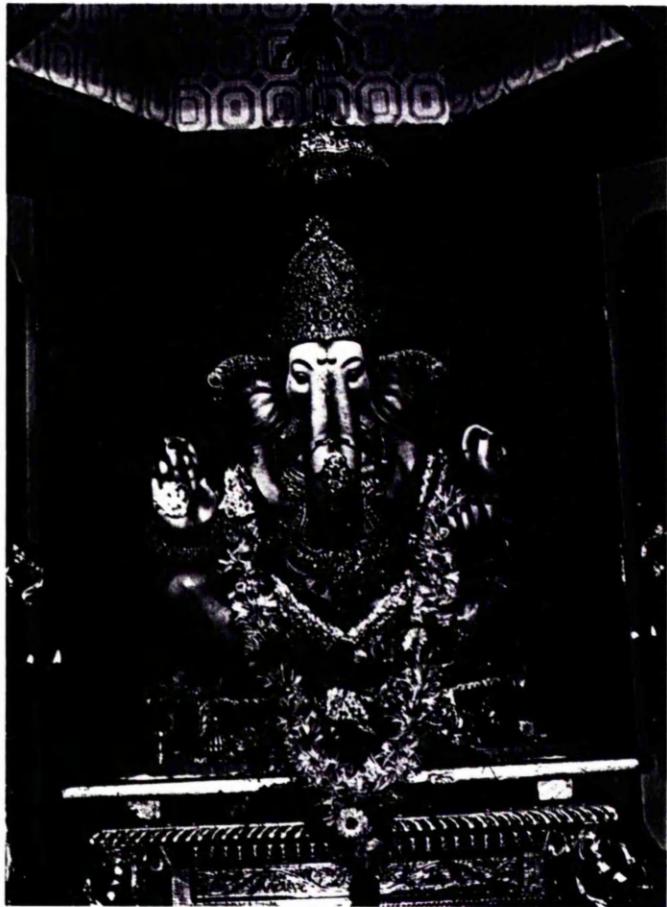


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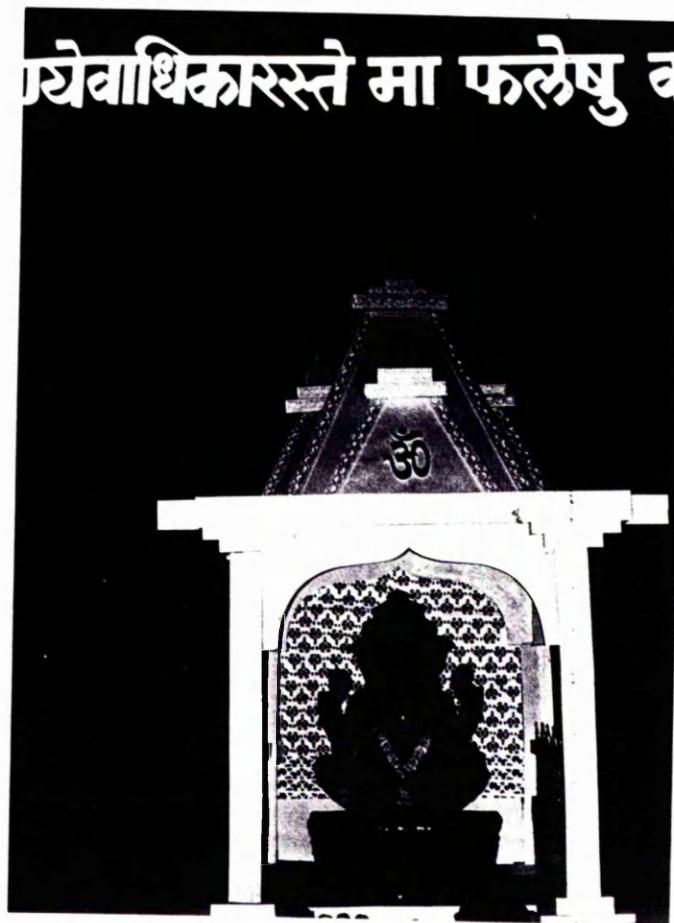


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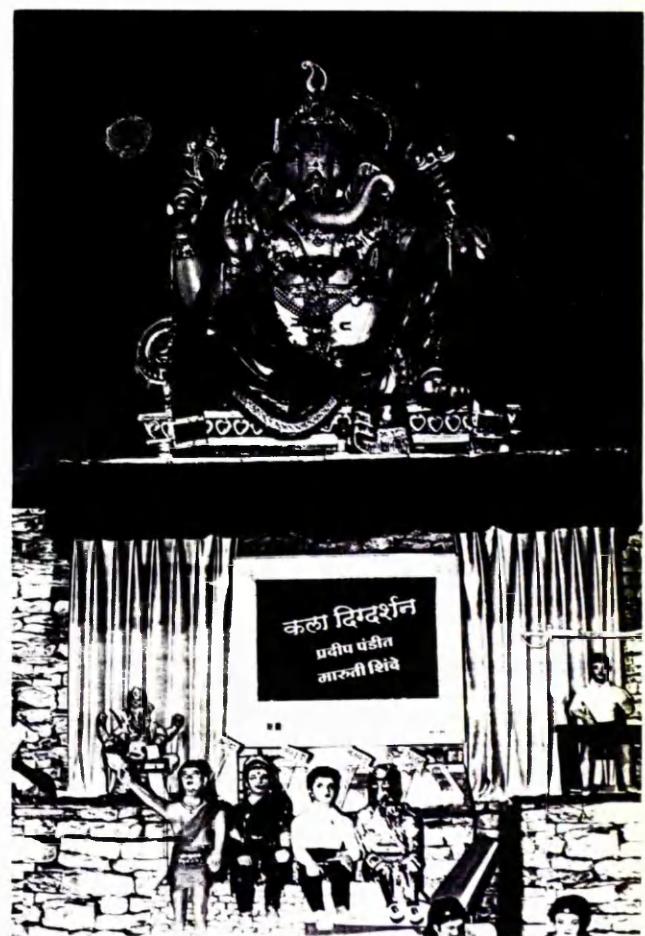
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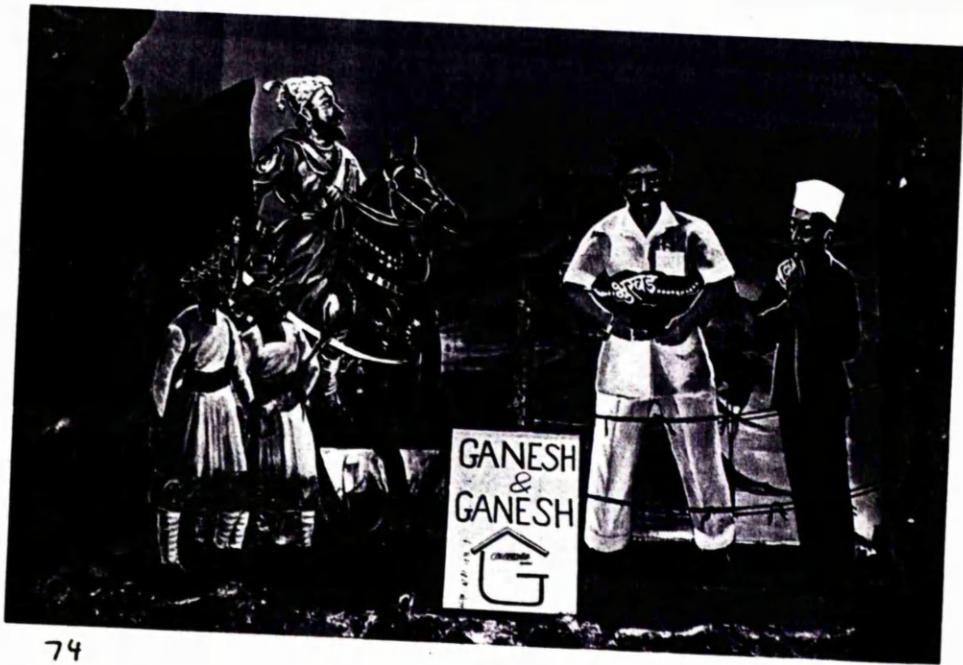
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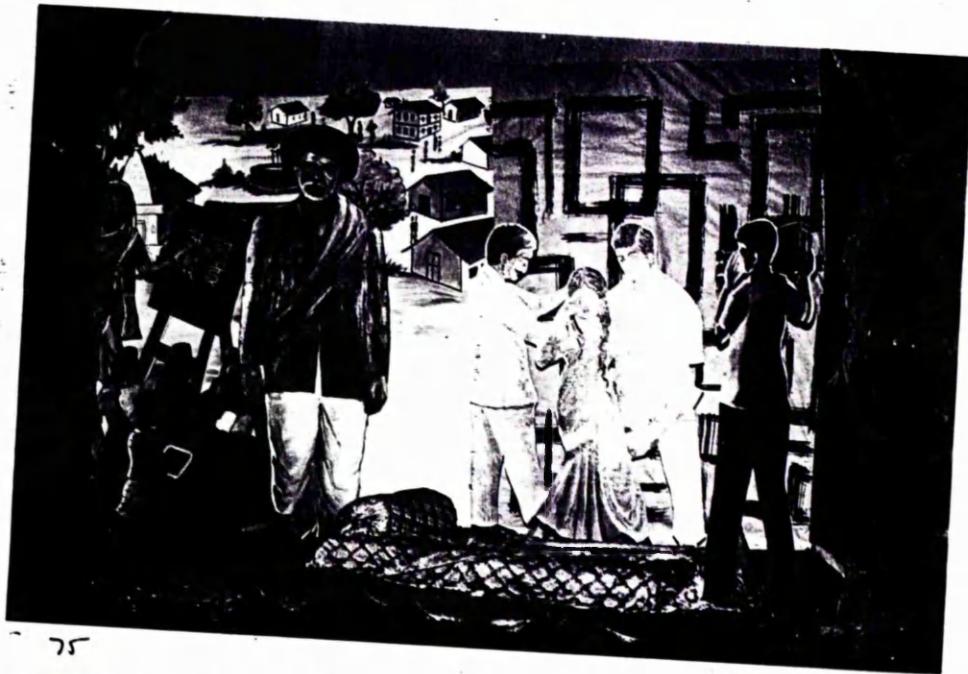
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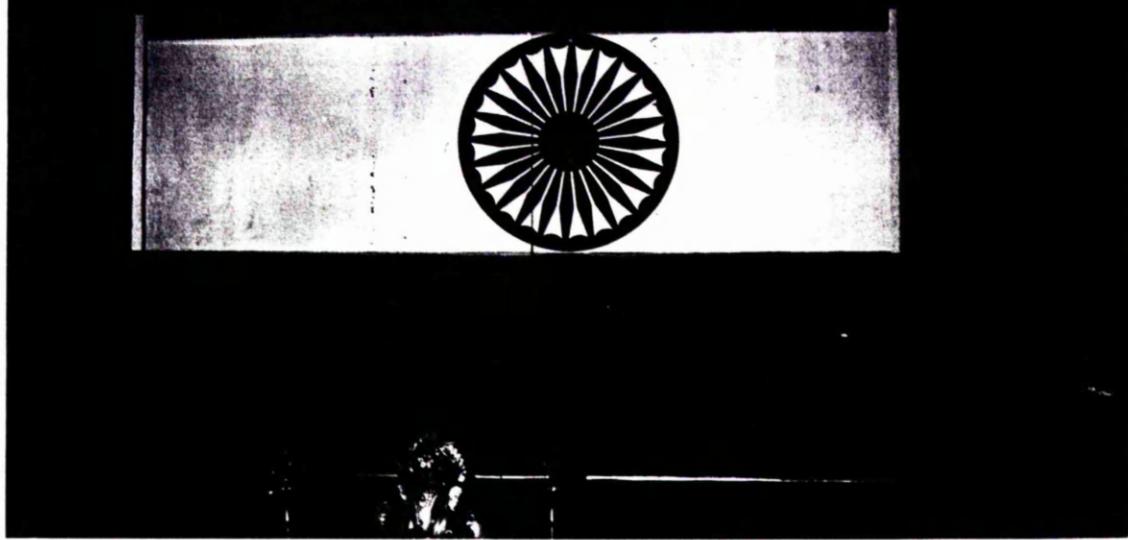
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Chapter Eight

Political Appropriations and Public Contests of *Ganeshotsava Mandals*

This chapter concentrates on the political appropriations of *Ganeshotsava mandals* and festival activities in Mumbai. The political parties involved include the regionalist party, the Shiv Sena, now in Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly power in alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); and to a lesser extent, due to their comparative lack of strength in ‘street politics’ and *Ganeshotsava mandal* activities in contemporary Mumbai, the Congress party.¹ The chapter illustrates the dynamics of hegemonising forces in festival activities, as well as the contestation for public space, media attention, finance, and popular approval and support between what might be described as oppositional hegemonic blocs.

By 1947, the aim of national independence had been achieved, albeit at great cost to lives and communal relations. Consequently, the agenda of anti-colonial nationalism took a back-seat. Festival activities and tableaux took on a blatantly commercialised and celebratory tenor, responding less to socially relevant themes (see Chapter Five). In more recent decades, however, socio-politics has again had a sharp influence on the Ganapati *utsava*. These dynamics have been increasingly conspicuous in recent years with the rise of the Hindutva movement in India, and renewed attempts at co-opting festivals such as the Ganapati *utsava*. In Maharashtra, Hindutva has its regionalist advocates particularly since the mid 1980s with the political party, Shiv Sena, led by Bal Thackeray.² In addition, this militant brigade has unleashed oppositional offensives to defend or promulgate other party agendas in the festival site, such that the occasion like many others, has become a vehemently contested arena for publicity and popular support. The festival activities are reflective and productive discourses of a wider politicised agenda to enlist support, played out amongst the populace through an array of patronage, pageantry, display and community-oriented activities.

In contemporary Maharashtra, different parties compete for favour through working in *mandals*, and sponsoring lavish decorations and programmes.³ Festivals such as Ganapati *utsava* are a useful means of electioneering. This is a practice which has been exacerbated under efforts by the likes of the Chief Election Commissioner’s, T. N. Seshan’s, stipulations to curb election malpractice and corrupt expenditure, or what Seshan has called the ‘politics of fraud’ (Seshan and Hazarika 1995: 13). As stringent measures were imposed upon the election process itself in 1994, other avenues of circumvention and public dissemination were assiduously sought, such that more and more politicians began to place greater importance on their representation at

key public and religious events. Public religious participation and avocation also served the additional purpose of presenting the public figure in what appears to be a religious, moral and selfless light.

I begin this chapter by briefly considering contemporary Maharashtrian political culture, before focusing in more detail on the Shiv Sena. I consider the reasons and motivations for the Shiv Sena monopoly on *Ganeshotsava mandals* in Mumbai. Then I provide a description and illustrations of a couple of *mandals* and *mandap* tableaux. These include the more explicit and extravagant Shiv Sena controlled *mandap* displays and narratives by the Tarabaug and Spring Mills Compound Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandals in south-central Mumbai and the Congress-sympathetic Tanaji Krida Mandal in Kurla in the north eastern suburbs of Mumbai. Whereas the former provide parochial and communalist variations on the theme of nationalism as it applies to the Shiv Sena in Mumbai; the latter provide what I have described as Hindu secular versions of the narrative of belonging. Notes of consonance as well as dissonance are apparent between the two socio-political strategies and public representations which are elaborated further in Chapter Nine.

Contemporary Political Culture in Maharashtra

A series of political campaigns based on anti-Brahman, regional and linguistic grounds have moulded the contemporary political culture of Mumbai (see Chapter Two). In brief, statehood came about in 1960 as a result of agitation for a Samyukta Maharashtra, by the party of the same name, and the linguistic reorganisations of the states of India.⁴ Greater in-migration to the commercial capital of India resulted in the growth of parochialism with those indigenous to Maharashtra. One of the consequences of this process was the emergence of Shiv Sena politics in the 1960s. Nonetheless, the main party in central power for the most part of post-independent years has been the Congress party, both at central level, and at state level. From its inception in the 1880s, it has presented itself as a ‘secular’, cross-caste and cross-religion coalition which up until the 1990s, advocated a moderate socialist approach. At the state level, Congress has presented a regionalist view of nation-oriented ‘secular’ politics. From 1977-1979, largely due to the Emergency situation initiated by the Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, Congress lost central state power to the Janata Dal.⁵ Again in 1996, Congress lost favour with the electorate to be replaced by a coalition government.

Official Congress power in Maharashtra continued until 1995, when it was voted out of power to be taken over by the Bharatiya Janata Party-Shiv Sena alliance (Guru 1995).⁶ Nonetheless, as Palshikar (1996) and Hansen (1996a) show, Congress strength

persisted in places like Pune. This is also corroborated by my findings of *mandals* in Pune which demonstrate explicit alliances with the Congress party. Examples include the largest *mandal* in the state, the Dagdu Seth Halvai Mandal, and the Sakhalipir Talim Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal discussed in Chapter Five. This grassroots support is alongside the Congress MLA, Suresh Kalmadi's, initiatives to set up a commercial and tourist-oriented 'parallel' festival to the Ganapati *utsava*, called the Pune Festival (see below). To a lesser extent, Congress support is also evident amongst latter-day migrant communities in Mumbai, particularly those from the north of India, as I demonstrate below with the Tanaji Krida Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal based in one of the city's suburbs. Trade union activism, particularly as inspired by Datta Samant (Pendse 1981), has also been a key feature of Mumbai's political culture up until the mid-1980s. As I elaborate further below, the Shiv Sena were instrumental in destroying the strength of these Left-democratic movements in Mumbai over the last three decades. Other political parties active in contemporary Maharashtra include the Communist Party of India, the Janata Dal, the People's Workers Party, and the Bahujan Samaj Party which principally fought against Brahmanical Hinduism and for the equitable distribution of water (Phadke 1993). However, up until 1995, none of these political parties managed to usurp the Congress hold on the state, even if it was lost at the central state level.

Factionalism within Congress ranks, a volatile time in Hindu-Muslim relations and state security in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, and the Mumbai bomb blasts in March 1993, led to an upheaval of Congress rule in Maharashtra, as it did at central level. Accusations were made about Congress ministers, particularly the state's Chief Minister, Sharad Pawar, being involved with the underworld who were said to be responsible for the bomb blasts. Accusations against Pawar's government of mishandling the operation and charges of corruption flew left, right and centre. The situation was so volatile that by the time of the Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly elections in March 1995, it was more or less written on the cards that the Congress were going to lose. Issues of 'Corruption, Callousness [against the treatment of Muslim communities in riot situations] and Criminalisation' provided the key slogans for opposition parties (Guru 1995). Reportedly, even members of the Muslim communities who had tended to see the Congress as protector of minority rights expressed their disaffection by voting for the unlikeliest candidates from the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance (Vora 1996; Palshikar 1996). After March 1995, the BJP candidate, Manohar Joshi, became Chief Minister whereas Bal Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena acted as the overall political mentor, the Supreme Leader. A strong personality cult seems to have developed around the figure of Thackeray - a charismatic, vehement and skilled orator, and the party have built a

sizeable bastion from local spheres of influence in Mumbai. Thackeray has been described as:

'...an autocrat who rules over the megapolis with an iron hand, with complete control over the government, the multi-crore film industry, the corporate world and the minds of millions' (*Outlook*, September 25, 1996).

Resistance to such trends is of course present, but one that is necessarily cautious or apathetic in view of the large intimidating party Thackeray controls. Despite the State Assembly victory, the alliance has been fraught with difficulties and differences in opinions. Nonetheless, for the case of Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena, seem to rule the roost in this marriage of convenience due primarily to their grassroots support and adoption of aggressive tactics under the inspiration of Bal Thackeray.

The Shiv Sena

There is a long and complicated history of the formation of the Shiv Sena since its inauguration in 1966 (Gupta 1982; Lele 1995; Katzenstein et al 1997).⁷ The formation of the party was encouraged by parties such as the Congress in order to offset the influence of the Communist Party of India especially amongst trade unions (Gokhale-Turner 1980: 99; Pendse 1981: 696). The Shiv Sena contested municipal elections in 1968 and succeeded in winning 42 seats, a third of the total in the municipal corporation. Up until the 1990s, it continued to contest for municipal power, before it decided to enter into the realpolitik arena of state, and now it appears, national politics.

In the Shiv Sena's political history, many, sometimes even contradictory alliances, have been made as part of its efforts to exploit electoral politics in order to secure its support base (Katzenstein et al 1997: 382). Perhaps as a result of this and the inconsistency between its sometimes violent activities and family-oriented respectable image, its committed social work and gangsterism, the Shiv Sena has quite rightly been described as a 'monster of ambivalence' (Heuze 1995: 230). However, the Shiv Sena's appeal to regional and linguistic sentiments of Maharashtra have remained more or less consistent.

Starting off by directing its venom against communists and south Indian migrants, and commanding the support of Maharashtrian white-collar workers and professionals, the Shiv Sena has in later years expanded its appeal to workers in formal and informal sectors of Mumbai particularly its lumpenized youth (Hansen 1995: 5). In the process, the Shiv Sena has lost some of its earlier support. It is nowadays characterised by a

predominantly youth brotherhood who place action, whether it be legal or illegal, as the basis of their political work. The party is predominantly anti-Muslim (Hansen 1995: 14), usually explicated in the rhetoric against anti-nationals or illegal immigrants and 'overstayers' from Pakistan and Bangladesh (Wright 1996: 1). Their logic runs that if Muslims adhere to Islam, they are more in favour of Islamic nations and hence a threat to the harmony of India (Katzenstein et al 1997: 378-9). As Niranjana (1995) also notes, Hindutva's entry into liberal discourse has made them address anti-Muslim rhetoric only indirectly. However, since the alliance's victory in Maharashtra, Bal Thackeray, whilst not being sympathetic to liberal discourse, vacillates between playing the liberal card and being openly antagonistic against Muslims in public speeches. As Heuze has noted, the Shiv Sena has incited anti-Muslim pogroms in 1971, 1984 and 1986 (Heuze 1992: 2189), as well as in 1992-3 after the disturbances of the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya. The party's adoption of the Hindutva mantle, particularly from 1981 (Heuze 1992: 2189), has confirmed the Shiv Sainiks' anti-Muslim stances, even if they appear to pay lip-service as to being the party for all communities since election into Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly rule.

There is an estimated 40,000 hard-core activists and around 200,000 sympathisers, many of them men under the age of thirty five, in 210 *shakhas* (organisational wings) and 1,000 sub-*shakhas* which are organised by the Shiv Sena in contemporary Mumbai (Heuze 1995: 214).⁸ The major stronghold is in Dadar in central Mumbai where the head office used to be up until the party's acquisition of state power in their opportune alliance with the BJP for the State Legislative Assembly elections in 1995. The structure of the Shiv Sena organisation is loose but well-co-ordinated for occasions of rapid mobilisation. Headed by the Sena Pramukh, Bal Thackeray, it has an advisory body, the Kavya Karani - now part of the Sena-BJP combine in the state legislature. The *shakhas*, whose leaders (Shakha Pramukh) are chosen by Thackeray, have direct contact with the populace through open offices in neighbourhoods and regular organised activities (Gupta 1982: 74-5) generally advertised through Shiv Sena blackboards littered about the locality (illustration 84). Other organisations that they run include the Citrapat Shakha (a film unit established in 1970 to promote Marathi films), trade unions, the Mahila Aghad (Woman's Front), the Bharatiya Kamgar Sena (Indian Workers Army), and the Sthanya Lok Adhikar Samiti (Local People's Rights Committee) which attempts to procure jobs for the educated unemployed (Heuze 1995: 214). The *shakhas* seem to be the key to the Shiv Sena's grassroots support, providing help and civic amenities to local communities (Hansen 1995: 5). The anomie of city living seems to be countervailed by methods of renewing and consolidating community contacts in the neighbourhood.⁹

Dadar along with the area slightly to the south of it is notably influenced by Shiv Sena politics. This has been the case since 1970 when political participation was activated by Shiv Sena in labour areas such as Lalbaug, Prabhadevi, Dadar, and Parel in south-central Mumbai. As these areas were dominated by mill workers and other manual labourers, they were formerly politically Left-wing bastions. The Shiv Sena made inroads here as they began to politicise the workers along religio-ethnic lines. The party is also notorious for group collection of party funds, particularly around the time of festival, which often lead to aggressive demands in the commercial districts of Mumbai, and extensive racketeering.

Since the 1980s, the Shiv Sena has taken on a more national perspective by stressing a Hindu identity and the use of Hindi in political sloganeering. This represents a shift in the politics of parochialism for the Shiv Sena, allowing them to capitalise upon their local organisational standing as well as ride on the backs of the national Hindutva brigade:¹⁰

'...the Shiv Sena effectively exploited a discursive opportunity to link its own locally produced version of militant Hinduism with the politicized Hinduism that has been rapidly spreading throughout North India since the mid-1980s; but...the discourse of Hindu nationalism was only able to take hold in Bombay and in Maharashtra due to the tightly structured and coercive character of Shiv Sena as an organization operating in a political milieu that was increasingly fractured and undirected' (Katzenstein et al 1997: 371-2).

It is apparent that, as with the region of Maharashtra, religion has provided a vehicle with which to raise primordial emotions without needing to argue for the justifications of a particular political agenda. Indeed, the Hindutva cause has enabled an expansion of the repertoire of religious emblems, such as the Ram Jamnaboomi Mandir campaign to build a temple to Ram at the site of the Babri Masjid, and the celebration of festivals.

With the strategic alliance of the BJP-Shiv Sena, the national-local spectrums of power-brokering were further facilitated. It also appears that it provided another version of the alliance between two tactical approaches of law and democracy as represented by the BJP, and of authoritarianism and aggression as with the RSS, VHP and Bajrang Dal (Basu et al 1993: vii). Since the Bharatiya Janata Party-Shiv Sena alliance won the elections for the Maharashtra State Legislative Assembly in March 1995, the party has tended to promote a 'softer', more moderate and consensus-based side to its Hindu chauvinist image. It had managed to woo some of the Muslim vote bank due to their disaffection with the Congress party, and is eager to publicise its Muslim memberships, which is still a minute percentage, however much critics

consider this self-presentation as the politics of tokenism.¹¹ Instead, the alliance has tended to direct its campaign against 'anti-nationals' and 'aliens', particularly Pakistani and Bangladeshi 'illegal' immigrants, the majority of which are Muslim. It is apparent that a combination of direct action tactics, ideological malleability, residential mobilisation, and a strong network structure have led to the rising success and dominance of the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra.

The Tiger's Mouthpieces

Alongside their grassroots activities, the Shiv Sena, symbolised by a roaring tiger, have also tried to propagate their views through media outlets. The *Marmik* weekly magazine in Marathi, which started in 1966, acts as one of the Shiv Sena's mouthpieces as well as giving full vent to Bal Thackeray's ideas and cartoon-drawing skills.¹² Later the daily newspaper, *Samna*, was made available in Marathi in 1989 and then a Hindi edition from 1993 (Katzenstein et al 1997: 383). The Shiv Sena utilise the full potential of media dissemination, as well as keeping a check on other media forms, resorting to press intimidation or damage of property if anything is printed against the Shiv Sena (Sarkar 1993: 163).

As Gupta cites, Thackeray once said that:

' "[Man] must be given full spiritual and aesthetic freedom and no curbs should be placed on him. As long as he is caged, he can never be happy nor will he be able to realise his full potential." Bal Thackeray believes that his own experience as an artist brought this realization to him' (Gupta 1982: 122).

Fully aware of the power of images, cartoons provide a satirical medium to let vent to Bal Thackeray's personal vision of the political world which Shiv Sena supporters and sympathisers venerate. The visual caricatures provide an index on different strategies of attack and obstacles in the party's ambitions. Whereas in the 1960s, *Marmik* cartoons were predominately against south Indian migrants in Mumbai, nowadays they are overwhelmingly against figures of political power, particularly from the Congress indicating the different level of the Shiv Sena's strategies in the 1990s. Cartoons also provide a means of bringing together religious and political commentaries, as with cartoon figures of gods such as Ganapati for the moral indictment of leaders and campaigns to address problems like the sugar and food shortage of the mid-1960s (Gupta 1982: 138). More recent caricatures show a figure of a 'false' Ganapati transposed with the face of a corrupt Congress politician (*Marmik*, 11-17 September, 1994; illustration 86). With the inscription, 'Congress *netutva* (leadership)', he is

undoubtedly a reference to the then Chief Minister, Sharad Pawar. The false god sits on a giant *mushaka* with the label ‘criminals proliferating at top levels’. In his four hands, he holds a paper with ‘false promises’, the returns of his corrupt work (*ghotale*), and plans for the party’s leadership again. A man desperately asks an anxious-looking Ganapati, ‘Destroyer of Evil, now you have to immerse these things’. Interestingly, the Ganapati on the front cover of the same issue shows an assertive and domineering Ganapati, very much reminiscent of the assertive poses adopted by the public figure of Thackeray. Ganapati asserts, ‘Until today, you people used to ask me to satisfy your wills. Today, I’m expressing my will to all my devotees: when I arrive next time, then I don’t want to see this corrupt Congress government in Maharashtra’ (illustration 87). Clearly, Thackeray and his coterie manipulate the potential of cartoons for, on the one hand, caricature and parody as a systematic weapon of socio-political criticism, and on the other hand, representations of venerable images of Ganapati as a social crusader to further the party’s agenda.

Such dual strategies of parodying and idolising are also evident in Shiv Sena affiliated *Ganeshotsava mandap* tableaux. For instance, with the Abhudhyangan Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal display of 1995, Congress politicians were parodied as rats ‘eating away’ at money, and wining and dining whilst people were dying in riots on the streets (illustrations 88-89). Despite arguments to the contrary, the Shiv Sainik view on the events of the riotous period after the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992-3 was that it was a situation that was allowed to foster by the diffident attitudes of Congress politicians. Cartoon-like presentations are also utilised to present endearing or respectful images of Ganapati as a kind of socio-religious warrior of justice, as was the case with *mandap* tableau of the Ghodapdeo Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal in south Mumbai in 1996 (illustration 90).

In recent times, modern media such as audio cassettes and videos have provided a semi-autonomous zone of message dissemination, resistant to the Congress monopoly over the terrestrial television station, Doordarshan. This has been a characteristic strategy of the Hindutva brigade. As Rudolph cites, Shiv Sena cassettes around the 1989 polls featured:

‘...ominous sounds, explosions, mushroom clouds, mutilated bodies, consuming tongues of red fire, the gold and black of a predatory tiger...stalking its prey. The subliminal message was communal: aroused Hindus were after Muslims’ (Rudolph 1992: 1491).

Such loud and sensationalist features are also prevalent in *Ganeshotsava mandap* narratives which I describe below.

The much trumpeted history of the seventeenth century Maratha ruler, Chatrapati Shivaji, also forms a significant part of the Shiv Sena directive. Shivaji evokes the ‘golden age of Maharashtra’, celebrated as the founder of the Maratha polity, an exemplar of just and uncorrupted rule, and the victor against Mughal challenge which today translates into victory over ‘anti-national’ Muslims. The rule of Shivaji, *Shivshahi*, is deemed as a just and principled rule compared to the tyranny of the Mughals, and as an extension, British colonialism. Due to the present political ambitions of the Shiv Sena, it has also been set up as an ideal in contrast to corruption in government which up until recently was Congress.

Shivaji's portraits and busts are heralded everywhere as an emblem of Maharashtrian martial and just power (illustration 85). Often, in Shiv Sena *shakhas*, this is alongside representations of Bal Thackeray. All Shiv Sena functions start with the garlanding of a bust of Shivaji with the slogans '*Bal Thackeray Sena Pramukh Jhindabad*' ('Long live Bal Thackeray, Leader of the Shiv Sena') with which Bal Thackeray's ambitions to be the next Shivaji incarnate are made all too apparent. In *Ganeshotsava mandap* tableaux, stories to do with Shivaji's life are placed alongside current socio-political issues, for instance, and used as allegorical filters with which to compare the glory of Maharashtra's past, and the corruption of contemporary times, for which it is argued, only the Shiv Sena are fit to deal with.¹³ The wars between the Marathas and the Mughals, ideally epitomised in the rivalries between Shivaji and Aurangzeb and his general, Afzal Khan, are predominantly seen through the eyes of Hindu-Muslim communalism, as well as influence numerous political campaigns (Gupta 1982: 41). It is notable that since 1995, when there was a change in the government in Maharashtra, there had been a greater demand for Ganapati *murtis* and tableaux relating to the life and works of Shivaji. The coronation of Shivaji was repeatedly invoked after the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance came into state power in 1995. It was estimated by a *murtikar* that in 1995 around sixty percent of his orders were for Shivaji as a background theme to the Ganapati *murti*. Many *mandaps* depicted Shivaji's coronation, whereas many others related his birth, his development, and his rule, protecting the weak and punishing criminals.¹⁴ It is quite explicit that the Shiv Sena aim to represent a new reign of just rule for Maharashtrians, in particular, which epitomised the *Shivshahi* in the seventeenth century.¹⁵

The Ganapati *utsava* is advanced as the means to further disseminate such messages as well as Maharashtrian Hindu culture in general by the Shiv Sena controlled *mandals*. As Hansen notes:

'Religious festivals were from the outset central foci of the Shiv Sena's populist manifestation...The Shiv Sena has been instrumental in adding an unmistakable conspicuous and opulent character of the Bombay version of this festival' (Hansen 1995: 24).

Nowadays, in the 1990s a milieu has been created for artists, *mandal* members and the general Hindu public involved in the Ganapati *utsava* to promote unity, religious and moral values as well as entertainment and innovation within the legacies of a Maharashtrian Hindu tradition. Such sentiments coexist with a national Hindutva programme. The Shiv Sena capitalise upon the convergence of the two realms, as well as presenting a more regional inflection on them, as it is stated by their sympathisers that a notion of an ideal Maharashtra is what the *rashtra*, the nation at large, ought to be based on.

Political Co-option of Festivals

Most political parties have recognised the potentials to be gained in participating and even organising events during festivals such as the Ganapati *utsava*, but seem to be fighting a losing battle against the Shiv Sena which has the upper hand with *Ganeshotsava mandals* in Mumbai. Despite the apparent all-inclusiveness of public festivals, religious occasions such as the Ganapati *utsava* have tended to be hijacked for contemporary political causes, playing into the hands of militant Hindus.

The Shiv Sena has had a significant influence on the Ganapati *utsava* in latter-day times, consonant with its rising support primarily in Maharashtrian strongholds and working-class areas of Mumbai where most of the older *Ganeshotsava mandals* are situated. The annual festival has provided a recurrent means of reasserting Maharashtrian identity and control of public space, as well as providing an arena for homogenising sets of narratives and issues as presented in *mandap* tableaux. The Shiv Sena has progressively spread its sphere of influence on popular culture in Mumbai over the years. The Shiv Sena's fostering of grand scenes and the predominance of many smaller scenes with *Ganeshotsava mandals* exemplifies the encroaching and conquering of public space in a capillary network. They constitute points in a city's topography which 'move' on procession days through the streets of the city in what could be described as a process of annual saffronisation. The implications of this for participating Hindus have already been noted in a discussion on immersion processions in Chapter Six. However, in this case, the political aspects of militant Hinduism and ambitions for public control are made even more apparent. It is a view that is reiterated by Shiv Sainiks themselves, rather than just a theoretical argument pointing out the political potential of these kinds of public processions.

On the campaigns of the Hindutva brigade, Chakravarty (1994) concentrates on the RSS *shakhas* and cultural activities. He notes similar strategies to the ones employed by Shiv Sena *shakhas* with the Ganapati *utsava* involving:

'...intense investment by the communal organisation during the Ram Janma Bhoomi Campaign, using temple premises and streets, exhorting Hindus to participate together in the BJP campaign of *yatras* in an attempt to create a new style of congregational politics' (Chakravarty 1994: 111).

Attempts to coalesce strategies of collective gathering with media and literature control are exemplified by their style of 'congregational politics' which:

'...require the large scale assemblage of people and is usually built upon "religious" festivities culminating invariably in a procession. Strategies to mobilize people include pamphlet literature disseminating, and confirming Hindu communal ideology. The setting up of various organizations, the congregation occasions, and the pamphlet literature, are working together to build consent for an exclusivist idea of the nation; for a widespread sanction for ejection of the Muslims from their current place in the country as well as for violence against them' (Chakravarty 1994: 111-112).

Such hegemonic strategies are efficacious because they work from local grassroots levels, and utilise the already familiar and powerful strategies based upon historical heritage, religious ideas and praxis:

'The success of the ideology lies in the fact that it appears to have explanatory value, and consent for it draws upon religion. At the same time it offers political clout and street power to those who are disenchanted and perceive themselves to be deprived' (Chakravarty 1994: 112-3).

Despite the workings of such hegemonies, it must be remembered that they are not always uncritically received. The phenomena that Chakravarty accounts for also confronts pockets of criticism and resistance even from Hindu citizens in Mumbai where the Shiv Sena's strength is substantial. I have already accounted for several *Girnar-Loksatta* judges' critique of politically blatant *Ganeshotsava mandals*. It is to investigate the fractal lines within a city's political culture that I concentrate on Congress sympathetic *Ganeshotsav mandals* in Mumbai, rather than in Pune.

With its populist rhetoric and grassroots activity of encouraging social service activities and organising Hindu festivals such as the Durga Puja, *Shivaji Jayanti*, and most importantly for Maharashtra, the Ganapati *utsava*, Shiv Sena *shakhas* have managed to control around seventy percent of the city's *Ganeshotsava mandals*, particularly in the areas of Girgaum, Lalbaug, Dadar, Mahim as well as more outlying

districts of Mumbai. It appears that the particular Maharashtrian connotations of the public Ganapati *utsava*'s history lend it further to Shiv Sena rhetoric. Whereas the north of India had its Ram as a 'herald for demarcating geographic, territorial, and spiritual boundaries' (Kapur 1993: 74) reproduced through various narrative and visual texts particularly since the 1980s and reaching an intensity around the time of the Babri Masjid destruction in 1992, Maharashtra has had the standard of Shivaji and the vehicle of the Ganapati *utsava* that carried the Hindutva brigade onwards in its bid to reassert territorial and religious strength against the perceived need to counteract disruptive anti-national activities.

Most *Ganeshotsava mandals* have charity status and consist of members from the locality, some of whom have formal positions as President, Secretary, Treasurer and so forth, whereas others have more of an informal part to play in the organisation in terms of running social and cultural events such as educational facilities, blood donation camps, song and art competitions, drama shows and other events for the neighbourhood. The formal posts are renewable from year to year by mini-elections, such that most upstanding people in the locality have a chance to run the organisation. The *mandals* are not generally overtly political outfits - their devotion to the religiosity of the occasion is stated to be the more important. However, *mandal* members in Mumbai may be affiliated with political parties, such as the Shiv Sena, but also to a lesser degree, the Hindu chauvinist parties of the Bharatiya Janata Party, and others including the 'secular' Congress. It is generally the case that local 'bigwigs' or community leader are given positions of responsibility within the *mandals*, who also tend to have political sympathies and alliances, if not active affiliations. Another means by which the Shiv Sena in particular rules the roost in terms of its influence on Mumbai's popular culture is through Mitra Mandal (Friends' Associations) which provide centres of recreation, and organise festivals in the locality. In Mumbai, they are heavily influenced by the Shiv Sena (Hansen 1996a: 159). Hereon, I refer to *mandals* which organise Ganapati *utsavas* under Shiv Sena's influence as Shiv Sainik *mandals*.

Since the 1980s, the Shiv Sena's sponsoring of festivals have become more lavish, elaborate, and a platform for veiled party politics:

'In some ways, this event has become a Sena festivity...and an important means to raise funds for party activity' (Katzenstein et al 1997: 381, see also 382-3).

The inauguration of the BJP-Sena alliance as State Legislative Assembly powers was treated with great aplomb, as was made evident in the Shivaji *Jayanti* which coincided with Maharashtra's Independence Day in May 1995 shortly after their electoral victory. It was the first time competitions were inaugurated by the *Samna* newspaper

for the Shivaji *Jayanti*, but after the initial enthusiasm and extravagance, did not endure for succeeding Shivaji festivals. In 1995, extravagant *Ganeshotsava mandaps* of the coronation of Shivaji were widespread as were fort reconstructions based on the model of Shivaji's forts in the seventeenth century in an extravagant display of pageantry and power (*The Times of India*, August 18, 1995, illustration 91). Efforts were also made to hold large scale *maha aratis* in public spaces in response to perceptions of Muslim *namaz* causing a public nuisance in the city on Fridays. Effectively, the Shiv Sena represented a systematic attempt at regaining control of public space and contributing to its 'saffronisation' along with distinct parochial tones of keeping Mumbai 'beautiful' and keeping 'illegal migrants' out - as their slogan went '*Sundar Mumbai, Marathi Mumbai*'. Urban space emerges as a contested terrain along the axes of capital, religious and regional considerations.

In the festival of Navratri in November 1994, the Shiv Sena, despite their 'Maharashtra for Maharashtrians' rhetoric, were holding mass organised *garbabs* (traditionally, a Gujarati dance performed with sticks) in anticipation of the coming State Legislative Assembly elections. The Congress Party also felt that they had to comply, otherwise they might stand the chance of losing favour and visibility amongst the populace. Ostentatious political participation were also evident with the Ganapati *utsava* in that year. In the 1996 Ganapati *utsava* in Mumbai, there were numerous tableaux, banners and political participation to do with the upcoming Municipal Corporation elections (see, for example, Appendix I, *mandal* number twenty). Politicians were often invited by sympathetic *mandals* for *pujas* and programmes; politicians might also sponsor competitions and programmes; they might control various *mandal* policies through their members; they might be seen to do public immersion of their household Ganapati, and they might also be present at key immersion places. To associate oneself with such festivals was to get close to the public, and show devotion to a common god.

Interestingly, probably as a result of the monopoly of the Shiv Sena on *mandals* across the state due to their grassroots activities, the Congress minister, Suresh Kalmadi, was instrumental in publicising the Pune Festival on behalf of the Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation from 1988. This was a more 'packaged' version of the Ganapati *utsava* and ran simultaneously to it, with artistic performances of dance and theatre troupes, bullock cart races, food festivals, musical soirees, competitions, and plenty of Doordarshan television coverage in a bid to draw more tourists to the area. It would seem that as the Shiv Sena had the monopoly on street-level, Congress were trying to make a bid for monopoly using its resources, networks and control over terrestrial television media in the region. This is in addition

to Congress strength at a grassroots level across the majority of *Ganeshotsava mandals* in Pune.

However, the grassroots activism and networks of the Shiv Sena seem to have been the most enduring in Mumbai; the media and consumer-oriented form of the Pune Festival appreciated as a spectacle, but having less significance for many of my respondents in the city. This further supports my main argument about the potency of collective and performative potential of nationalising events in my critique of a focus on media forms alone. This is not to say that the latter is less powerful, but on its own it is of less significance if media reception is not going to be seriously accommodating, or if there is a discrepancy between mediated images or narratives, and lived experience. Grassroots activism has formed the basis for the political parties to jump upon opportune moments and strategies at a wider level. It would not be too far from the truth to say that control of *Ganeshotsava mandals* contributed further to the Shiv Sena's popularity amongst Mumbai residents, particularly as it showed them acting in a socially and religiously responsible way for the community and region, as opposed to its widespread image of corrupt *goonda* (gangster) politics. It is notable that there are variant hegemonising dynamics pertaining to represent the interests of the community or nation through festival activities and mediations. Thus, amongst the unitary effects of both participation and media engagements in the festive context, oppositional fault-lines representative of distinct party interests are also evident.

Sainik Spectacles

Often, *Ganeshotsava mandal* members would create or contract mini-shows with the use of plaster of Paris or painted hardboard models of people and objects surrounding the main *murti* of Ganapati. With the use of taped narration, music, lighting effects, and occasionally moving models or props, the shows relate a string of events, issues, stories lasting anywhere between five and twenty minutes. At the beginning and the end of the shows, the main *murti* of Ganapati is invariably highlighted as the benevolent saviour and remover of corrupt and evil activities that is considered to have besieged India and its populace.

In part due to the history of the festival used for the dissemination of political information, its media coverage or patronage, and the political ambitions of festival organisers, themes to do with topical news events have formed a key component of *Ganeshotsava mandap* displays. A compendium of events in different time-spaces are merged, interpreted through the local-minded, youth-oriented, male framework of the *mandal* and suffused with other ideologies such as a glorious *Shivshahi* and Hindutva propositions as the ideals for society. These have the potential to produce a sense of

affinity with the spectators, which can then be channelled into an expression of party propaganda and allegiance. Several of the incidents that are chosen in politically partial displays are those that could be used to portray the opposition in a bad light, as was the implications of the corruption of Congress in their negotiations with the American multi-national company, Enron, to build a power plant in Maharashtra, and Congress politicians' part in the criminal-politician nexus involved in the Jalgaon Rape Scandal, in 1994. Others reflect morally charged indictments of India's present predicament. In 1994, common topical concerns represented included anti-corruption drives particularly associated with the Municipal Officer, G. R. Khairnair, the Dubai-based gangster lord, Dawood Ibrahim, operating in Mumbai, the film actor, Sanjay Dutt's, collusion with the Mehmoond brothers held responsible for the bomb blasts in Mumbai in March 1993, riots in Mumbai, Harshad Mehta's stock market scam, the Latur earthquake, slum development, and so forth. In 1995, other proposed themes which materialised in displays included the Naina Sahni tandoor murder in which the leader of the Congress Youth Committee murdered his wife by grilling her in a tandoor oven, and the coming into State Legislative Assembly power of the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance. Such topical events were combined with those of a religious or historical nature. Aside from familiar religious stories about Maharashtrian saints, episodes from texts such as the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, scenes about Shivaji's life and rule, freedom fighters, independence and afterwards were also commonly presented as part of *mandap* tableaux and narrative.

Structural generalities are discernible in the *mandap* tableaux narratives. These are representations of, first, a glorious past particularly in the guise of an ideal *Shivshahi* or unity in the struggle against colonialism being recalled. Second, a battery of contemporary ills and crises in the guise of exploitation of women, unemployment, political corruption, mismanagement of resources, TADA abuses, national disruptions such as bomb blasts and so forth are critiqued, most often through a nationalist-infused filter, and in the case of politically explicit tableaux, in favour of Shiv Sena's interests. Third, an alternative is offered to this corrupt, violent and immoral disarray - an ideal society is explicitly or implicitly promulgated, the justice of Shiv Sena rule is implicated or made explicit, and Ganapati is requested for help in this project at the end of the narrative.

The structural generalities apply for the narrative, as they do for associated sound effects, and images. Rhetorical conventions of glorious pasts, miserable presents and calls for triumphant futures add to the mood-effects of the narrative contents. With the influence of Hindutva politics, the scenario is described as a holy war, and political intention is sacralised. Thus political violence or ambition is expressed as a religious

purpose. Explicit political propositionality is generally not desirable in religious circumstances, nor is it entirely possible:

'Under ritualization the relation which normally exists between intention and act is transformed [...] the actor having adopted this stance that ritual acts are non-intentional' (Humphrey and Laidlow 1993: 94).

It is this seemingly 'targeted non-intention' which lends the *utsava* its popularity amongst various interest groups, be they defined best as religious, social or political. The Shiv Sena however vacillate between making explicit propagandist use of the *utsava* to ones that are only implicitly political due to the invocation of religious themes consonant with their priority for a moral cause as part of Hindutva politics (see below). Another perspective on this phenomena is provided by Chakravarty, who notes how identified commonalities provide a means by which interest can be shared, but need not be expressed. On the subject of the Hindutva brigade's role in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, Chakravarty notes that:

'...Hindutva worked locally by basing itself on the perceived interests of the people. As the local build-up of consent for Hindutva in many towns across certain areas coalesces with processes whereby defenders of petty and big privileges across the country find an accessible target for people's ire in a particular enemy, and patriotic appeals to recreate past glory becomes a useful ideology; no direct interest is necessary to provide consent for December 6' (Chakravarty 1994: 112-3).

With narratives of common journeys into Maharashtra's and India's past and present in *mandap* tableaux narratives, attempts are made to consolidate unity between the spectators, envision a camaraderie between like-minded people elsewhere for future possibilities, as well as focus their anger on identifiable targets. The Shiv Sena's name and reputation as protector and just rulers is further heralded. I shall now illustrate this discussion with the example of two *mandap* tableaux constructed in 1995 by Shiv Sainik *mandals*.

Spring Mills Compound and Tarabaug Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandals

To recall, 1995 was the first year of the BJP-Shiv Sena State Legislative Assembly rule - thus a year of vainglorious celebration for Shiv Sena *shakhas* and their associated *Ganeshotsava mandals*. The following *mandap* tableaux were situated in the central part of Mumbai in Mazgaon and Dadar of that year. The two *mandals* responsible for their construction were the Spring Mills Compound Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal

in Naigaon near Dadar, and the Tarabaug Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal in the nearby district of Mazgaon. These areas were once populated with textile mill workers. After trade union activism and lock-outs staged by the management in the 1970s and 1980s, widespread strikes and unemployment hit the region (Pendse 1981). Consequently, efforts were made by those effected to improve educational qualifications and enter into other vocations such as banking and teaching. Both areas are largely Hindu-populated, though not too far from Muslim enclaves particularly in nearby districts of Byculla, Mahim and Crawford Market in Mumbai.

For the 1995 Ganapati *utsava*, the Spring Mills Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal constructed an extravagant forty foot high set of Shivaji's Raigad Fort which served as the set for the narrator in the Tarabaug *mandap* video (illustration 91). Trends of alliances between consociate *mandals* are notable. The Spring Mills Compound Mandal was situated amongst a colony of ex-mill workers' families, resident in a mill compound. The *mandal* was headed by the President, Kalidas Kolambkar, a Shiv Sena MLA. Due to his patronage, the *mandal* had access to large sums of financial resources through sponsorship, donations, and other less transparent means. Estimated costs for the display were in the region of Rs 15 lakh compared with a more modest sum of around Rs 25,000 for the Tarabaug *mandap* display - the difference being due to the different levels of patronage and finance networks the two *mandals* could tap.

Inside the Spring Mills Compound fort construction, there was a representation of Shivaji's coronation *durbar* on the ground floor. Vignettes of the leader of the Shiv Sena, Bal Thackeray and the BJP-Shiv Sena government, including the Chief Minister, Manohar Joshi and Deputy Chief Minister, Gopinath Munde, standing in front of the State Legislative Assembly building, the Vidhan Bhavan, were displayed on a raised platform. Ganapati was shown standing in a chariot pulled by horses to the left of the top platform. To the foreground on the side of the vast hall, descended the seven rivers of India alongside female models representing Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati, Godavari, Narmada, Arveri and Sindh (illustrations 92-93). In front of this stood the national bird, a peacock with moving tail feathers. The show went as follows:

[Very loud trumpeting begins the narration. Vedic verses accompany a sunrise effect behind the rivers. There is a description of the grandeur of Raigad Fort. India is considered as the *pavitrasthana* (the pure place) of Ganga. Water spouts out from the top of the mountain-scape and descends into the artificial pond at the bottom.¹⁶ Conch calls announce the coronation of Shivaji and the *durbar* is lit up. The narration proceeds.]

'After three hundred and fifty years of tyrant rule, a Hindu king had become Chatrapati [the king of the people]. When you see this scene, you feel pleased and satisfied. After many years,

Maharashtra saw a Shivshahi. Similarly, today after a long time of mis-rule, the Shiv Sena has taken power.

[The cut-outs of Bal Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena, and the Vidhan Bhavan are lit up.]
They set the example of Shivaji to everyone.

[Lightening effects accompany the goddess, Bhavanimata, who came to earth for both Shivaji and the Shiv Sena, both of whom had prayed to her to let the Hindu kingdom rule.]

*Let this Maharashtra remain for a long time. If Maharashtra dies, the whole of India will die.
Jai Hind! Jai Maharashtra!*

Despite the alliance with the BJP in Maharashtra, this display was ostensible self-publicity for the Shiv Sena. The *mandap* tableau made explicit the Shiv Sena's ambitions of becoming the next period of Shivaji's rule in contemporary Maharashtra. With the nationalistic associations of the rivers and the peacocks, the narrative hints at political aspirations further than the rule of Maharashtra.¹⁷

As there is a charting of the Indian landscape with the religious pilgrimage of the Asthavinayaka around Maharashtra in the Tarabaug Mandal tableau video (see below), the Spring Mills *mandap* tableau begins with a narration and depiction of the seven holy rivers in India. The water from this pure place is used in Shivaji's coronation - a religious and national internalisation. *Shivshahi* is commended for the repulsion of tyrant rule which was Mughal at the time. With the blatant comparison made between *Shivshahi* and Bal Thackeray's government, this rule is promoted as against all contemporary tyrants whether they be Muslim, anti-national or corrupt politicians of the opposition. The marginalisation and demonisation of Muslims, British and Congress is implicated through the correlation between 'three hundred and fifty years of tyrant rule' and 'mis-rule'.

Excess and melodrama characterise the style and content of such narratives - a characteristic which lends itself to self-righteous declarations of political rule and justice for the nation. Here it is notable that contemporaneous political intentionality is not just soaked in religious virtues, but also the trope of a glorious Maharashtrian history through the invocation of a mythicised period of just rule under Shivaji - *Shivshahi*, which the Shiv Sena claim to represent.

The Tarabaug Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal was the first Ganapati *mandal* in Mazgaon, having been established in 1932, although the area of Girgaum further south is the oldest region for staging public Ganapati festivals, the first one having been installed in 1893 (see Chapter Five).¹⁸ A Shiv Sena *shakha* was present in the compound, headed by a Shakha Pramukh who was also the President of the *Ganeshotsava mandal*. The Tarabaug Mandal presented a 'masala' *mandap* display in 1995, whose theme was *Lok Jagar (People's Awakening)*. As the *mandal* members

explained, the message of the subject was that before one can think about freedom of India, one should attain self-emancipation. This was a theme considered relevant not just for Maharashtra but the whole of India. The *mandap* display consisted of several hardboard cut-out sections highlighted in a luminescent purple border made from 'Executive Bond' paper. Amongst the various hardboard cut-outs, there was a projector screen underneath a large sitting Ganapati. A tricolour design (the colours of the Indian flag - green, white and saffron stripes) covered the background wall. The cut-outs included a policeman, students, a figure of Blind Justice, a Muslim man holding the scales of justice with a woman sitting on one side of the scales and the sign 'Shariat' on the other, a cow, and a woman caught in the snare of a serpent (illustrations 94-95).¹⁹ These images were also presented in the video projections, so that, along with lighting effects, the entire show presented a cross-cutting of actual and videotaped images:

[A folk song about the Asthavinayaka begins the video showing a troupe of devotees singing their way around from one pilgrimage spot to another. Respects are paid to Ambamata: 'Jai Amba' (another form of the goddess, Bhavanimata). Then a presenter in a saffron *pagadi* (headgear) and *kurta pyjama* - that is, traditional Maharashtrian dress - walks down a constructed set of Raigad Fort - the fort which was constructed by the Spring Mills Compound Mandal. Correspondingly, the respective cut-out vignette is illuminated, some of which are also filmed for the video. Film stills, clips and other locations are edited together in this video. Ganapati is continuously lit, appearing to take on a narrator's role. The presenter narrates in Marathi.]

'Whatever feelings we have about the history and legacy of the independence of our nation, we try to put forward here. For this, I need some of your time. As there are so many problems, there is no time to hesitate.'

[Images of Shivaji - both photographic and from the feature film on his life - are presented. Shivaji's Raigad Fort is again shown.]

Mahisai Suradri, a demon was ravaging Maharashtra.²⁰ To get rid of him, the saint, Eknath, prayed continuously to Tulajabhavani: "Help us open the door". Shivaji was born to Shahiji and Jijamata,. He was the answer to Eknath's prayer. He was born the son of Maharashtra, a devotee of Tulajabhavani.

[A shrine dedicated to Shivaji's personal goddess, Tulajabhavani, in another of Shivaji's fort known as Shivneri is shown.]

Due to her blessings, Shivaji became king. He gave us Shivshahi after fighting the Mughal Empire ruling Maharashtra. As a child he used to play with the Mahars, a low-caste community. Later, he made an army out of them. He was progressive in his ways. And because of this strong army, he became the king of Maharashtra.

Then the British came in, first to do trade. They took advantage of the weak points of Shivaji's legacy - the Brahmin Peshwas and ended up taking over the country. Our own country became slaves.

[Footage with soldiers shooting at Indians from Richard Attenborough's film, *Gandhi*, is shown.]

Tilak took the oath, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it" and began the fight for freedom. He protested against the British. He started off the sarvajanik Ganapati utsava. The first one was in Mazgarh in Pune. Then it came to Mumbai in a chawl of Girgaum called Keshayji Naik. Ganapati utsava was the symbol for an independent India. Foreign goods were boycotted and destroyed.

[The burning of foreign goods is shown accompanied with the portraits of famous freedom fighters - Sukhdev, Chaphekar Brothers, and Vasudev Balyant Phadke.]

These people believed in a violent way of attaining freedom, and therefore had to go underground.

Veer Savarkar brought further leadership. He sacrificed his life for the nation. He was imprisoned in the Andaman Islands across the Kala Pani for life - hard labour and life imprisonment.

Subhas Chandra Bose formed the Indian National Army. Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Gandhi continued the fight.

[Black and white archive footage of Gandhi and others is shown.]

All the leaders had one dream - for the freedom of the Indian nation. Eventually on the 15th August 1947, there was a change of the flag at the Lal Qila.

[The Union Jack is shown coming down as the tricolour flag of India takes its place.]

But there was a sorrowful side to this story as well - the dark side of the moon was seen; an eclipse was cast. As India was split into two nations, many people died in the turmoil that followed.

We became independent but what about the economic development? What did the common man get out of it? What is the present situation of India?

From 1916 to 1960 the population was increasing phenomenally. Even though the economic climate improved, it still did not provide for equal rights due to corruption. There was less work for the less-privileged. Many workers worked in the mills but in the 1980s the workers were left cold as the managers tried to sell their land. There were lock-outs by the management. The workers were left helpless.

Leaders have become selfish. They are not concerned about the welfare of the people. We got freedom but for whom? Gandhi was selfless, but politicians today are not like that.

On the one hand, women got liberation and freedom, encouraged by development projects from the government. They hold high respect in society. On the other hand, there is exploitation, dowry deaths, murders and sex scandals.

[A hardboard cut-out of a woman gripped in the claws of a large terrifying serpent standing in the mandap tableaux is shown in the video and lit up on the stage.]

Why is this happening?

Shah Bano was a Muslim woman who was trying to claim justice for herself, but she did not achieve it due to the Shariat Muslim law. That is why we should have the uniform civil code.

[Cut-outs of the figure of Blind Justice and a Muslim is shown holding the scales of justice: On the one side, there is a figure of Shah Bano. On the other, a board saying Shariat. The scales tip over to the latter side as the narration proceeds.]

Even after gaining degrees, youth were left jobless. So they turn to gangsterism.

[A cut-out of a man, one half of whom is holding burning degree papers in black cap and cloak; the other half of whom is in jeans holding a gun is lit up both on the set and in the video.]

Under V. P. Singh's Government, there were more educational reservations for the Scheduled and Backward Castes. Some upper-caste students burnt themselves to death in protest.

[A hardboard cut-out of a student wrapped in flames outside of a University gate is shown.]²¹

On 12th March 1993 there were many bomb blasts in Mumbai. Everyone looked at each other with suspicion. The perpetrators were the enemy of the nation.

[Clips of Chatrapati Shivaji Station, formerly known as V.T. (Victoria Terminus) Station in Mumbai are followed by clips from the film, *Angar*, starring Nana Patekar showing a succession of bomb blasts and buildings falling down.]

Children became orphans. Who is responsible for all this? Who can forget such incidents? Questions, questions and more questions.

But now we feel there can be an answer and solution to all these problems. That is because of the Shiv Sena.

[A shot of a saffron flag flying atop the Vidhan Bhavan, the State Legislative Assembly forum, is shown.]

There is no reason to feel afraid. Now we have the Shivshahi. They have provided food, clothing and shelter, man's basic requirement to the poor man. They have removed TADA. They believe that crime should come to an end, not the criminal. They have provided educational facilities for the poor. Now only fifty per cent of students pay a capitation fee and the rest get into University based on merit. They want a uniform civil code. Everyone should have equal rights. They have campaigned against the slaughter of the cow. The cow in the Hindu religion contains thirty three crores of gods resting in its stomach. The Catholics and Muslims slaughter them and eat beef. Cowsheds should be built for the cows. The unemployed should all get jobs.

Young people should be able to stand on their own feet. These are our many expectations. Even the Government is expecting something from you. If everyone thinks that the solution will begin from keeping myself morally upright, then there will be no crime. There are many leaders to guide you. Gandhi, Ambedkar, Savarkar fought for our lives. They can inspire us. They lit the torch of freedom. With the blessing of Ganapati we can try to solve all the problems. Ganapati will save our country. So many young soldiers are dying to protect the nation's boundaries. So with full strength and willpower, sing this song.'

[Archive footage of soldiers fighting a war are shown. The song *Naya Zamana Ayega* from Manoj Kumar's movie *Naya Dar (New Fear)* is played.]

'Now the country is in your hands.

There are many more lives to live your life.

But to sacrifice your life for the country, there is only one season.

If anyone tries to touch India with their hands, you should break their hands.

No Ravana should again be able to touch Sita.

Draw a line on the land with your blood,

Like the Lakshman Rekha so that Ravana cannot enter.

Nobody should be able to touch her.

You're Ram. You're Lakshman.'

[Finally a young boy from the film walks up to the front and salutes with the slogan '*Jai Hind*' transposed on him. The credits follow.]

Reviewing the narrative, the glories of *Shivshahi* are described as the epitome of Maratha masculinity. Martial warriors, militant Hinduism and the sacrifices of selfless freedom fighters are emphasised as being successful in overthrowing Mughal and British colonial rule and their goods. This leads to a comparison with the current situation of mass unemployment, greedy and corrupt politicians, justice for women, a uniform civil code for all communities - that is, concerning family laws, marriage, divorce, inheritance and adoption, instead of separate ones for minorities such as Muslims and Christians (Wright 1996: 4) - and anti-national threats as represented by the Mumbai bomb blasts, despite the work of nationalists in the past. The Shiv Sena then offer their own solutions by way of working for the establishment of a *Shivshahi* in contemporary times, with the provision of food, clothing, shelter, and jobs. They credit themselves with the removal of the unjust law of TADA, the progressive removal of the higher education fees, and campaign for a uniform civil code, and movements against cow slaughter. Interestingly, the *mandap* narrative even suggests that aggressive tactics are sometimes required to tackle social problems with their declaration that 'crime should come to an end, not the criminal.' This is another inflection on the virtues of masculinity and aggression in seeking justice for the region or country. Finally, these propositions are offered to Ganapati for his blessings. This enables a sacralisation of the requests and propositions. Political ambitions seem to be justified by religious sanction geared to serve the majority community of Hindus.

An Art of Stage-craft or State-craft ?

It appears that the art of stage-craft is elided with the art of state-craft as Shiv Sainik *mandals* chart their version of the history and character of the region and nation through such politically partial *mandap* displays. The performative and toxic excess of the religious festival and *mandap* narratives diffuse party propositionality such that the line between a Hindu moral universe, *Shivshahi* precedents and realpolitiks are further blurred. The entertaining aspects of the festive context further diffuse political party motivations, as well as disseminating the party's agenda across the festival participants. Politicians' involvement in the festival show their apparently selfless patronage, and demonstrate attempts to form an affinity with people due to the devotion to a common god.

Mandap display and narrative content can, however, be equated with Shiv Sainik political motivations. Evidently, events and issues are chosen that favour the public presentation of the party and justify their political agendas. Issues such as the Shah Bano case and a separate Muslim personal law have been a token part of Hindutva rhetoric since the 1980s, and have a gone long way to propagate prejudice against Muslim communities (Lele 1995: 205). Other issues are selected which implicate the Muslims with various injustices. Shiv Sainik *mandap* presentations coalesce with an image of the Shiv Sena as protectors and just representatives of the nation's majority (Hindu) interests. They argue for a uniform civil code, implicitly critiquing the Congress 'secular' policies of 'pampering' minority groups, particularly the Muslim community, imply that Islamic law is undemocratic by pointing out their bias against women, and argue for the protection of the cow, criticising those who slaughter them including Christians as well as Muslims, who are considered as 'alien' to autochthonous Hindu culture. Furthermore, Mumbai bomb blasts are another vindication of 'anti-national' forces, and the alleged conspiracies of Pakistan-backed mercenaries and the underworld perceived as Muslims operating from Dubai (*Sunday*, 14-20 March, 1993). This provides the justification of militant, aggressive or 'masculine' strategies for avenging the constructed wrongs of history, society and politics, and furthering the interests of a Hindu majority population. The boundaries of the nation and its people are further crystallised by defining the enemies, both 'alien' and internal - namely the Mughals, the British, Congress, 'anti-national' Muslims, and Pakistan for their backing of 'anti-national' activities. The recollection of such issues by Shiv Sainik *mandals* in the festive gathering becomes a means of justifying their anger against not only perceived threats to the nation, but also, against Congress for accusations of 'pandering' to minority communities rather than the majority Hindu community.

The *mandap* narratives are a stylised interpretation of contemporaneous politico-economic issues which are designed to create maximum impact as well as a

consolidation of Hindutva views. The flow of events in several ‘masala’ *mandap* narratives from a nation’s glory, a nation in peril, and a nation phoenix-like rising from the ashes enables the potential for a journey of affinity between producers and spectators.²² As Pandey comments on features of Hindutva historiographies:

‘...it is the story of “foreign” aggression and native valour of eternal Hindu activism and sacrifice that is endlessly repeated’ (Pandey 1994: 1524).

In this case, ‘native’ activities are further valorised with the attention given to the selfless work of Maharashtrian national heroes, such as Vasudev Balwant Phadke, V. D. Savarkar, the Chaphekar brothers - Damodar, Balkrishna and Vasudev - and now the Shiv Sena. But strategies of story-telling are not always consistent, as one notes with the inclusion of other national heroes such as Mahatma Gandhi whose ideology was anathema to militant Hinduism, allowing for a degree of heterogeneity. It appears that historical figures, whatever their contemporaneous political allegiances, are utilised as part of the common history of the nation by several political parties (see Chapter Nine).

Only information which is favourable to the party’s side is presented in a simple, easy-to-understand manner. The presentation of the information need not demonstrate total consistency, but use any variety of images and narratives to make its point. Simple, yet eclectic images, are juxtaposed with one another of to create emotional connections. Manichean polarities, generally between Hindu and Muslim, are implicit, if not explicit. Authoritative narration and strong language with emotional associations is widespread. Anti-intellectual tendencies are apparent both in narrative and Shiv Sena activities (Heuze 1992: 2194). Tentativeness and uncertainty is not permitted in such narratives (Pandey 1994: 1525). Slogans about Maharashtra or India, and their sacralisation by invoking verses to Ganapati, are used time and time again. Song adds to the mnemonic function of simple narration. The whole, alongside people’s visits of other similarly structured *mandaps*, lead to a cumulative effect amongst audiences.

Ganapati is invariably invoked as a moral arbiter, implying veracity and approval of the narrative’s content, as well as a means to which to address the desires of the devoted. It bears parallels with the invocation of Ram by Hindutva forces. Pandey notes how histories of Ayodhya said to begin in the ‘age of Ram’ are ‘marked by an easy...intervention of the divine - or to put it in other terms, a realisation of the ineffable that lies behind the illusion of this fleeting world’ (Pandey 1994: 1526). The intervention of the divine in the *Ganeshotsava mandap* tableaux effectively draws the narrative back into the moral universe paved out by the public celebration of a Hindu

religious festival. It provides a vivid example of 'targeted non-intention' in performance.

The Tarabaug *mandap* tableau presents a glorious history of Shivaji fighting the unjust rule of the Mughals and freedom fighters struggling to expel British colonial rule. This recalls a shared past, enlivened for contemporary audiences and presented as part of everyone's history in Maharashtra. Thus it advances Maharashtrian parochialism, as well as the need for a strongly nationalistic agenda with which to continue to protect the contemporary nation. Diatribes on social iniquities, crises and political corruption since independence are an implicit critique of Congress 'secular' policy since the days of Nehruvian nationalism. Separate civil laws are considered against the name of people's unity and the nation's integrity in a bid to advance the Hindutva cause. Some of the topics are student-oriented (understandably as many of the disaffected educated youth subscribe to Shiv Sena *shakhas*), identifying themes close to people's lives which would enlist further support. Personal survival is thus equated with the survival of the party. Such crises are thrown out to be addressed by the solution of a modern day *Shivshahi* (courtesy of the Shiv Sena) and aided by the wishes of Ganapati. It is implied that the future of the nation is part of everyone's destiny, and *Shivshahi* is the only beneficial rule for the nation and its populace.

It is clear that the artful manipulation of emblems to do with community and religion lead to the party's offering of 'a milieu of moral and psychological comfort' (Heuze 1992: 2193) to the spectator. Despite this reductive analysis, it is important to recognise the mutuality of political intention and metaphorical associations. As Spivak comments:

'The literal and the figurative (form, images, metaphors, rhetoric) depend on each other even as they interrupt each other. They can be defined apart but they make each other operate' (Spivak 1994: 136).

The tableaux themes and narratives which, by way of historical, religious and political narratives, lend further fuel to promulgate solidarity amongst its audience in a shared understanding and empathy with the wider national forces of Hindutva. The promulgation of ideas of Hindu masculinity and *Shivshahi* through *mandap* tableaux bear a direct parallel to this with the glorified ethico-political order of a Maratha warrior king, Shivaji; and his fight against Mughal rulers - the 'alien' Other which could be in the form of Afzal Khan, *rakshas* (demons) or Muslims in general. As well as promoting the welfare of Maharashtrians, the Shiv Sena rhetoric seeps into nationalistic arguments against foreign 'enemies' particularly 'terrorists' and economic migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh respectively. So whilst an inclusiveness is generated by the activities that enable a simultaneity of experience, its boundaries are

given extra definition when technologies of ‘Othering’ are employed - through the tableaux themes and structures as well as the composition of festival participants. Nationalism acquires even greater force when a ‘demon’ figure such as the Muslims is constructed as a threat which in turn can become a strong bond filling up internal cleavages, such as those based on caste, to varying degrees of success (see Chapter Nine).²³

In the case of the two *mandap* tableaux considered above, the Other need not be explicit. In *mandap* tableaux, communal antagonisms can be implicated through associated practices and issue of Muslim communities, than demonisations of Muslims themselves. This could be due to the fact that, had restrictions such as the illegality of using religion for political campaigns not existed, political co-options of the festival could be even more blatant and virulent. Instead, many Shiv Sainik *mandals* circumvent these limitations by asserting Maharashtrian culture and not firing criticisms at Muslims directly, but to issues and campaigns which effectively exclude or victimise non-Hindus. I refer to examples such as the common understandings of Mumbai bomb blasts being carried out by ‘terrorists’ and criminals living either in Dubai or Pakistan and said to be Muslims, the perceived favouritism and undemocratic nature of separate civil laws for Muslims, the lack of equal rights enshrined in Muslim civil law for Muslim women, the perpetrators of cow slaughter, and general suspicions of Muslim communities as to whether their true loyalties lay to the Indian nation, particularly as the Indian nation and its people are increasingly interpreted through religious tropes in the wave of communalised identities since the 1980s. As Sarkar describes, a series of assumptions and myths have turned into common-sense in this milieu of ‘communal consensus’ amongst a large sector of the Hindu populace (Sarkar 1993a: 164). New events are invariably dressed up in the pattern of old verities based on prejudices rife in Hindutva politics. Based on historical and contemporary practices of hegemonic antagonisms, Chakravarty notes the naturalisation of anti-Muslim prejudice across the Hindu populace:

‘Loss of Hindu identity and the need to protect Hindu *dharma* are interwoven with talk about the diseased cancerous corrupt nation which can only be protected by a revival of Hindu forced to exorcise the cancer. Consequently, notions of Hindu “*rashtra*”, Hindu “hurt” and “appeasement” of Muslims; anti-national Muslims cheering Pakistani victories in cricket matches, and the unabated “breeding” by Muslims have become common-sense’ (Chakravarty 1994: 111-112).

Whilst the above notes the hegemonic representations of Shiv Sainik *mandals*, below I account for variations, areas of resistance, and contradictions as part of the uneven effects and contestations of hegemonising strategies and representations.

Variant Versionings of the Nation

Other Shiv Sainik *mandap* displays present variations on the above themes, although as I note below, they are not always as explicitly political with their narratives. Hindutva of a less Sainik order is exemplified by the Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal with their *mandap* tableaux theme of *Our Freedom Struggle* in 1996 (see Appendix II, *mandal* number three, illustrations 69-70). A nationalist history is presented which glorifies a militant and masculinised version of nationalism, but unlike the above *mandals*, political partiality is not demonstrated, only attachment to the principle of a militant and vigilant nation. A litany of freedom fighters are presented as brave messiahs with strength of belief and courage of conviction, who sacrificed their lives for the nation. They are effectively considered ‘sons of the soil’ (*bhumiputra*). Women are considered as wives, sisters and mothers of the nation. It is mentioned that men had a duty to protect them, but presenting a variant on orthodox opinion, the narrative states that widows should be considered lucky if their husbands died for a selfless cause, fighting for the nation. The metaphor of Sita as indicative of self-sacrifice, undying devotion and strength is invoked as the ideal for Indian women. The glories of India compare better with other nations. Yesteryears are, however, contrasted with the present-day glut of greed and corruption in India. Hindu allegories are invoked throughout the narrative and display, and recalled at the end of the narrative when it is stated that only those who are principled and selfless, like Ram, will make the country great again. Masculine assertiveness rests alongside the seemingly contradictory selfless sacrifice in their ideal of the national hero. The whole narrative is offered as a prayer to Ganapati. Thematic parallels are also notable between less party political partial tableaux espousing nationalist themes (see Chapter Nine).

The Tanaji Krida Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal exemplifies more ‘secular’ variations of nationalism of the Congressite *Hindu-Mussalman bhai-bhai* kind (Hindu-Muslim brotherhood) as opposed to parochial nationalism preferred by the Shiv Sainiks, and overlapping strands of militant Hindu nationalism. The Tanaji Krida Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal is situated in Kurla, north east Mumbai. It is a fairly recent *mandal*, established in 1979 by a community of migrants from the Uttar Pradesh area, many of whom are small factory owners or workers, or taxi drivers. There is also a substantial Muslim community who also work in the taxi trade living in the area. Although a Congress politician did not patronise the *mandal*, Congress sympathies and critiques of the communalism encouraged by the Shiv Sena were expressed by its *mandal* members.

The exterior of their *pandal* in 1996 had been decorated in a cave-like manner with cut-outs of nationalist heroes such as Lal Bahadur Shastri, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Subhas Chandra Bose looking out from a plateau (illustration 96). Behind them was hung the Indian flag and the message: 'Loyalty to the nation has brought about independence', and underneath: 'How many days of independence have actually arrived...?' In front of this was a cacti-like plant with the words 'Improper behaviour' (*anacara*), and a male youth in front.²⁴ Next to him, was a piece of black rock with the words, 'National apathy' ('*Deshabaddalaci anastha*').

Inside was a large model of a broken pair of glasses (reminiscent of the ones belonging to Mahatma Gandhi) with the words, 'Oh Ram!', [Mahatma Gandhi's dying words]. This dream was not realised....Look at the torches signifying love for India next to you.' (illustration 99). Next to this was a board with five flame torches, and newspaper clippings pasted on to the flames. The Marathi language articles cited feats of pride for the nation such as 'Vishvanath Anand [a renowned chess player] humbled as a world champion'; 'Vegetable vendor woman gave Rs 10 lakh to charity'; 'Creating petrol from water - a miracle by an Indian youth'; 'The extraordinary progress of Indian aeronauts! Successful flight of an aeroplane without a pilot!' (illustration 97).

In the nearby corner was situated a board with the expression, 'Go dim in darkness or make yourself bright in brightness'.²⁵ Around this in white strips radiating outwards were written qualities to be emulated for a healthy society: awareness of tradition (*parampareci janiva*), election voting (*matadan*), social awareness (*samajika bhana*), attention to progress (*pragatice dhyana*), pride in the nation (*deshaci shana*), dissemination of knowledge (*jnyanadana*), self-respect (*svabhiman*), and respect for history (*aitihasaca sammana*). Next to this was a figure of a peacock whose tail feathers, quite appropriate to the national board, mentioned nationalistic ideals such as equality of brotherhood (*samata bandhuta*), heroism (*virata*), truth prevails (*satyameva jayate*) and unity (*ekata*) (illustration 98).

Opposite these decorations, was placed the *mandap* display proper. A standing Ganapati was flanked by national heroes on ascending steps on both sides, including Indira Gandhi, Kiran Bedi, Leander Paes, Mahatma Gandhi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, V. D. Savarkar, and *sant* Jnyaneshvara (illustrations 100-1). In front of this, on the side of the stage, were thermocol structures of the Gateway of India in Mumbai and India Gate in New Delhi. Once the audio narration was begun, a mechanised belt would move from the Delhi Gate to the Gateway of India which showed trolleys depicting various models of the Taj Mahal, soldiers, the solar system, and a map of India, almost as if a procession was passing by (illustrations 102-3). With the audio-taped narration, the set was animated:

'Brothers and sisters of India, "Vande Mataram" - this five syllable greeting has ignited the flame of patriotism in the minds of the people of India. People saw the sunrise of independence rise above the mountain ranges of difficulties which were established by foreigners. But nowadays, the parasitic growth of self-interest and improper behaviour (svarthaci va anacaraci bandhagule) is trying to darken this sun [of independence]. And to proudly say 'I am an Indian' now, comes nowhere near reaching these ideals.

Does the coal of apathy (anastheca kolasa) always remain black? Consider this with a patriotic sentiment -

Song: 'The best of all lands is my India'.

The land which established the ideal of co-religious existence and humility through religion and culture, this is our country, India. Thereby, I am proud of being an Indian.

Our mighty Indian Defence Forces protect us by staking their own lives in order to save our own. They make us fearless. Salute these young men three times.

Those Indians who with their ingenuity and aesthetic touch even animated stones (pattharanahi bolake kele, - literally made stones speak) and thereby gave us an admirable history. I am respectful of this fact.

For each and every step that has been made and impressed in modern scientific progress, I bow my head.

I am bold enough to make such splendid worship to the country' - this fertile and portentous intent (asa sujalam-suphalam, literally full of fruit and water) in contemporary India is in the grip of improper behaviour and selfishness. Nonetheless, our brilliant actions and self-confidence have lit torches and there have been those who have dedicated their lives to the nation - the martyr Captain Gore, the late Indira Gandhi, the late D. R. D. Tata, T. N. Seshan, Lata Mangeshkar, Kiran Bedi, Leander Paes, Ragjar Pillai and these institutions which serve society. These great individuals, despite untoward circumstances, proceed with the splendour of a torch procession (tejacya masalincya yatra nighalya).

In the light of this magnificent torch procession, let us enlighten [brighten] ourselves. With torch in hand, let us also live and enliven (jagvuya, jagvuya) the fact that we are Indians with genuine pride (sartha abhiman).

Song: 'Let India be the ocean of strength. Let it be prominent in the universe.'

It is notable that this *mandap* tableau demonstrates a partisan Congress spirit, made explicit with the inclusion of Indira Gandhi as a national hero, the appraisal of India as a land for co-religious existence, and the achievements of the nation's heroes, which continue to inspire the people to this day. However, as I have noted above, figures considered as heroes for the nation's history, particularly under colonial oppression, seem to be adopted by all contemporary *mandals*, whatever their political allegiances. This is evident for the use of V. D. Sarvarkar in the Tanaji Krida *mandal*. The

phenomena is discussed further in Chapter Nine on the attributes of the nation which are seen to lie beyond contestation by festival participants. As with the Chandanvadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (Appendix I, *mandal* number eleven), it is evident that this *mandal* aims to represent a multi-religious message within the strictures of a Ganapati festival geared for Hindus. Limited efforts are made to include the figure of the Muslim, rather than present him as an outsider to the national constituency. A continuity is stressed between past heroes and today's heroes, rather than a discrepancy which tends to be the case with Shiv Sainik *mandals*. National monuments and figures are cited to outline the cartographic and human character of the ideal nation. They are represented on the conveyor belt almost as if they were part of the Republic Day parade. The nation of India is prioritised over the locality or region.²⁶ The display also seems to be based less on issue-based politics, and more towards a veneration of the nation and its people (see Chapter Nine).

If one were to compare the Tanaji Krida Mandal with the *mandals* above, variations on the theme of nationalism are made apparent.²⁷ Whereas with the Shiv Sainik *mandals*, the Muslim is explicitly or implicitly singled out as 'traitor', with the Congressite *mandal*, he is included; but this is to sometimes sceptical reception as the vehicle of a Hindu festival is used to promulgate this message. The apparently inclusive message of the *mandap* narrative seem consonant with the limited influences of the Shiv Sena in the area of the Tanaji Krida Mandal in Mumbai, along with the stress of brotherhood between recent migrants from Uttar Pradesh resident in the area. Their regional associations with Uttar Pradesh appear to be the stronger means of fraternal bondage than being overly mindful of religious differences for public representations.

With these variant inflections on nationalist themes, political party endorsed strategies of nationalism are made apparent - some of which show overlap, particularly with regards to their views on Hinduism and the nation; other viewpoints are antagonistic, particularly with regards to the treatment of minority communities. The festival has become a meeting ground of differences, despite the fact that the political usage of religion is a contentious issue amongst 'secularists'. Even though arguing for a 'secular' India, the vehicle of a Hindu festival mitigates the import of the message for most of the participants are exclusively Hindu, particularly as communal antagonism has in recent years reared its ugly head again in Maharashtra. Shiv Sainik *mandals* lay comparatively more stress on regional Maharashtrian history, and invoke communalist notions without too many qualms.

Furthermore, as Niranjana has argued, the spaces of nation and secularism have been premised on ideas akin to Hindutva (Niranjana 1994: 79).²⁸ The Tanaji Krida *mandap* narrative provides a 'softer' versioning of more aggressively exclusivist *mandap* tableaux. The *mandal* provides little by way of critique of the negative aspects

and assumptions of Hindu chauvinism in its representations, though does consider itself as oppositional to the Shiv Sena. 'Secular' messages can be shown to complement Hindutva messages, albeit an oppositional relationship in the political arena. I return to the overlaps in variant hegemonic strategies, and their constitutive aspects of discursive nationalism in Chapter Nine.

Spectacles and Spectators

The effects of such politically partial *mandap* displays are manifold. As political hegemonies are transposed through the use of religious and historical ideals for the expressed purpose of the community, they do not appear to harbour singularly political ambitions. They serve the additional purpose of entertaining, with a spectacle that draws attention from both media and visitors alike. It is quite apparent that as well as trying to inform and enlist support, the *mandals* also try to impress the populace with their illustrative displays. Large quantities of financial resources facilitate political desires, as more and more wonderful scenes are created for public consumption.

On the subject of Renaissance ceremonies, Strong notes the desire to create wonder which was intricately linked with political ambitions of those in power to stake a hold over their subjects. Strong discusses wonder as 'based on the idea of spectacle as essential to drama, and aligned to a celebration of magnificence and liberality as regal virtues' (Strong 1984: 40). Strong's point seems to have some relevance to my research as well, as *Ganeshotsava mandals* attempt to excel and impress with more and more extravagant and innovative displays and shows - a dynamic exacerbated by organised competitions, and the publicity stunts of political parties.

As religious subject matter itself has become highly charged political arenas in 1990s India, it is not always the case that we find Shiv Sainik *mandals* creating explicitly political scenes of the type described above. They might instead concentrate on *dharmik* scenes in a bid to glorify Hindu religious themes. Since their rise to state power after 1995, some Shiv Sainik *mandals* have tended to favour religious themes for their tableaux over and against socio-political themes as with tableaux that point out the corruption rife amongst Congress politicians. It would seem that once the Shiv Sena were in a position of governmental power where accusations of corruption and even murder were rife, tendencies to include socio-political or topical subject matter had in several cases, been curbed to concentrate on more religio-mythological themes. As *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges pointed out, if one were to compare the Spring Mills Compound display of 1995 positing Bal Thackeray's government with Shivaji's *durbar*, and their display of 1996 concerning a grand replica of the Sai Baba Mandir in Shirdi, some interesting Shiv Sena strategies are made

apparent.²⁹ With their substantial financial resources, an extravagant scene was created to impress visitors, yet this time with no apparently political message. However, if one considers that the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance had been in state power for nearly eighteen months by now, and the fact that charges of corruption had been levelled at Shiv Sena politicians including the alleged involvement of Bal Thackeray's nephew, Raj Thackeray, with the murder of Ramesh Kini (*Outlook*, September 25, 1996), to present topical scenarios was to raise several awkward questions. Despite their street bases and municipal posts, the Shiv Sena had fully entered the state parliamentary. They were not just representatives of grassroots organised interests, but constrained from being as immediate and effective within the confines of democratic bureaucracy. Not only were they more visible, but also they were liable to temptations and accusations of political corruption.

Thus, the threshold of acceptance of narratives glorifying Shiv Sena's deeds had, apart from die-hard Sainiks, been considerably lowered. To present monuments of India's historical and religious heritage seemed to divert attention away from the world of official politics which the Shiv Sena were also partial to now, and represented an attempt to sanctify their image in public through being seen to advocate religious principles. It has been made explicitly clear with the case of the Spring Mills Compound Mandal. Other Shiv Sainik *mandals* in 1996 veered away from representing the political and topical to grand scenes of religious and historical interest, as with 'theme parks' of the Ajanta and Ellora caves, India Gate, Shivaji's forts, prominent Hindu temples and so forth. Smaller *mandals* with less financial resources represented similar kinds of dynamics but on a smaller scale.

On the other hand, however, it must not be taken for granted that all religious subject matter is necessarily political in intention in contemporary Maharashtra. An analysis of *mandap* displays need be backed with some knowledge of their producers' backgrounds and intentions. There is a criss-cross of relations between intention and reception of imagery which I now attempt to delineate. For heuristic reasons, I temporarily consider religion as faith pertaining to the divine, and politics as instrumental propositionality pertaining to the mundane.

After around 1985, Hindutva forces of the Bharatiya Janata Party and kindred groups aspired to dominate the political landscape. *Ganeshotsava mandals* were also to become more politicised, and national and political issues took centre stage in the festival. Many 'theme' *Ganeshotsava mandaps* (where the Ganapati *murti* is accompanied by a thematic representation of a mythological, social or political event) focussed on national issues. A festival organiser in Lalbaug, commented, 'This however does not mean to say that the organisers themselves are politically committed'. Another example was that of a *mandal* in Dombivli, north west Mumbai,

which had displayed a scene of a temple, a mosque and a church with members of all communities praying together. It was designed by a youth who had no ostensible political sympathy with the principle of national integration. The motivating factor here is the competition. Therefore, there existed a discrepancy between an avowedly political scene with a depoliticised verbal explanation or intention. In other cases, however, representations did reflect the political motivations of the organisers, as parties such as the Shiv Sena, the Bharatiya Janata Party, the Vishva Hindu Parishad and the Congress try to ‘capture’ more and more *Ganeshotsava mandals*.

Therefore relations between organisers and *mandap* representations can be either of the following:

- (i) discrepancies between non-political motivations and political or nationalist representation (perhaps geared for competition requirements);
- (ii) reflections of the political interests and ambitions of organisers in the *mandap* scene; and
- (iii) discrepancies between political strategies and non-political scenes as with the display of religious subjects. However, if there is a *dharmik* tableaux fostered by Hindu chauvinist groups, political implications or ‘targeted non-intention’ can be feasibly surmised. But this is not to say that all *dharmik* scenes have political implications. This can only be concluded in circumstances where the producers demonstrate political affiliations, and in circumstances where religion is a highly charged political issue.

This tripartite model also holds for interpretations of tableaux by visitors - that is, cases where there is:

- (i) little empathy by spectators for the tableau in that an overtly political scene is treated indifferently, critiqued or contested; therefore there is a discrepancy between intention and reception;
- (ii) overtly political scenes are empathised with such that intention and reception conjoin; and
- (iii) non-political scenes, as with those based on *dharmik* or historical themes, might be taken in a politicised sense in which case there lies a possible discrepancy between intention and reception.

It need be cited that these models are a simplification of a cobweb of relations between the organisers’ and visitors’ views (too numerous to fully represent here), the mutual entanglement of religion and politics, and types of *mandap* displays in contemporary Maharashtra. Nonetheless, they highlight discernible contradictions and complexities of hegemonising strategies to monopolise festival praxis and *mandap* interpretations.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I considered the political scenario of Maharashtra and the control of the Shiv Sena over *Ganeshotsava mandals*. With the examples of explicit political co-option of *utsava mandals* as with the Tarabaug and Spring Mills Compound Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandals, I provided an analysis of the kinds of imagery and narrative present in their *mandap* tableaux. They provide explicit examples of religion sanctifying political ambitions, as well as the explicit politicisation of a religious occasion in contemporary times. Much of this is an indication of the level of communalist politics running throughout substantial sectors of a politicised Hindu populace.

Despite the Shiv Sena's monopoly of *Ganeshotsava mandals*, particularly in Mumbai, it is notable that political co-option of the festival can only ever be partial and variable for several reasons. Political contestation between several parties and within individual parties, and non-acceptance of the likes of *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges, obstruct their will and tactics to dominate in the public field. Campaigns to revive liberal secular leanings and respect for plurality have been further fuelled by the rise of Hindutva forces (Engineer 1995), such that religio-politics has become a highly contested terrain in contemporary India.

Further, hegemonising strategies demonstrate discrepant effects in intentionality and reception amongst the populace, as well as variant paths. This is exemplified with some co-opted *mandals* preferring to stress the religious importance of the occasion veering clear of explicit indictment of being seen to use the festival platform to propagate aggressive party politics. I noted that even though some of the festival constituencies blatantly use the occasion to propagate support for their party cause, others are more subtle and publicly prioritise the religious aspects of the festival. In these cases, it is not always possible to assert the political intentionality of the *mandals* without a consideration of the kind of control and decision-making entailed within the *mandal* members. Therefore, I considered the complex of relations between intention and reception using the example of politically partial, nationalist and *dharmik mandap* tableaux.

In their eagerness to acquire hegemony in the public field, the Shiv Sena try to reinscribe a hegemonic order on the festival as a means by which a people-based solidarity can be effected. However, as Laclau argues for movements to 'act over that "social", to *hegemonise it*' this is an 'ultimately impossible fixation' (Laclau 1990: 91). Indeed, the site of the festival, whilst representing a version of the social, also enhances and exceeds the parameters of the social. Thus the festival as a whole cannot be entirely co-opted as if it was a reified object or as a seamless whole, but demonstrates internal variations and shifts through space and time. Nonetheless, it is clear that

substantial numbers of *Ganeshotsava mandals* blatantly use the occasion to propagate support for their party cause. The movements represent hegemonic forces acting to ‘fix the flux’ of multiple readings of the festival and its constituent activities. Whether explicit or implicit, it is apparent that the festival as a religious occasion seems as much to sanctify political ambitions as it demonstrates the politicisation of religion.

It is notable that there are variant hegemonising dynamics pertaining to represent the interests of the community or nation through festival praxis. However, amongst the oppositional fault-lines representative of distinct party interests, areas of overlap with regard to Hinduism and nationalism have also been noted. As with my discussion on nationalism in Chapter Three, whether it be civic or ethno-nationalism, ‘secular’ or communalist, the differences between the likes of Shiv Sena politicians and *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges as manifest in the *Ganapati utsava*, is one of degrees rather than of kind. However, the two factions are antagonistic in the use of religion. By this, I refer to the fact that in both cases it is a religious festival which is being used as the means to propagate ‘secular’ ideals and an aggressive Hindutva parochialism/nationalism, yet liberal ‘secularists’ contest the use of the festival for instrumental politics and to spread communal hatred. The next chapter considers the arena of nationalist (*rashtriya*) *mandap* tableaux where political partialities, if any, are not apparent or explicitly publicised but subordinated to the principles of the ideal nation. Due to the particular religious associations of the festive occasion, the politically partial *mandals* described in this chapter differ in degree rather than kind to the types of *mandaps* described in the next chapter.

¹I was not able to get exact figures as to the extent of their domination of *Ganeshotsava mandals*. Respondents amongst *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges estimated that the monopoly extended to about seventy per cent of the *Ganeshotsava mandals* in Mumbai. Hansen notes that there are around five thousand Shiv Sena linked Mitra Mandals (Friends’ Associations) which also organise festivals (Hansen 1996a: 159).

² For a discussion on Hindutva, see Chapter Three.

³This is not to assume, however, that the *Ganapati utsava* was uniformly politicised in earlier times; only that Congress Extremist ideals represented by Tilak were pre-eminent, propagated further by the more communalist parties, such as the Hindu Maha Sabha.

⁴The federal republic of India was proclaimed in 1950. There are now twenty four self-governing states and seven Union Territories. The states are administered by a Governor appointed by the federal President, and a council of ministers headed by the Chief Minister. These council of ministers are drawn from the Legislative Assembly which is popularly elected every five years. Eight of the larger states have a second chamber known as the Legislative Council.

At the centre in New Delhi, there is a 544 member *Lok Sabha* (*People's House*) which is elected every five years from single member constituencies by universal suffrage; and a 244 member *Rajya Sabha* (*Upper House*) which is elected a third at a time by state legislatures on a regional quota basis. Even though the titular executive head of the federal government is the President (elected for five-year terms by an electorate composed of members from the federal parliament and the state legislatures), real executive power is held by the Prime Minister and cabinet drawn from the majority party or coalition within the federal parliament.

The states have primary control over education, health, police and local government, whereas the federal government has responsibility for defence and foreign affairs and plays the more prominent

role in economic affairs. At times of crisis, central rule, otherwise known as 'president's rule', can be imposed. At the more local level, cities and towns also have a Municipal Council which has limited degrees of power but sole responsibility for all municipal concerns - roads, housing, sewers, water and other amenities. Several politicians have worked themselves up into state and central power by being a Municipal Councillor which is also an electable post, changed every five years. Villages have their local governments known as the *panchayat* and headed by the *sarpanch* (Ghai 1994).

⁵Indira Gandhi declared a national Emergency in June 1975 according to Constitution regulations allowing for a government to impose martial law in cases of severe social and political unrest or turmoil. The Emergency was widely criticised as anti-democratic and in breach of freedoms of speech and press. Widespread discontent to Indira Gandhi's use of the Emergency to maintain centralised control resulted in the replacement of Congress by the new coalition Janata Dal in 1977.

⁶As Guru comments, this alliance was influenced 'less by ideological convictions than by the pragmatic compulsions to capture power both at the state level and at the centre' (Guru 1995: 734). The Shiv Sena was seen to be strategically operative at the state level whereas the BJP provided more of a national-oriented appeal to voters. Whereas both parties used the banner of Hindutva, Guru also states that the combine did not make an absolute majority, but captured only 138 seats without expanding its social base. This was effected with the aid of electoral manipulation and calculation as well as the alliance representing a coalition of castes (Guru 1995).

⁷Katzenstein, Mehta and Thakkar (1997) summarise viewpoints as to the ascendancy of the Shiv Sena since the last decade, covering societal shifts, the Shiv Sena's institutional and organisational factors, ideological or discursive factors, and, finally, their own suggestions of discursive and organisational factors operating together such as the adoption of Hindutva dialogue along with accumulation of funds, manipulation, and sometimes even intimidation of media outlets, autocratic structure, and network of *shakhas* which provide a place for activities in service to the community and to party campaign issues.

⁸The Shiv Sena *shakhas* are informal meeting places, as opposed to the orthodox and disciplined organisations of the RSS *shakhas* which advance brands of Hindu religious education and physical training (Wakankar 1995: 56-7). Training is made available to Shiv Sainiks in the use of cudgel and sword, and firearms in the countryside (Heuze 1992: 2193). These differences in the organisations are despite the fact that Bal Thackeray had trained with the RSS cadres before setting up the Shiv Sena.

⁹Chandoke comments on socially constructed spaces in cities as 'the physical container of direct personalised, non-commodified relations which act as a buffer against the market' (Chandoke 1991: 2872). In the case of Shiv Sena-controlled localities of Mumbai, socially constructed spaces also act as buffers to newer non-Maharashtrian economic migrants into the city.

¹⁰I refer to the Shiv Sena's politics as parochial as opposed to regionalist, due to the fact that regionalism implies an element or desire for autonomy from the central state, which could grow into a sub-nationalist or 'separatist' cause as happened with the Khalistani movement for a Panjabi homeland. The Shiv Sena prioritise regional interests, culture and histories, but do not campaign for a separate state; rather they have striven to adopt a national vision.

¹¹Hansen notes the projection of Shabir Sheikh (MLA) as proof of Shiv Sena's rhetoric of broadmindedness (Hansen 1995: 22).

¹²Morkhandikar (1967) notes that the Shiv Sena bought out a brochure, *Shiv Sena Speaks*, on August 1st, 1967, to defend itself against criticisms in the English newspapers. Since the party's inauguration, the Shiv Sena have seemed to have operated a double-pronged strategy of working in neighbourhoods and capitalising upon media outlets.

¹³For example, see Appendix I, *mandal* number seventeen - the Gamdev and J. K. Building Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal; and below - the Tarabaug and Spring Mills Compound Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandals.

¹⁴As another example of Shivaji's significance to the Shiv Sena, the Maharashtra State Government represented a replica of Chatrapati Shivaji's naval force in the Republic Day Parade in Delhi in January 1996. The float depicted Shivaji's naval chief, Kanhoji Angre, commanding a battle ship with live models wearing the traditional uniform worn by Shivaji's soldiers in the seventeenth century.

¹⁵It might also be recalled that Tilak closely followed the calls to publicise and politicise the Ganapati *utsava* with attempts to start Shivaji *Jayanti* in the 1890s. Tilak too informs the Shiv Sena's ideology,

although to a lesser extent than more militant Hindu nationalists such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Vasudev Balwant Phadke, Rajguru and so forth - the majority of them being Maharashtrians, 'sons of the soil', and regarded as selflessly and conscientiously working for the nation.

¹⁶ Water was taken from the seven rivers for the coronation of Shivaji - a purification rite comparable to the act of dipping oneself in the holy waters.

¹⁷ These more nationalistic ambitions are also evident in the Gamdev and J. K. Building *mandap* display and narrative of 1996 where a figure of Bal Thackeray, points to the Lal Qila (Red Fort) as if to say '*Chalo Delhi*' ('Let's go to Delhi'), invoking parallels between Subhas Chandra Bose' call to the people to go to Delhi and overthrow colonial rule (see Appendix I, *mandal* number seventeen).

¹⁸ Two individuals, Vasudev Savant and Nana Parab, started the Tarabaug *sarvajanik utsava* as the festival was getting very popular in Mumbai, and due to their motives to fight for freedom. Manohar Shirke, a resident of the area now eighty five years old, was a freedom fighter who keeps a Ganapati in his house during the festival to this day.

¹⁹ Shariat, also spelt Shari'ah, refers to the canon law of Islam.

²⁰ This is quite ostensibly a reference to the Mughal rulers of the time.

²¹ This *mandap* narrative is unusual for the inclusion of student protests against the Mandal Commission, despite its dividing potential amongst Hindu communities. It demonstrates the influence of wider nation-wide Hindutva politics on the *mandal*. According to *mandal* members, the martyrs' identifications as Hindu students eclipsed their status as upper caste protesters against what is perceived to be another case of government mis-rule. The Tarabaug Mandal showed a mixed caste composition of Hindus. The *mandap* narrative seems to attempt to appeal to both high and low-caste Hindu, as is made apparent by Shivaji's respect for and employment of low-caste Mahars in his army. The inclusion alludes to the ambiguities in the associations of the caste of Marathas, as much as it does to the low-caste origins of Shivaji. With Shivaji's coronation, his status, along with his caste associations, were raised (see Chapter Two).

²² This is not to say that the reception of such tableaux is always acquiescent. Whereas politically partial *mandals* do not consider it problematic to use religion and art for the purpose of promoting a political agenda and see the benefits of converging various agendas, it is precisely due to the instrumentality of aesthetic considerations, and religious opportunism for political ambitions that several *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges consider such blatant uses of *mandap* tableaux as not fitting. On the other hand, *Samna* newspaper competition judges do not exemplify a troubled liberal consciousness, not least as this is the paper which acts as the Sena's mouthpiece. See below for more on the discrepancy and convergence between intention and reception of artworks.

²³ For example, Chakravarty notes the ambivalent support of Hindutva by Dalit groups: 'While it has found a way in some areas of incorporating the dalits in symbolic ways or during particular events this incorporation is extremely transient' (Chakravarty 1994: 113). As I have argued further in Chapter One, the Shiv Sena exemplify a less specific caste-oriented politics.

²⁴ The cacti-plant is actually a *bandhagule*, a parasitical plant, which is used in the *mandap* narrative as a metaphor for the unhealthy spread of bad conduct.

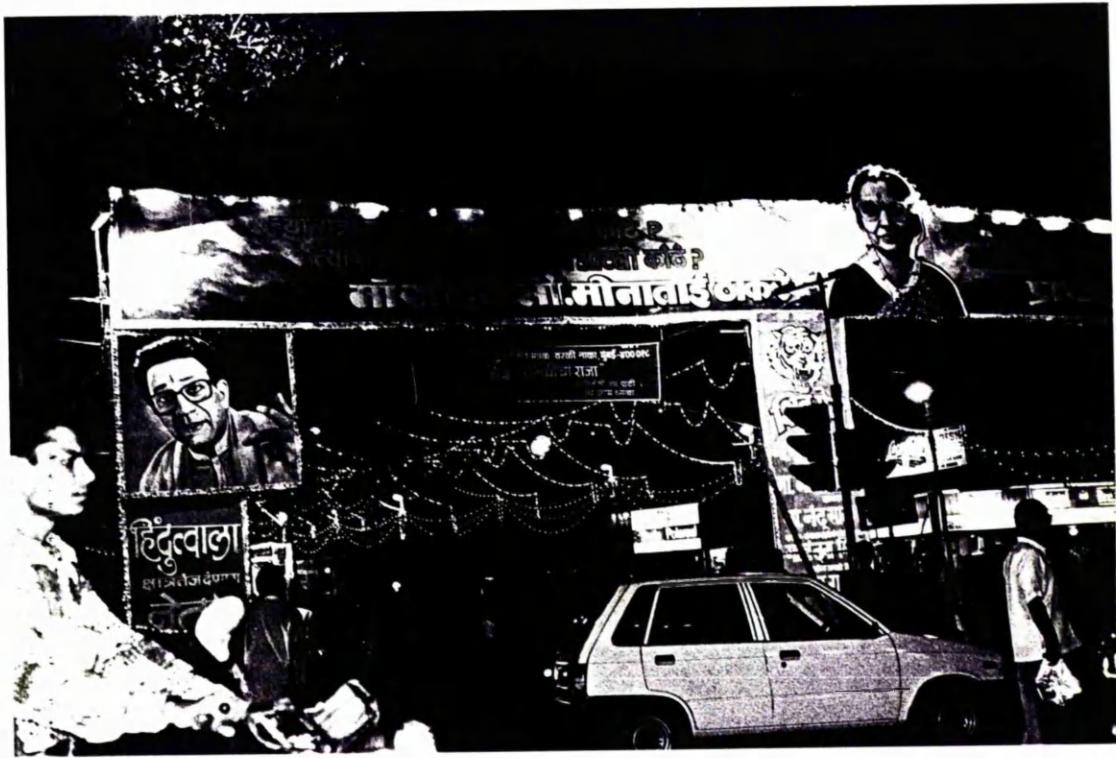
²⁵ Note that the metaphor of light is used to connote not only religious enlightenment but also the progress of the nation. It is implicit that darkness is associated with ignorance, namely a lack of religious faith and a lack of patriotic sentiment and action.

²⁶ See also Appendix III, *mandal* number fifteen for other examples of Congressite *mandap* displays.

²⁷ See also the Gamdev and J. K. Building Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (Appendix I, *mandal* number seventeen).

²⁸ See also Chapter Three on secularism and communalism.

²⁹ The dynamics noted here seem also to be relevant to the Shiv Sena Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal with their large construction of the Jyotiba Mandir in 1996 (see Chapter Seven and Appendix III, *mandal* number fourteen).



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गुणगोरव समारंभ
शिवसेनाइताखाळी.३७ तर्फे
 या विभागातील शालंत परिहेत
 द उच्च माध्यमिक परिहेत अधिक
 गुण मिळवून उत्तीर्ण इताल्या
 यशस्वी विद्यार्थ्यांचा सल्लार समारंभ
 आयोजित करण्यात येणार आहे.
 तरी विद्यार्थ्यांनी आपल्या गुणपत्रिकेची
 द्वितीय प्रत देऊ इतालेटू खालं.५ ते ८.३०
 यावेळेत फॉर्म लावेत.
 • १० वी ... ८०% व अधिक गुण.
 • १२ वी ... ६५% ... (सल्लालिज दिलाल)

अल्पांग नम
श्री. दिलीप दत्ताईक (समारंभक)

84



85



■ ११-८-९४ ■ ६ ■

मार्शिक
86

काळीकृ

द्यंगचिंग साप्ताहिक

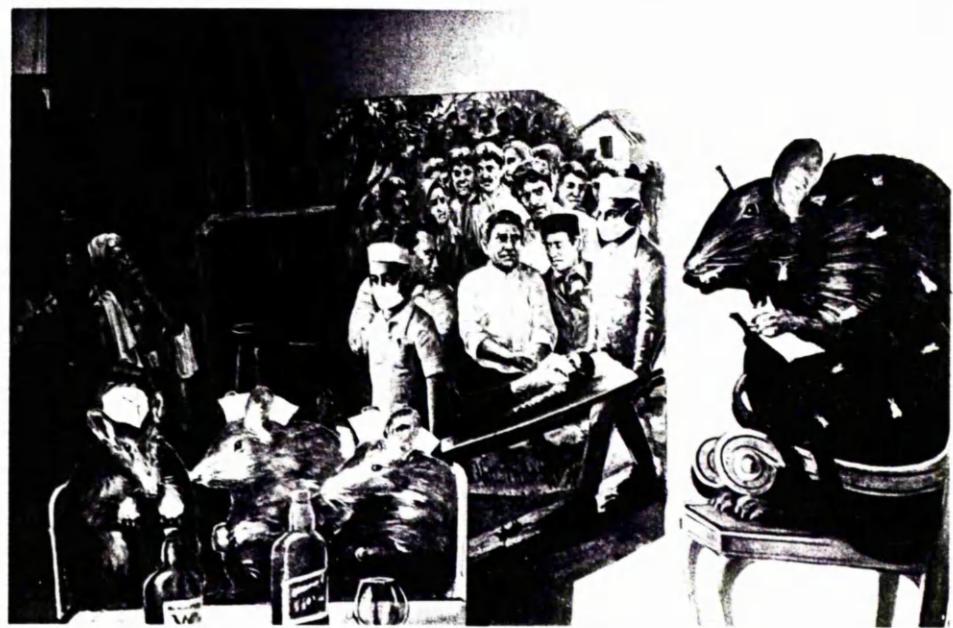
किमत ५ रुपये



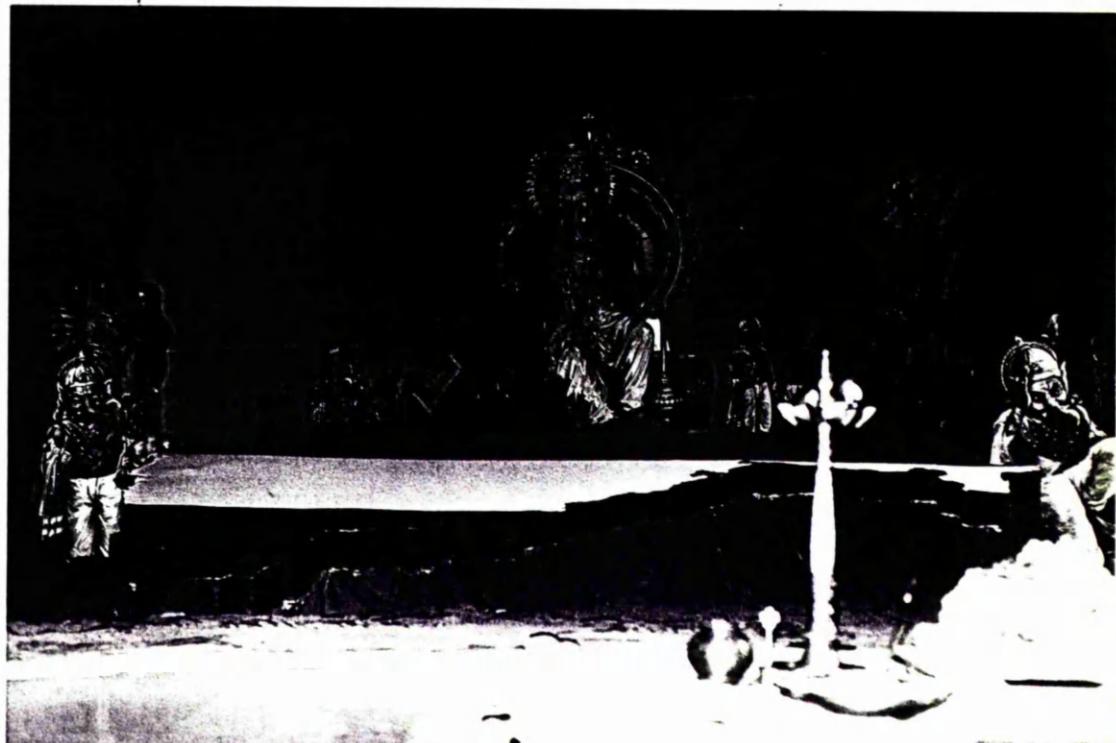
आजपर्यंत तुम्ही तुमच्या
इच्छा माझ्याकडे व्यवहा
करत होतात, आज मी
तुम्हां भवतांकडे पुक माझी
इच्छा व्यवहा करतो. मी
जेव्हा युद्धाचा वर्षी घेईनि तेहा
चा मड्डाराष्ट्रात मला हे ग्रस्त
कोंग्रेसचं सरकार दिसता
कामा नये!



88

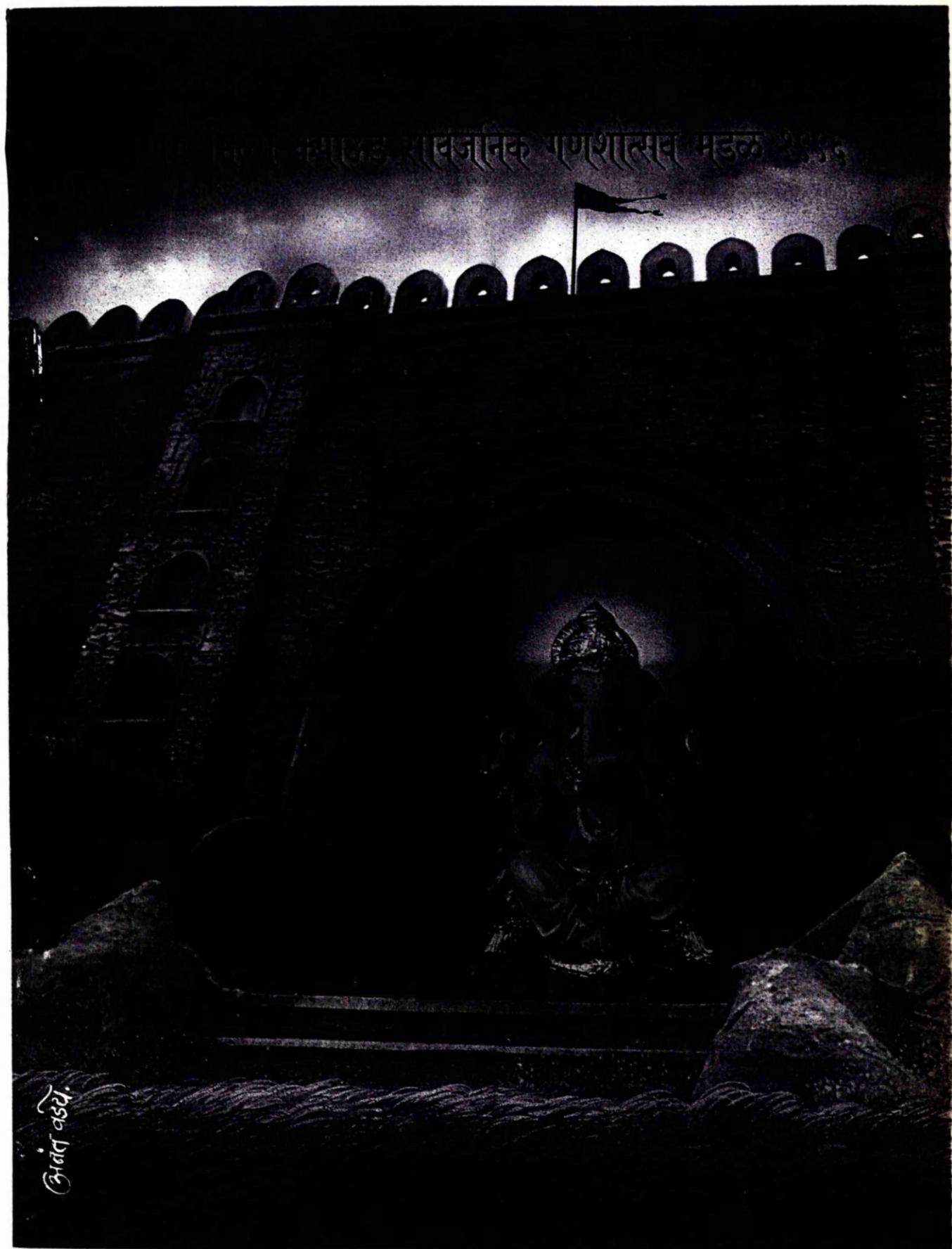


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अंगरे
(Angre)

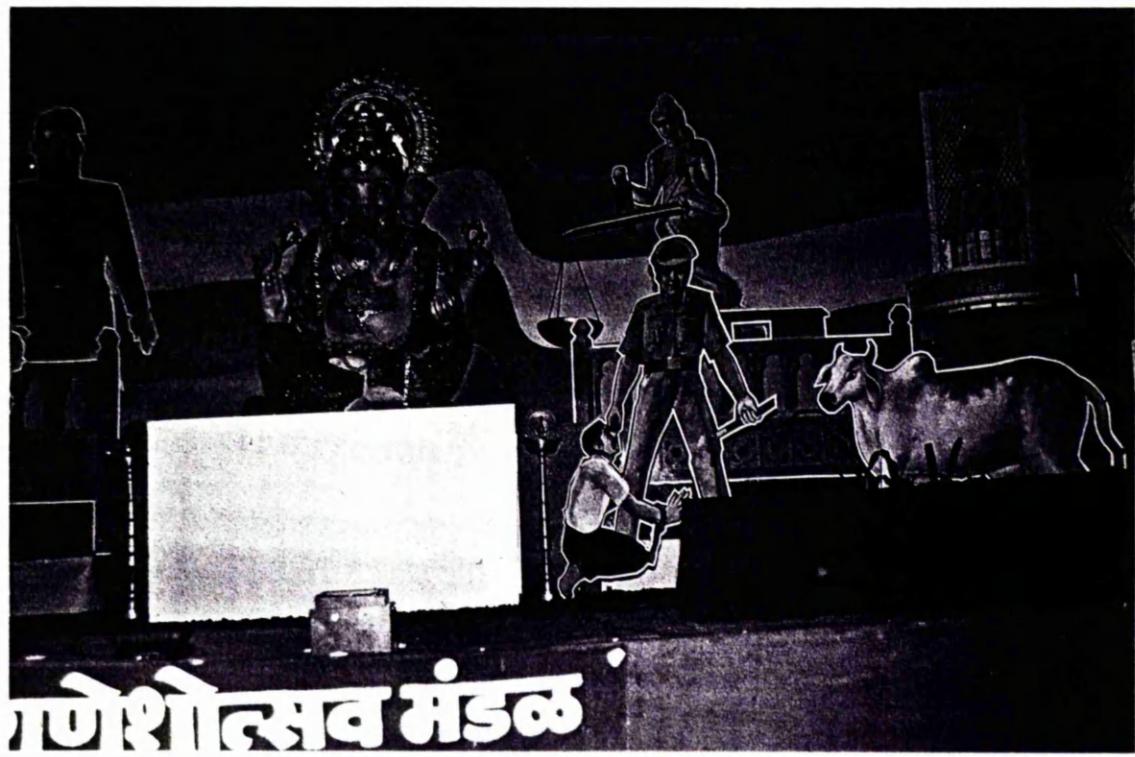


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त्रिशौलसव मंडळ

१५



ताराबाग सार्वजनिक ग
ताराबाग माद्यगांव लूप्पुर मुंबई

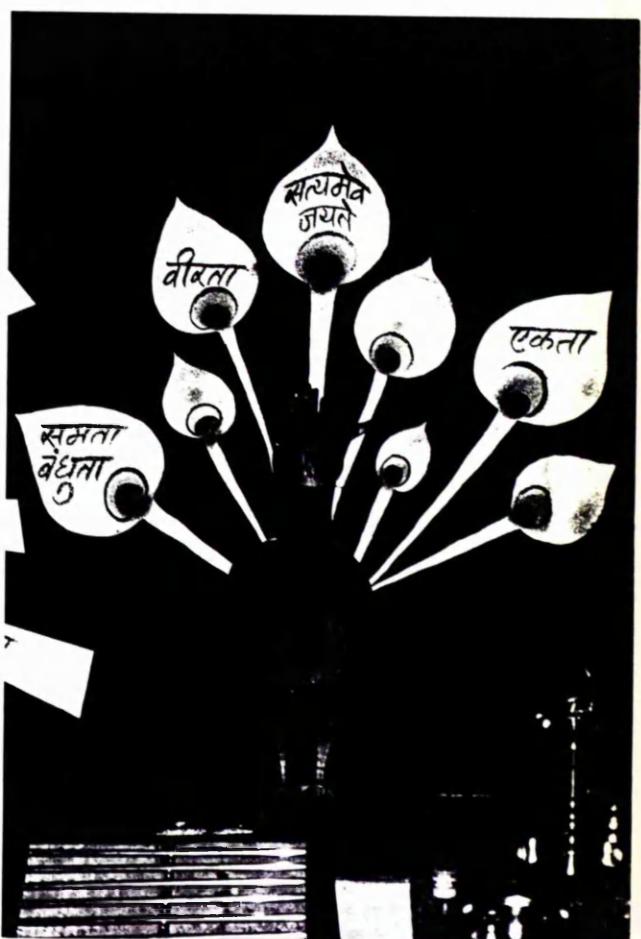
१५



१६



१७



१८



99

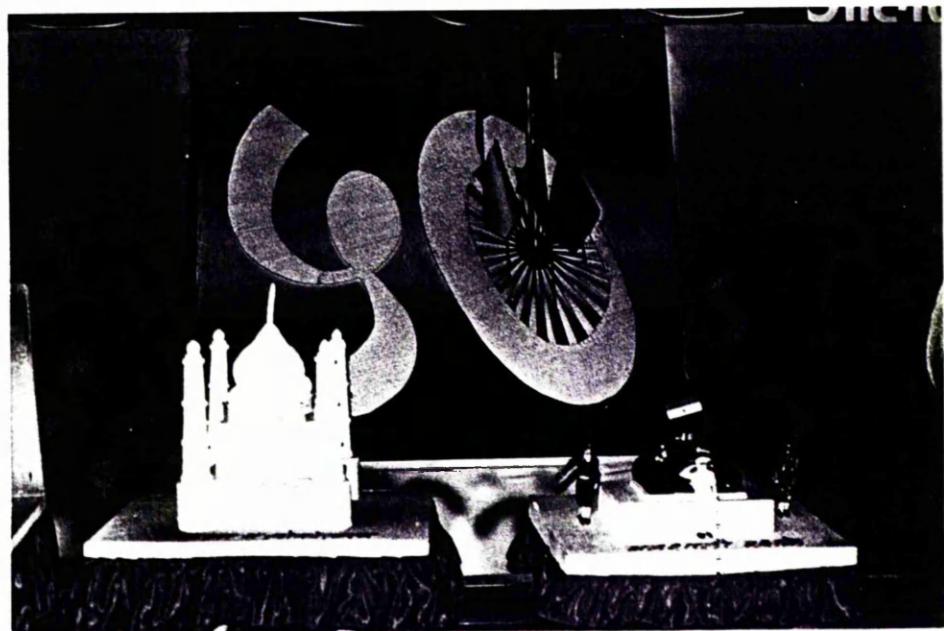


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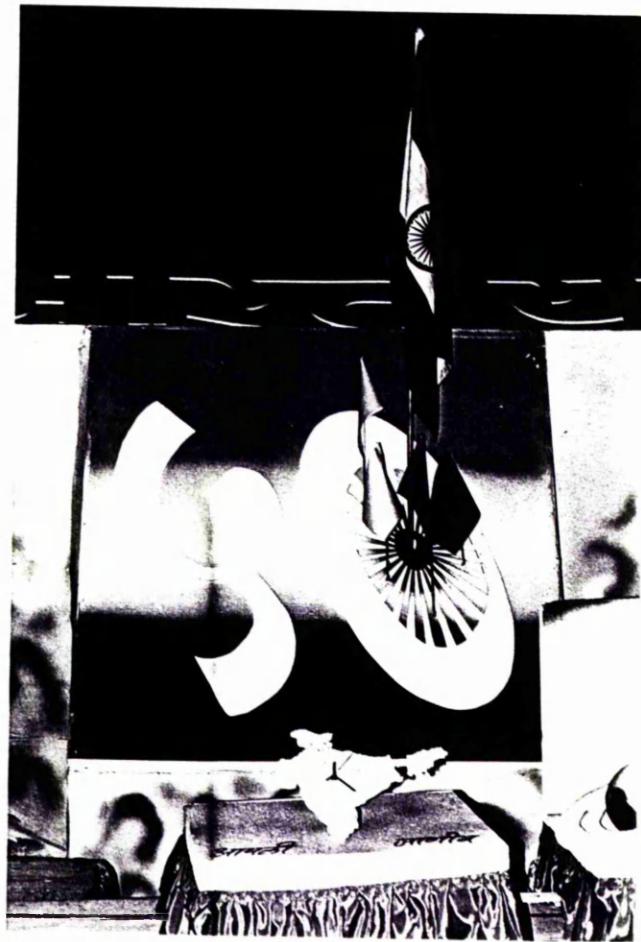


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Chapter Nine

Interrogating the Spectacles of Nationalism

In earlier chapters, I have described notable ways the festival has been utilised to reflect as well as propagate national values in their various mutations, namely in relation to the festival's history (see Chapter Five), festival praxis, participants' opinions, and public processions (see Chapter Six), media-run competitions (see Chapter Seven), and political parties (see Chapter Eight). The whole provide facets on the festival, yet do not exhaust them in their entirety. Due to the limitations of hegemonic articulations as well as the provisional and multiperspectival space of the festival, contradictions as well as contestatory opinion unsettle overriding conclusions as to the festival's characteristics, such that the rubric of nationalism forms one complex, albeit a prominent part, of festival praxis (see Chapters Three and Four). In this chapter, I concentrate on another significant aspect of the festival, providing an overview of representations of the nation with a focus on *rashtriya mandap* tableaux.

To recapitulate the various facets of the rubric of nationalism thus far: anti-colonial struggles entailed within the history of the *sarvajanik Ganapati utsava* has, in contemporary times, predisposed the festival to a revival of nationalist ideals as well as it being instrumental in a call for a 'public awakening' (*lokjagriti*). The public field of both media networks and collective gatherings provided a performative occasion to disseminate messages which were politically-motivated, but often veiled in religious allegories particularly in colonial times. Such promulgation of nationalism and a social awakening in former times has had a number of consequences. Comparing the present-day scenario with the past, people on moral high-grounds began to complain about the 'vulgarisation' of the festival - namely the excessive commercialism, racketeering, and the practice of obscene behaviour and dances during immersion processions. This has particularly been the case with the founders of the Brihanmumbai Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Samanvay Samiti, a regulating committee to oversee the festival which was established in 1982. Space has not allowed me to discuss the organisation in more detail. Suffice it to note that 2,795 *Ganeshotsava mandals* in Mumbai are part of the voluntary organisation (Silim 1991). The members meet once before the time of the festival to discuss key concerns and issues concerning its arrangement. Newspaper-organised competitions since 1986 began to encourage festivals based on religiously and socially progressive grounds, as with the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition organisers' avocation of the principle of national integration through festival proceedings and tableaux designs, and social work such as educational and health-related facilities for the neighbourhood. Centennial celebrations since 1992

recalled the festival's glorious past during colonial times when it was considered as having a progressive role to play without undermining its religious purpose to unite people with each other and with god. Such projects are coterminous with the political agenda of the Hindutva brigade namely the BJP, RSS, VHP and its more parochial cousin, the Mumbai-based Shiv Sena, particularly since the 1980s. Hence the festival amongst other cultural practices has been seen as instrumental in mobilising ideas and people in the pursuit of revivalist, nationalist or religio-political goals in India. In the process, versions of the nation are played out in several ways in the public field of the festival.

By way of concluding the thesis, I provide an overview of *rashtriya mandap* tableaux recorded in the festival in Mumbai and Pune from 1993-96, and present an analysis of recurrent themes as manifest in their visual iconography and narratives. In view of arguments as to 'mass-mediated images as a centralised locus of social and political discourse' (Rajagopal 1994: 1659) or 'televisual politics' (Pinney 1995a: 4) in contemporary India, this chapter engages with the visual, media and the performative as it relates to the displays in the Ganapati *utsava*. I concentrate on constituent aspects of representations of the nationalism rubric in the Ganapati *utsava* - that is, visualisations of the nation. But I also note the process of the activation of versions of the nation in the performative arena of the Ganapati *utsava*. However, in this chapter, the examples cited are necessarily dislocated from their respective *mandals* and *mandap* narratives, to concentrate on sets of recurrent iconographies as they have been produced for the festival. Developing Anderson's phrase of 'languages-of-power' (Anderson 1983: 47), the analysis could be described as an investigation of the 'iconographies-of-power' in the Ganapati *utsava*. In the foregoing chapters, I have touched upon various facets of this complex and inexhaustible discursive domain, concentrating upon *mandap* tableaux as mediatory points, whilst considering the viewpoints of *mandal* members and visitors, as well as the political and institutional processes impinging upon cultural formations. Space has not allowed me to focus on the viewpoints of artists, but their diversity reflects the views of participants.

I begin with a discussion on the characteristics of *rashtriya mandaps*. I then provide an analysis on the visual aspects of nationalism, rather than variant versionings of the nation determined by political positionalities as described in Chapter Eight. Whereas the last chapter considered the dissonant strands of hegemonic strategies in the festive context, this chapter concentrates on the points of consonance amongst the dissonance in relation to the festival's visual and mobilised spectacles. It provides an analysis of features of the hegemonising and homogenising aspects of discursive nationalism characteristics with regard to *mandap* tableaux, rather than politically partial strands which operate under the rubric of representing, or aspiring to represent,

the nation. It is notable, that much of the analysis here forms part of normalised representations and conceptions of the nation in the festival.

As with literature, representations of the nation can show diversity and ambivalence (Bhabha 1990). But with the weight of historical and contemporary associations of nationalism with the festival, there tends to be a fixity of visual signs pertaining to *rashtriya* displays. Bhabha's discursive conception of ideology as it relates to nationalism and representations is pertinent to account for the gamut of *mandap* tableaux, but is of limited explanation in the case of *rashtriya mandap* tableaux themselves. In this context, the discursiveness of the sign is less frequent than its containment within bounded parameters:

'As Volosinov said, the ideological sign is always multi-accentual and Janus-faced. But in the heat of political argument the "doubling" of the sign can often be stilled' (Bhabha 1990: 3).

This is an argument that is supported by Anderson when he writes that the nationalist novel depicts:

'...the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside a novel with the world outside. The picaresque *tour d'horizon*... is nonetheless not a *tour du monde*. The horizon is clearly bounded' (Anderson 1983: 35).

The tendency towards closure of signs is ostensibly the case for *rashtriya mandap* tableaux, as it is for other mobilised imagery in India such as the figure of Ram (Kapur 1993). Even though, Ram has had a tradition of diverse interpretations, now, the hegemonic 'symbol' of Ram is prevented from becoming an autonomous signifier capable of infinite variations and extensions of meaning. This more limited field of interpretations appears to be the case for *rashtriya mandap* tableaux in the festival context, in which the majority of Hindu celebrants acquiesce with the hegemonic schema, particularly as representations of the nation, as indeed of Ganapati, tend to represent moral universes, and perceived to lie beyond contestation by festival participants. This is not to say, however, that there is a unitary of readings of the displays. Richman has shown even texts such as the now politicised *Ramayana* is open to various interpretations (Richman 1995). Manekkar (1993) has accounted for diffuse readings of Draupadi's disrobing in the *Mahabharata* television programme according to the female constituency of spectators. Readings can be articulate within limited parameters, oppositional to each other, or present an arena of diverse debate contingent upon the degree of ideological closure in particular socio-political contexts. Readings of *rashtriya* tableaux amongst festival participants tends

to operate under the rubric of nationalism - that is, with regard to the nation's history, culture, social well-being and communal integration - the latter prone to varying degrees of tolerance (see Chapters Six and Seven). With the majority of festival participants being Hindu, an audience accepting of national and religious imagery is largely pre-determined. Nonetheless, in contrast to recent politicised representations of Ram, and primarily due to *mandals'* motivations to excel and innovate with their displays, there is still what might be described as a 'bounded' range of innovations and negotiations of national theatics. The following account considers the range and content of national theatics in *rashtriya mandap* displays, rather than their reception amongst spectators alone.

Rashtriya Ganeshotsava Mandap Tableaux

As *mandap* tableaux construction is largely a community art-form, most of the locality would be equally involved in the production and the spectatorship of the art forms. Depending upon authority and skill, some members might, of course, take on a more leading role in the production decision-making and construction, whilst occasionally people might be contracted to do the work.¹ *Rashtriya mandaps* are a category of tableaux determined by indigenous classifications as to those *mandaps* which directly deal with issues to do with the nation - its history, present constituencies, crises, celebrations, and its hope for future prosperity and well-being. Although it is possible to argue that religion is also used to propagate Hindu nationalism in the festival, I analyse features of nationalist imagery based on informants' opinions on what constitutes *rashtriya* as opposed to *dharmik* tableaux. Thus, I do not consider tableaux depicting solely religious themes around the figure of Ganapati directly, only so much as to acknowledge their potency in fuelling an already 'spiritualised culture' of nationalism (Kapferer 1987: 2). The relevance of *dharmik* tableaux for nationalism in the contemporary festival is implicit due to the (re)constructions of the nation as a Hindu site, but are still indigenously seen as more *dharmik* than *rashtriya*. Representations of versions of a more inclusive nation, although still articulated on the premises of a Hindu festival, correspond to festival participants' notion of *rashtriya* tableaux. The political efficacy of *dharmik* tableaux have been considered in earlier discussions on the militant politicisation of the Hindu religion, notably in Chapters Five and Eight for different temporal contexts. The following account constitutes an analytical overview on nationalist images perceived as the object of festival participants' engagements. It is notable that the reification of imagery is integral to the nationalist process, informed and moulded by hegemonic power relations. This process also exemplifies a productive and creative discourse in showing degrees of variation

and innovation. However, this focus is not to mitigate the significance of performance for on the one hand, activation, and on the other hand, instability of reified entities - an argument which I return to later.

Although, due to strictures of space, I do not concentrate on *mandap* narratives here, the tripartite schema mentioned in Chapter Eight overlaps with most 'masala' narrative texts of *rashtriya* narratives incorporating the religious with the historical, political or topical. However, politically partial (*rajnaitik*) *mandap* narratives differ from the more general nationalist ones considered here, in that party allegiances are not publicised. The pattern of structural generalities are: first, a glorious past of justice, selfless sacrifice and bravery is recalled in the making of the nation as its fundamental founding myths; second, a battery of contemporary ills and crises that threaten the integrity, honour and stability of the nation are identified; and, third, a plea is made to maintain and restore the glories of the nation and its people, and Ganapati is requested for help in this project at the end of the narrative.² This pattern need not be encountered in a sequential manner, but invoked throughout the *mandap*'s narrative.

With this journey into the nation's halcyon past, and reminders of contemporaneous threats of India's deterioration, corruption, and violence, a programme for collective conscientiousness and action is advanced to work for the nation. Examples of merit are forwarded to encourage such work of excellence. Thus one finds martyrs with their stress on self-sacrifice and altruism for the nation, placed alongside achievers for the nation, such as sports players, singers, actors and others, particularly those people whose achievements have been noted on an international level. Fights against colonial, tyrant or anti-national activities, as with border struggles, are identified to further the cause of national honour, unity and integration. Examples of scientific progress or 'myths of modernity' for the nation and benefits to the society are also identified.³ These notions are 'at once constituted within the nation and constitute the nation' (Kapferer 1987: 1). By celebrating the best, the idea that the worst of Indian society could be eradicated is promulgated.

It is notable that *rashtriya* artworks in the festive context are integrated into a normalised political schema, rather than in the particular service of political parties (*rajnaitik*), even though the latter show overlaps in strategies and may well utilise *rashtriya* concepts and imagery. The artworks are not purely about producing an aesthetics or political agendas, but also an ethics of conduct and values. As a result, the political can be sanctified and naturalised. *Rashtriya* artworks assume an anomalous position - demonstrably politicised yet avowedly apolitical. *Rashtriya* artworks are at once political, yet also normalised amongst festival participants and considered to lie beyond *rajnaitik* instrumentality. Nonetheless, what might be described as the *rajnaitik* use of the festival, as was noted with the political parties in

Chapter Eight, is veiled in the discursive religio-nationalist field of the performative occasion. In the case of the Ganapati *utsava*, this ambivalent nature holds true in certain cases for *dharma* subject matter, as it does for nationalist *mandap* tableaux where nationalism is portrayed like a religion.

The strategy of apolitical promotion of the festival was particularly useful in colonial times when debate was generated amongst the colonial government as to whether the festival was a religious occasion or a political campaign, in which case it was to be outlawed (Cashman 1975: 84; see Chapter Four). However, unlike colonial times there is little need for veiled references when it comes to promoting the cause of the non-partisan principle of nationalism in contemporary times. In fact, the contrary: the more explicit a national subject matter is, the more it is glorified and appreciated by the majority of participants. The politicised and the depoliticised aspects of festival praxis are articulate in a dynamic ambivalence.

The map and monuments of India frequently appear in such *mandap* tableaux. The nation is regarded as a moral place where ideally truth prevails, a metaphor for the sanctity and protection of women, but considered perpetually under threat. The message is conveyed that without love for the nation, there will be an emaciated society. Together with the celebratory and bereaving or shocking aspects of the nation, a community of empathy and affinity is created. As the *mandap* tableaux does not appear to be used as a platform for party propaganda, but in tribute to the nation of India, there is less criticism or resistance. It appears that the nation with its people, particular histories, achievements, treasures, and vulnerability in the face of outside threats, is considered almost as sacred as the deity of Ganapati to Hindu festival participants. As Kapferer (1987) argues:

'Nationalism makes the political religious and places the nation above politics. The nation is created as an object of devotion....The religion of nationalism, wherein the political is shrouded in the symbolism of a "higher" purpose, is vital to the momentum of nationalism' (Kapferer 1987: 1).

Religious characteristics imputed to ideas about the nation enhance its hold on the public imagination in the festival. The nation as sacred is the hegemonic view which exerts power over 'residual' and 'emergent' meanings 'by seeking to impose and naturalise...sets of feelings, values and interpretive strategies, and, by extension,...representation of the "real"' (Jauss 1982: 144). The naturalisation of views about the nation extend to dominant readings of assumptions and interpretations by festival participants, whether they be of a more liberal or Hindu chauvinist political persuasion. Indeed, the phrase for nationalism, *rashtriya bhakta* (literally, national devotion), seems to imply an acceptance of Hindu ideas about religion. It is also

noteworthy that arguments for degrees of nationalist faith or disbelief are equivalent, if not overlapping, for religious faith or disbelief.

Amongst festival participants, the nation, with its variable constituencies and imaginations, is often considered as sacred and ineffable as the deity of Ganapati. An already ‘spiritualised’ nationalism converge markedly with religious festivities by way of the Ganapati *utsava*. Characteristics about the religious festival lend themselves further to the ‘religion of nationalism’ in a mutually strengthening relationship. In this sense, the notion of political *bhakti* is strengthened – one’s reformed self, nation and god are brought together in the festive occasion. Emblems to do with the deified nation are occasionally found transposed on to concepts and representations of the Ganapati *murti* (illustrations 34, 104-5). Due to the festival playing a part in the history of anti-colonial struggle, the Ganapati *murti* has come to symbolise the nation itself, both deemed as sacred entities in contemporary India. It is a vivid example of the coming together of ‘thinking’ the nation and god across the region (see Chapter Four). ‘Homogenous’ notions of time (Anderson 1983: 29) pertaining to the national, and ‘mythic’ notions of time pertaining to the divine and devotional (Pinney 1995: 15) are evident in a dynamic relationship, and could even be argued to persist for the phenomena of nationalism in general as a ‘spiritualised culture’ (Kapferer 1987: 2). The dynamics vividly illustrate Basu’s comments:

‘The interpretation of *dharma* and *rashtra*... is geared towards modifying the meanings of both. If Hinduism is ‘nationalized’, the nation is to be in the same measure Hinduized’ (Basu et al 1993: 40).

The deity of Ganapati invariably lies beyond critique amongst the Hindu populace in Maharashtra. The god conveys hope, is the beneficent helper and saviour, and is presented as the only true solution for the problems of the nation, if not world. With the performative *mandap* narrative, Ganapati’s status is reconfirmed if not heightened in the assertion of his continued relevance for the modern world. Indeed, the *murti* itself, as representative of popular Hinduism in Maharashtra, has almost become an ambassador for the Indian nation in several different suits, and with all its ironies, contradictions and shortcomings. He is considered a god that is necessary for the salvation of the nation. It is with his blessings that any work can be begun and completed successfully. Sanskrit verses embroidered on to the vernacular narrative in *mandap* display appear to ‘lift’ the speech about mundane worldly matters and aspirations to divine realms. Both with the opening and the closing of the mini-show, we have a semblance of the descent of the divine, and ascension of the mundane. First of all, godly presence is brought down to the earth.⁴ Then people’s prayers are lifted up to the divine. The narration embodies the worries of the social collective rather than

the individual who would of course present his own prayers to Ganapati either in his/her home, the temple or at the *mandaps*.

In other *mandap* tableaux, ‘masala’ narratives invoke religious stories alongside the social or topical.⁵ Mythic templates are embroidered with topical events, channelled into a narrative which promotes ‘secular’ nationalist or Hindu nationalist agendas. These ‘myths’ are versatile, and nor are they exclusive to this medium or Indian society, but appear in most modern-day media formats around the world (Barthe 1973).⁶ ‘New’ ideas or events are woven in to a standardised schema of *mandap* narratives. Nationalist ideas appear to be ubiquitous in contemporary India, as increased liberalisation programmes and media connections with the wider globe has led to the emergence of a greater self-reflection and identity politics. This self-recognition in relation to the west has, of course, always been present since at least colonial times, but it has had a recent upsurge as well as transformation due to India being placed in a more compact global nexus of media, economic and political networks (Kothari 1995: 625). As I have argued in Chapter Four, the Ganapati *utsava* is best seen as, not lying outside of mundane praxis, nor a reflection of socio-political milieux, but a stylised rendering of some of the central values articulate in society at large. It is clear that issues to do with the nation form part of the ‘central expressive and moral concerns’ in the Ganapati *utsava* as a reflective and productive arena of dynamics within society at large.

Other characteristics of *rashtriya mandap* tableaux are what might be described as ambiguities between didactic features based on ‘emotive reasoning’ and the populist orientations of *mandap* displays and narratives. *Ganeshotsava mandap* tableaux are as much oriented towards imparting information as they are to producing pleasing images and entertainment. Conjoined with a celebratory context, didactic messages are easily digested by participants in the spirit of awareness of ones’ religious and national heritage. Oftentimes, the themes disseminated are reliant upon various sentimental attachments, assumptions, expectations and incontestable realms of debate, particularly as to the principle of the national project. Messages disseminated across the populace encourage and contribute to a national regeneration. With Ganapati tableaux, this theme is considered most important amongst conscientious parents and *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition judges (see Chapter Seven), but is also significant in politically contested arenas where party propaganda is evident (see Chapter Eight).

The art critic in early twentieth century Bengal, Sister Nivedita, declared that: ‘Art, like science, like education, like industry, like trade itself, must now be followed “for the remaking of the Motherland”, and for no other aim’ (cited in Guha-Thakurta 1991: 185). In an article in a journal of the arts, *The Modern Review* (1907: 86), a

model construct of arts was set out in terms of the main didactic purposes it was meant to serve:

'...a historical purpose of reconstructing the glorious past of the country in paintings and sculpture; a moral purpose of elevating the thoughts and emotions of the viewers; and, most importantly, in the context of modern India, the purpose of "nation-building"' (cited in Guha-Thakurta 1992: 186).

Pedagogical traits of *rashtriya* artworks are based upon assumptions about a glorious national history, moral connotations, and community obligations. The sphere of meanings and interpretations tend to be reduced into something that can be easily learnt and recognised. Along with entertaining narratives, didactic messages in the festive context are considered as particularly suitable for children. Didactic traits are apparent in the pedagogic message embodied or attached to *mandap* tableaux scene by means of narration or notice. Didacticism need not just be about a disinterested educational purpose, but can easily become persuasive communication to be used by governments, political parties and pressure groups to change or reinforce people's attitudes and views.

However, despite such didactic traits, it is evident that *rashtriya* displays also have a populist orientation to entertain. This could be with regard to the subject matter, which is a reflection, as well as of, production of urban 'popular' culture. The displays demonstrate a mutuality of imaging in style and content between cinema art and kindred forms in the interests and tastes of the majority of the community. With the Ganapati *utsava*, populism is apparent in the 'popular' art idiom and simplicity with which the tableaux are created. Subject matter that is familiar or amenable are most effective in enlisting empathy from the observer. Choosing well-known subject matter, whether it be age-old or topical, is appreciated; and refreshing twists to familiar tales are valued even more. Populist orientations also point to aspirations to attract and form a collective consciousness amongst large sectors of the populace - an 'imagined community' instantiated by displays and festival participation enabling empathy, instruction, entertainment and even seduction. As I have outlined in Chapter Six, entertainment value and pleasure-principles are crucial to the attraction of the festival to large sectors of the population. The celebratory context of the festival, and freely available entertainment, as with *mandap* tableaux, theatre performances, film shows, and games provide an extra bonus to participate in the festivities. Rather than being seen as oppositional to each other, there is a complementarity between aspects of the socio-political, pedagogic and pleasure realms - the success of didactic messages very much hinged on the popular and pleasurable entertainment, and the credibility of

pleasure, very much justified by educational, religious and nationalist values articulate in the festival.

Rashtriya Spectacles in the Ganapati Utsava

As it has been shown in the foregoing chapters, the Ganapati *utsava* is a multi-dimensional festival with many competing dynamics, not all of which can be subsumed in one problematic on the relations between *mandap* tableaux, religion and nationalism. The account here presents prominent recurrent themes that can be discerned in *rashtriya mandap* tableaux in the Ganapati *utsava* as well as invoked in festival participants' discussions as part of an investigation into the national imaginary. Even though showing individual distinctiveness and innovations, the characteristics of *rashtriya mandap* tableaux show the process of 'limited' imaginings, where certain elements are considered sacrosanct or normalised. Tropes through which the nation is visualised and activated are premised on interrelated discourses of: (i) constructions of the nation's temporal path and characteristics in the past, present and future; (ii) representations of space, nature and territory; (iii) representations of gender; and (iv) constructions of the Other. I conclude by considering the discussion's relevance to media dissemination; and the cumulative effects of performative and collective gatherings and events.

The above themes are overlapping markers to a complex and dynamic discursive domain. Nonetheless, the outlined characteristics of *rashtriya mandap* tableaux are widespread in the contemporary Ganapati *utsava*, each of which I now elaborate. Due to the strictures of space, the analyses are necessarily brief, but nonetheless, useful for an overview of the various sites of national representations in the *utsava*, which may have parallels with other case studies. The following discussion is reflective of indigenous praxis as much as it is a commentary on relevant literature to do with pertinent themes arising.

Spectacles of the Nation's Trials and Tribulations

Standardised constructions of the past are most ostensible in *rashtriya mandap* narratives and images depicting legends of Shivaji and the lives of political campaigners such as Tilak, Savarkar, Gandhi, the Chaphekar brothers, and other regional heroes such as Babu Genu who sacrificed his life for the cause of Swadeshi, by throwing himself in front of a truck carrying foreign goods from the port in colonial Mumbai in the 1930s (illustrations 106-110, 115). In 'masala' *mandap* tableaux, as with the example of the Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag *mandap* tableau (Appendix II,

mandal number three, illustrations 69-70), particular events associated with key freedom fighters are relayed one after another in a teleological account about the nation's struggle for freedom under colonial rule. Nationalist constructions of histories and 'traditions' become cultural 'markers' if not normalised in quotidian practice. They are played out in the performative occasion of the festival, through the use of both *mandap* displays and dramas. For instance, Colonel Walter Rand's murder by the Chaphekar brothers is cited as the first political assassination in contemporary India (*Indian Express*, September 12, 1996), and as I show below, re-enacted for contemporary festivals.

Historical 'markers' play a vital part in crystallising, lending character and naturalising national identity - one that can be posited as having a long historical lineage, longer than the actual making of the democratic nation in 1947. Figures and events are reified, highlighted and made to appear as part of a linear narrative with the purpose to demonstrate the good they did for the making of the nation's history. In this process, elements of historical amnesia are also present, particularly if historical knowledge works against the glorified deeds and characteristics of the heroes, sites and icons. The Ganapati *utsava* too forms part of nationalist historiographies. Whilst this thesis refracts such views due to the contemporary articulations of historical narratives in festival praxis, I have also noted the variant and discrepant strands in the history of the festival, not all of which were outwardly for the cause of the nation in Chapter Five.

Amin comments that 'master sagas of nationalist struggles [are] built around retelling of certain well-known and memorable events' (Amin 1995: 3). As with his elaboration, festival activities and displays also contribute to the building of 'master-sagas' based on the re-telling or re-picturing of well-known and memorable events. With 'masala' *mandap* tableaux, the narratives often have a chronicle-like quality about celebratory accounts. They also tend to elaborate and place a heroic setting where the triumph of good over evil is presented, as with the undoing of colonial wrongs by moral and selfless people. Further, nationalist histories have a selective national amnesia for awkward events which serve to authenticate popular protest and campaigning from crime, as with the glorification of Colonel Walter Rand and Michael O'Dwyer's assassinations for the cause of nationalist struggle.

Tilak's life too has become appropriated by nationalist historiographies. Cashman describes the extents to which Tilak too had been idealised which reflects the views of many festival participants in contemporary Maharashtra:

'In his own time Tilak was accorded the trappings of divinity in the popular mind. He was acclaimed as the *Lokamanya*, the leader revered by the people. Uncrowned king of the freedom movement, his

deeds were likened to those of the Maratha hero Shivaji (1627-80). As a traditional king is semi-divine, it was a short step for Tilak to take on god-like qualities. His portrait was carried in the Ganapati festival along with Shivaji's, the saints of Maharashtra, and a host of gods, and his deeds were likened to the heroic struggles of the epics' (Cashman 1975: 3).

It appears, just as Tilak aimed to mobilise regional icons with the socio-political associations of Ganapati and Shivaji, so with the onslaught of time, Tilak too has become part of the heroic and legendary tales of the region. His portraits continue to rank with Ganapati and Shivaji at *mandap* tableaux to this day - religio-political icons that form a staple part of festival celebrations. Nationalist histories are peppered with the heroes of the nations, such that their role in nation-building and historicity has lent an air of divinity to the figures. Indeed, many times, national heroes of the past are considered less as politically partisan figures, but heroes for the whole nation (illustrations 111-112).

This process also pertains to the heroes of the contemporary nation, especially if their work has been recognised internationally. Such modern-day national heroes include the tennis player, Leander Paes, the singer, Lata Mangeshkar, and the cricketer, Kapil Dev. Nationalism provides a cumulative repertoire of heroes, which absorbs the works of contemporary figures with their virtues for the national good. As a result, designated heroes or heroines are venerated as role models for festival participants.

The fetishisation of icons, sites, monuments, narratives, emblems and events is a prominent and integral part of *rashtriya* artworks. The process enables a reification of cultural accretions to do with the nation, including a repertoire of personages, monuments, narratives, and emblems attuned to the nation's heritage. They constitute a repertoire of 'unique' associations and emblems of community (Smith 1981: 87; see Chapter Three). Through reproduction, repetition, and campaigning, such national attributes become immediately recognisable amongst the populace consonant with an intensity of cognitive and emotional attributes. In India, images of veneration such as the tricolour flag, and popular icons such as Shivaji and Tilak, present an inverse dynamic to the stereotyping of the Other outlined below. Instead of a means of degrading and victimising attributes of a people, fetishisation in this case, becomes a means of venerating and respecting a set of consensual objects. Indeed, significant accretions of the nation have acquired the status of sacred entities.⁷

National histories are deemed important in recalling a nation's glorious past - an 'invented golden age' which, in the case of *rashtriya* artworks, acts as a model of inspiration in contrast to perceptions of contemporary fragmentation, threats to, and crises of the nation (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). On the other hand, valuable

characteristics of the contemporary nation are also notable, as with the notion of national progress (*rashtriya pragati*) in industry, technology and education (illustrations 113-114), and those that have excelled in their work for the nation, be it in sports, music, politics and so forth. Interestingly, it is the post-independence Nehruvian view of national progress as opposed to the Gandhian view of non-capitalist ‘village industries’ which is commonly upheld (Chandra et al 1989: 525). But Nehruvian associations with notions of national progress do not tend to be articulated amongst festival participants, for the discourse is very much normalised as the ‘natural’ ideal of the nation. Indeed, in contradistinction to Chatterjee’s (1994) argument about nationalism in the time of colonialism being about the ‘inner’ world and the ‘outer’ world under the monopoly of the west, contemporary narratives of the nation represent the nation’s control of both worlds, though not necessarily as distinct spheres. Further, in the wave of contemporary economic changes in particular, technology is only deemed useful if it is affordable and to the benefits of the common man (for example, see Appendix II, *mandal* number four, illustrations 71-73). Thus, industry, technology, and education are not treated as one might find in metanarratives as to the progress of the nation, but assimilated for their considered benefits for the layman.

Visions of utopia for the nation’s future in *rashtriya mandap* narratives are considered to be only attainable if selfless work for the nation continues to be upheld. This is requisite if perceptions of chaos, emasculation, and disintegration of the nation and all of its citizens is to be avoided. In the case of the festival, visions and hopes for the nation’s future seem to be sanctified in their presentation to the divine. Ganapati’s role as the ‘remover of obstacles’ is the means by which such visions are believed to materialise by participants of the Ganapati *utsava*.

Space and Territory

Discourse of space and territory relates to the articulation and conceptions of the geography of the nation of India. The nation-state is a territorial container whose areas and boundaries are intensely politicised and protected. Perhaps in view of the ‘scars’ of Partition in eastern and western parts of the subcontinent in 1947, narratives of the borders of the nation reach almost obsessive heights. External threats by way of foreign antagonism and war, and internal threats by way of ‘terrorism’ and insurgency unsettling the nation’s character and contours are a common feature of *rashtriya mandap* tableaux narratives. They serve the purpose of constant vigilance and exorcising of such perceived threats. Cartographic representations of India are frequently encountered in *rashtriya* displays where threats to the nation’s unity and

boundaries are highlighted in pictorial ways (illustrations 51, 77, 116-119). As I further elaborate below, nationalist slogans and the invocation of Bharatamata (Mother India) in *mandap* tableaux are also common, demonstrating the contiguity of nation, map, woman and honour.

Conceptions of nature are intimately linked to discourse about landscape and territoriality, thus relevant to a discussion on nationalist sentiments. Novak considers the new significance of nature and the development of landscape painting in nineteenth century America (Novak 1992: 81). He argues:

'Each view of nature...carried with it not only an aesthetic view, but a powerful self-image, a moral and social energy that could be translated into action. Many of these projections on nature augmented the American's sense of his own unique nature, his unique opportunity, and indeed could foster a sense of destiny which, when it served to rationalise questionable acts with elevated thoughts, could have a darker side. And the apparently innocent nationalism, so mingled with moral and religious ideas, could survive into another country as an imperial iconography' (Novak 1992: 84).

However, whilst offering significant insights, landscape painting alone is not prevalent in the Ganapati *utsava*. Nonetheless, it is invoked along with other significations, such as Bharatamata, environmental concerns, and the land's fertility (see Appendix III, *mandal* number six, illustration 80). On the subject of Indian chromolithographs, Pinney considers the portrayal of landscape as 'represented through a stylised aesthetic which expresses a historical and moral topophilia' (Pinney 1992: 1). Pinney argues that the environmental terrain is rarely utilised on its own, but acts as an iconographic attribute to the main figures in chromolithographs. Portrayals of a mythic India are commonplace and carry political undertones. It is notable that *mandap* displays too demonstrate similar traits to chromolithograph representations. Representations of landscape and the territorial markers of India, or its constituent sites, act as attributes to the models in the tableaux narratives. On occasion, direct copies are made of chromolithographs for the *mandap* tableaux. Rather than operating according to an essentialist aesthetic ostensibly removed from socio-political purposes as is Novak's argument for the case of American landscape painting, ideas about nature in tableaux are intimately linked to notions about the nation's fertile land, environmental concerns, and sanctity of the country.

In addition to representations of the nation's space, public space is also colonised for *mandal* displays and the immersion procession which takes the representation of Ganapati around the city, in its course, making public social and territorial statements (see Chapter Six, illustrations 29-36, 120, 125). The festival participant travels from *mandap* to *mandap*, or *mandal* to immersion site, situating him/herself conceptually in

a religious and socio-political landscape represented by the tableaux, or in the actual act of traversing the city. Indeed, city space is a microcosm of the whole nation, which is particularly highlighted by parochial politics (see Chapter Eight). The use and articulation of space - both in the representation of space in the compositions of *mandap* tableaux, and territorial, as in the public spread of *mandaps*, and the public processions to immersion sites - are crucial to the national project in envisioning, activating and asserting territorial control and propriety.

Gendered Tropes of the Nation

Gender representations, reinforced by latter-day Hindutva, oscillate between masculinist fighters (Hansen 1996b) or images of 'sons of the soil' (*bhumiputra*) for males, and the upstanding character and honour of females as mothers, wives, and sisters (Uberoi 1990). There are of course exceptions to this generalisation, as with the idea of national heroines, or women working for the nation, but the aforementioned dichotomy was more prevalent in *mandap* narratives and designs. Ideal males are ubiquitously represented as selfless campaigners and fighters, incorporating elements of self-sacrifice in their disinterested actions, and activism in their demonstrative bravery. As Gilmore argues, masculinity can be seen to be more than just physical strength and bravery, but also incorporate an ethic:

'...a moral beauty costumed as selfless devotion to national identity. It embodies the central understanding that the man is only the sum of what he has achieved and that what he has achieved is nothing more or less than what he leaves behind' (Gilmore 1990: 144).

Propagation of an aggressive masculinity have been in counteraction to androgynous or 'effeminate' portrayals of men in India's history (Kakar and Ross 1987: 98). Whereas Nandy argues that Gandhi adopted an androgynous position to defeat polarities identified with colonial dichotomies (Nandy 1983), the Ganapati *utsava* seems to have been the site of more aggressive versions of masculinity with displays of bravery and strength. This is the model of masculinity also propagated by Hindutva (Wakankar 1995; Hansen 1996b). It is notable that there is a scarcity of politicised models of Ram in *rashtriya mandap* displays (Kapur 1993; see Chapter Five). This may in part be due to the north Indian predominance of the deity, and, in part, to do with the Shiv Sainik influence in bypassing this icon for the preference of narratives about Shivaji as an example of Maharashtrian bravery and justice.

In contemporary *mandap* displays, women are most equated with religious prototypes, particularly associations to do with Sita, as the self-sacrificing and

respectful wife to the fighter, Ram. The use of the generic category of woman as embodiments of the pure but fecund nation are widespread in *mandap* tableaux. For instance, the ideals of Hindu womanhood are implicated in the nation of Bharatamata, carrying notions of sanctity, home, cultural traditions, ritual observance and purity (Guha-Thakurta 1992: 141, illustrations 32, 116, 117, 122). They provide visual testament to Chatterjee's (1994) argument about the 'inner' realm of spirituality residing in the home and the female in nationalist struggle, and continue to be seen as the cornerstone of the nation in contemporary times. Occasionally, other variations on this theme are also apparent. Mehboob Khan's classic film, *Mother India* (1957), provides other allegorical resources, as with the heroine, Radha (Nargis), cradling a child, or pulling the plough - an iconographic representation of the female's *active* association with mother earth (illustration 121).

Woman are represented in order to initiate a discourse on local, regional and national honour. They form part of a masculine discourse rather than a feminist appreciation of women's issues - that is, representations of a more generic invocation of women as markers of honour and the nation are evidenced, rather than a specific cause for women's issues. For instance, whilst the tragedies of rapes, dowry deaths and scandals against women are noted, they are channelled into narratives about the decline and immorality symptomatic of the contemporary nation (illustrations 123-124). Discourse of women and women's issues in *mandap* tableaux is largely in reference to their relationship to men, or encapsulating the honour and integrity of the nation in their Sita or *Sati* form. Others female tropes include the *Shakti* prototype to ward off demon forces, as with fierce goddesses such as Bhavanimata, acting as the counterpart to the *Sati* prototype (Das 1980). However, *Shakti* prototypes are less prominent and widespread than *Sati* representations in *mandap* tableaux. Both principles of *Sati* and *Shakti* can be channelled into nationalist discourse - the former as emblem of its purity and honour, the latter as defender and protector of its status and borders. The trope of Bharatamata invokes both categories of associations of woman in displays (see also Chapter Five, illustrations 19, 24).

Ideas of purity, simplicity or morality are replete in *rashtriya* artworks. They are exemplified by themes of the rural idyll, folk traditions, women and the nation. These values and embodiments are held as sacred and considered repositories of innocence. Spiritual ideals invested in these sites of the nation hark back to Gandhian philosophies of a spiritual 'village' India, and contrast with the Nehruvian programme of national progress, industry and science. However, as I have argued above, it is Nehruvian ideas as to the progress of the nation, and its welfare for the people which is more prevalent in *rashtriya* tableaux. Nonetheless just as with the *Sati-Shakti* trope above, the two polarities of Gandhian spiritualism and Nehruvian industrialisation can be both

conjoined in a syncretised version of nationalism. Such cherished values become particularly virulent in reaction to a perceived threat, whether it be from westernisation, aggressive countries, or threats to national integrity from internal Others. As Datta and Sarkar argue, women become the site for desire and contestation in communalised climates:

'The Hindu feminine body not only defined Muslim desire, but it also symbolises the body of Mother India. Its sacred properties supposedly aroused in the Muslim, precisely the opposite, debased effects. For Muslims...'woman' is not the Motherland, but the field of desire. The statement seeks not only to define the Muslim gaze on womanhood but also his relationship with the country: he desires to conquer her, not worship her. Muslim lust, then, broadens out into the ambition for power and control over India herself. While the Muslims from other countries harbour geo-political designs on her, Muslims inside complement the efforts by overrunning her with horrifying fast-growing numbers' (Datta and Sarkar 1994: 89).

Due to their intricate entwining as emblems of communal boundaries, threats to the female body are perceived as threats to the community or nation and vice versa - a topic which I next discuss. It is notable that threats to Bharatamata and associations of woman, are not always dressed up in terms of the Muslim as Other in *rashtriya mandap* displays, but a number of 'anti-national' protagonists.

Perceptions of the Other

The construction of the Other against which a national identity is further crystallised are often found in *rashtriya* artworks. The terrain is a dynamic one, where different degrees of inclusiveness and exclusiveness to the nation's contours are delineated. One may find explicit vilification of Others as a threat to the nation's integrity - a term useful to connote both ideas of honour and community integration. Indeed, without a perceived Other, the nationalist project is considerably debilitated. Hansen comments:

'...the basic impulse in any ideological cause and, for that matter, cohesion of any imagined community - *in casu* the national community - is the search for fullness. This search, in turn, constitutes the community, which can only exist as long as this fullness is *not achieved*. Once the fullness is achieved - and the Other is eradicated - there can be no cause and hence no community' (Hansen 1996b: 150, his italics).

The presence or conception of the Other, whether it be British colonialism in the twentieth century or the presence of the Muslim or Pakistani 'infiltrators' in the midst

is, ironically, required if a national culture is to persist. The presence, and indeed, ‘invention’ of the Other acts as a foil with which, and against which, national identity is further crystallised. Whilst nationalist projects anxiously seek certainty in homogeneity and ‘fullness’, squaring the circle, on the other hand, also leads to the instability of the circle. Hansen’s comments provide insights into the demise of the Ganapati *utsava* as a national vehicle in the 1950s and 1960s when nationalism was seen to have reached its goal and the Other in the shape of colonialism was expelled. Nonetheless, the *other* Other in the form of the Muslim, particularly in the aftermath of the Partition and the creation of East and West Pakistan, persisted. Due to a complex of socio-political reasons, this was followed by a series of wars between India and China (1962), and India and Pakistan (1964, 1971) which enabled the promulgation of a set of enemies to further the nationalist project (see Chapter Five).

The discourse of the Other is contingent upon contemporaneous socio-political processes. For instance, in the 1990s, perceptions of Kashmir as a volatile state infiltrated by Pakistanis and separatist Muslims intent on destabilising the nation were commonplace (illustration 126). Other associations of Muslim communities have been commented on by the aggressive stance adopted by Shiv Sainiks in Chapter Eight. By directing the enemy elsewhere, internal cleavages of caste and class are to varying degrees mitigated. On the subject of the *Ramayana*, Pollock notes that the text offers two unique imaginative instruments: ‘a divine political order which can be conceptualized, narrated, and historically grounded’; and, ‘a fully demonized Other’ which ‘can be categorized, counterposed, and condemned’ (Pollock 1993: 264). These traits have been noted in my discussion on the history of festival praxis in Chapter Five. In recent years, the *Ramayana* has provided another means of using a symbolic universe to promote aggressive Hindu nationalism, which is particularly evident in the characteristic changes of the figure of Ram (Kapur 1993). As Kapur notes in her other article:

‘In the name of tradition and ancient heritage new traditions and images are being manufactured. These new traditions have transformed Ram from a tranquil, tender figure to an interventionist warrior God’ (*The Times of India*, January 10, 1991).

These masculinist images of Ram were influenced by television epics such as Ramanand Sagar’s *Ramayana* and B. R. Chopra’s *Mahabharata* (*The Times of India*, January 10, 1991). Such images and ideas fed off, and into, Hindutva politics, which sought to promote an aggressive and masculine image against perceived enemies of a nation of emaciated Hindus.

Indicative of the Janus face of nationalism, more inclusive notions of other communities are also instanced, as with the ‘secular’ presentations of Hindus, Muslims and other communities living in communal harmony by the Chandanvadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (Appendix I, *mandal* number eleven, illustration 128). Threats to the nation are less specifically ethnicised in this *mandap* display, but do however represent the presence of anti-national people in the guise of corrupt politicians and *goondas* (illustration 51). Another *rashtriya* tableau presented by the Chaitnya Mitra Mandal in Pune depicts a scene from Mani Ratnam’s film, *Bombay*, in which the main protagonist attempts to stop a Hindu and Muslim fighting in the communal riots in Mumbai, of 1993 (illustration 129). Nonetheless, this *bhai-bhai* sentiment is articulated in a hegemonic Hindu public occasion, and of limited potency in the festival, particularly as the majority of festival participants are Hindu.

As I have already noted above, in India during the turn of this century, the Other tended to oscillate between the British and the Muslim, who both came under the category of *mlecha*, or foreigner (Naik 1992: 111). On occasion, the allusions to the Other were also made through allegorical references, such as narratives about Ravana, and *rakshas*. Although such veiled narratives are not as common in contemporary festival praxis, I came across the use of models representing Ravana capturing the nation (illustration 116) and visualisations of the notion of *vighna* (obstacles) meddling with the nation (illustration 127). The *vighna* was taken by *mandal* members to refer to a number of elements including anti-national Muslims and other separatist forces, and corrupt individuals meddling with the nation’s welfare.

In communalised climates or *mandals* appropriated by communalist parties, stereotypes are the crudest form of representation of the Other. The attribution of supposed characteristics of a whole group to any of its individual members, becomes a means of pigeon-holing individuals with value judgements. In India, the Muslim has become to be stereotyped as the over-sexed, deceitful, disloyal aggressor (Chakravarty 1994: 106). Such stereotypes gain familiarity, if not acceptance, and are woven into the mainstream as the predominant image of the Other against which all other representations need contend to a greater or lesser extent. In times of national or community crisis when blame has to be apportioned in order to have at least some degree of control over social processes, or due to the uncontrollable speed of a rapidly changing society, such stereotypes are particularly virulent (see Chapter Eight).

In sum, the notion of the Other in defining the parameters of the nation need be considered in terms of two main arguments - suspicion, discrimination, or enmity with notions of the Other, as defining the nation’s contours and boundaries; and how the nation sees itself next to ‘other’ nations by the presentation of its prided activities and achievements for the ‘other’s’ consumption as I noted in Chapter Six. Nationalism is a

relational category, particularly in a time of increased global interconnections through the economy, media networks and physical travel of people and goods. It becomes a screen through which the foreign is ‘tamed’ as has happened with the economy since liberalisation programmes in the 1990s (see Chapter Seven), and if not agreeable or in its interests, posed as a threat to the nation’s livelihood, particularly pertinent to perceptions of Pakistan (Devji 1992: 1).

Envisioning and Activating the Nation

With regard to the Ganapati *utsava* as a religio-nationalist vehicle, there are a complex of relations between the performative and the mediated. *Mandap* tableaux are seen as the heightened synthesis of festive and socio-political factors - the Ganapati *murtis* being religious epicentres surrounded by sets of a religio-mythological, historical and socio-political themes - and provide the main point of artistic innovations and spectator attention during the *utsava*. This articulation is further substantiated by intense media coverage of the events through print and audio-visual technology. However the actual physical sense of participation in a family, residential, *mandal* grouping is also crucial in effecting a sense of community and belonging to a local and national tradition.

Throughout the study, I have noted the mutuality of performative and mediated sites of news, debate and imagery in the public field. Both envisioning and activation of versions of the nation have been noted as prominent aspects of the festival. The interactive nature of the performative event, contents of pamphlets, images, *mandap* tableaux, and the media can produce a cumulative effect. ‘Relays of reproducibility through technological means’ (Kapur 1993: 96-7) enable the intensification as well as standardisation of national referents and campaigns. The phenomena recalls Anderson’s argument about the pre-condition of ‘print-capitalism’ for enabling the ‘imagining’ of the nation across large sectors of the populace, as well as the standardisation and hegemony of ‘languages-of-power’ (Anderson 1983: 47). This proposition need be widened to include the dissemination of narratives through audio-visual technology for a mass audio-visual culture, including the field of cinema, audio and video tapes. One need also consider the performative occasion as a means of consolidating a sense of community, as much as enable another kind of imagining through engagements with festival praxis, beliefs and concepts.

There is a circulation and saturation of visual icons, increased by the circulation of prints, chromolithographs, paintings, posters, videos and cinema media - an ‘interocular field’ (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1992: 52), intensified in India by the

changes in the cultural economy, particularly since the 1980s, and coming to a boom with the rise of media channels and video technologies since the 1990s such that:

"The average Indian urban resident operates in a landscape of billboards, commercials and other visual and aural messages, in which "capitalist realism" (in Michael Schudson's admirable phrase) and "socialist realism" are always playing hide and seek with one another. For many Indian consumers, therefore, personal and collective sentiments, nationalism and consumerism, patriotism and love for one's family, are constantly juxtaposed in their visual and auditory environment" (Appadurai 1993: 198).

In this pool of significations, the referents themselves are arguably representations, despite their apparent 'naturalness'. As Baudrillard (1985) argues, it is signs or representations which are increasingly consumed, where social identities are constructed, and experience construed through the exchange of sign-values accepted in a spirit of spectacle. This proposition assumes that there is no originary reality, but only 'travels in hyper-reality' (Eco 1986) where everything is a copy, a text upon a text, and where what is a simulation seems more real than the real.

This description of a depthless world has been described by Lash as a 'new filmsiness of reality' (Lash 1990: 15). However, this might be so, but there are two main points to be considered here which undermine the feasibility of such propositions. Firstly, the contextualisation of various imagery can lead it to be experienced as one of intense depth and strategies, leading to other realms of experience - it is the effects that the imagery create in their usage that is of significance here, as exemplified by the use of chromolithographs in Hindu ritual strategies (Pinney 1995c, 1997). Secondly, there are some ambiguities apparent in this 'depthless world' when one considers the addition of new forms to a visual repertoire as happens with annual displays of *mandap* tableaux. While it is incontestable that referents are themselves significations, as argued for the accumulation of recurrent themes in the development of *mandap* decorations in Chapter Five, others are about the consumption of 'new' events, 'new' sites, and 'new' icons that are not already part of the pictorial realm of the *mandap* texts - that is, many *mandap* tableaux are sustained by the 'new', the topical, the horrific, the 'what really happened', and thus never free from the temporality implied by context. Nonetheless, these representations of 'new', topical events fall into a fairly standardised schema and swiftly become the repertoire of *mandap* scenarios as other *mandals* adopt the idea (see Chapters Seven and Eight). Such circulation of images allow for the dissemination of attractive images and points of resemblance as well as innovation. Effectively, with the example of the Ganapati *utsava*, an inter-ocular public field allows for innovations as well as a further standardisation of *mandap* tableaux

imagery across the region. A vivid example of this process is illustrated by the Maharashtra Ganeshotsava Sarvajanik Mandal display in Byculla of 1996 with its novel representation of Ganapati created out of the logos of political parties, including the BJP lotus, the Congress hand, the Shiv Sena's bow and arrow, the Communist Party's sickle and the Janata Dal's peasant (illustration 132). The *mandal* members' motivations for the display was to encourage political parties to work for the nation and its people, rather than fight each other. Newspaper coverage was ample, highlighting the novelty and attractiveness of the design (illustration 131). In the following year, the Bal Mitra Mandal in Pune had constructed a replica of the model based on photographs they had seen in the newspaper (illustration 133). The example highlights the complementarity of actual displays in the festival and the media to add to the repertoire of tableaux imagery.

Efforts to control and canalise media and related outputs are as pertinent to nationalist campaigns as much as is their audience reception. They form part of the hegemonic strategies devised by political parties and strategies in a bid to spread arenas of consent. *Ganeshotsava mandals*, being one of these outlets, present a terrain of variegated and contested representations, reflective of the inter-ocular field as well as feeding into other media outputs. However, due to their neighbourhood work, *mandals* have the added function of organising events and occasions at grassroots level.

In addition to newspaper coverage of significant events and sites of the festival, and organised competitions across cities, other ways the media is directly involved in the festive event is through coverage of the *visarjan* procession and Pune Festival by Doordarshan, and since 1996, In Mumbai cable coverage. The latter has arisen as a consequence of opposition to Congress' monopoly of Doordarshan. It is consonant with the VHP's offensive with electronic media to enable sympathetic coverage (*The Times of India*, 25 September, 1992). Recently, even 'tele-pujas' broadcast on In Mumbai have arisen (*Times of India*, 5 September, 1995). *Ganeshotsava mandals* vie for media attention, as it provides the potential for fame and more visitors. Media forms, such as representations of newspapers, television stations, satellites, the use of televisions, and projector screens can also form part of *mandap* displays (illustrations 134-136).

Whereas media covers the nation-space, informing and communicating its citizens, and, as Anderson argues, allowing for the nation's imagining, performative events contribute to the phenomena of a territorial and collective statement played out in the nation-space. Due to the festival's annual recurrence, and its associations with the nation's history, the festive moment becomes a period of a living out of history in the present, accentuating the consciousness of both nation and its history. The annual

repetitions of the festival tend to entrench these multiperspectival messages - a paradoxical situation where the regularity of an occasion provides an opportunity for presenting an innovative take on recurrent themes. Scenes and parades of nationalist histories are particularly notable in their enactment in the Pune *visarjan* procession. Children dressed up as national heroes, Tilak look-alikes dressed in Maharashtrian costume, girls dressed up in tricolour flags representing Bharatamata, and other national events such as the assassination of Colonel Walter Rand by the Chaphekar brothers are performed during the immersion procession (illustrations 137-140). The performative occasion activates various agendas for their educational, entertaining and political purposes.

As I have noted above with regard to representations, this is not to posit a unique and originary character to the performative event. The festival is suffused with media, as well as itself an annual re-enactment. The festival constitutes a reinvigoration of the mediated and collective devotional sentiment. Despite the entanglements of performance and media, the two are seen as distinct practices, and have variant ways with which they form part of the festive occasion. Nor as I have noted in Chapter Five, are mass-mediated images and politics a recent phenomena, but in contemporary times, has reached significant intensities.

As with the impossibility of theorising a total vision of society (Laclau 1990), so with the performative festival. Laclau notes the '*infinitude of the social*...that it is always surrounded by an "excess of meaning" which it is unable to master' (Laclau 1990: 90). This argument also holds for the performative occasion. Whilst the performative event intensifies and consolidates community participation, it also harbours an unstable and precarious element which undermines efforts at hegemonic control. Within this context, *mandap* tableaux are repositories of values to be interpreted and activated in the festive context. The nation is visualised and activated in a 'toxic' performative occasion, just as the written waits to be uttered and performed for maximum impact. Images are not reified entities to be analysed compositionally for an enquiry into their socio-political efficacy, but to be seen in a flux of socio-political activities that make them resonate with meaning for the participants - almost like an instrument waiting to be played. The tableaux represent socio-political scenarios that are likely to be received sympathetically by the Hindu populations of Maharashtrian cities, towns and even villages. During the time of the festival, *mandals* set themselves up at various public junctures, effectively swamping the whole city. Due to the heavily populated *mandal* landscape, *mandals* try to distinguish themselves with innovative displays. Cinematic parallels and consequently entertainment which is moreover free, make the *mandap* tableaux even more attractive to the majority of festival participants.

Performative aspects and collective gatherings are required for the full efficacy and intensification of nationalist imagery and narratives. Territorial emotionalism charged with nationalist agendas and issues are played out in public space. The above characteristics noted of *rashtriya mandap* tableaux translate into performative action over the festival period and region with an intensity, endowing them with further argumentative capacity. Effectively, performative occasions with national agendas can constitute a regeneration of values; revitalise cultural traditions and heritage; and entrench a collective, seemingly egalitarian, sense amongst participants. Additionally, the religious aspects of the festival enable a rite of purification and regeneration of society and nation. Community bonding is consolidated in festival activities and the felt need to maintain, sustain and regenerate community well-being. Anti-communitarian or anti-national threats, recalled in several *mandap* tableaux displays and narratives, lend a more urgent sense of community spirit to festival participants. The participative nature of artworks and festival praxis can enable a feeling of unity between people, and between people and the displays, although such processes are prone to the fracturing effects of various hegemonic articulations with regards to organisations competing to monopolise or manage festival praxis.

Throughout the thesis, I have noted the variant aspects of the performative acts in the festival, with regard to the festival as a whole, and constitutive aspects of a devotional, socio-political, artistic and entertaining aspects. These have included religious rites to 'awaken' the image of Ganapati - a worldly god believed to overcome obstacles, and in a public sphere, overcome obstacles that present themselves as enemies, threats or problems of the nation. The performative potential of socio-political agendas, which, aside from nationalistic campaigning, and since T. N. Seshan's curb on electioneering expenditure in 1994, have made the festival amenable to a variety of publicity and political stunts. Also notable is the performative potential of the construction, uses and reception of spectacles such as *mandap* tableaux in the city space, to induce awe, wonder, religious observance as well as educate (often nationalistically imbued). By enabling an empathy with the *mandap* narratives, pasts can be relived, presents can be critiqued, future utopias can be imagined for the nation, and 'enemies' can be visualised as well as condemned. This is the aspect that most corresponds with Anderson's (1983) useful but unsatisfactory notion of simultaneity to describe the process of envisioning a camaraderie with others in the 'imagined community'. The imagining in Anderson's text is focused primarily on media, whereas this study looks at the way both media and performance are entangled in the imagining of the nation. This complex of nation-imaging could be usefully referred to as a 'hetero-simultaneity'. A transformation of subjectivity as a result of the imagining of the nation have their parallels and conjunctions with the envisioning of the deity as a

god for all the nation, collective participation in a popular festival, and spectators' engagements with *mandap* 'masala' shows.

Conclusion

The above exposition highlights the way that nationalist imaginings pervade and influence participants of a festival. The visual and performative activities are embedded in a network of power-laden forces - hegemonic in their struggles for dominance, yet also part of a devotional, artistic and entertainment field. This is not to say that these areas are separable or do not partake of ideological formations themselves: part of the success of the festival lies in the collusion of various elements, yet amoeboid enough for one aspect to be accentuated whilst others lie low. As I have argued throughout the thesis, the performative milieux does not lend itself to a straightforward correspondence of intention, form or reception of constituent activities and artworks. It is precisely because of these pervasive and complicated flux of relationships, that the performative milieux is particularly potent for a multi-accented agenda, as is indeed the case for the propagation of cultural nationalism.

The nation-space, as indeed the festival, is a discursive arena of devotional, entertaining, political facets, upon and with which the articulations of hegemonising strategies, particularly with regard to competitions, parties, Hindutva ideologies and nationalist agendas take effect. Chapters Three and Four considered hegemonic strategies and effects, and the performative and mediated sites of nationalist hegemonies. Chapter Five considered the public festival's role in historical political agitation, and the development of the particular character of festival artworks over the years. Chapter Six considered the discursive conception of nationalism as it pervades the festival, and how it is meshed with devotional and entertaining features. Chapter Seven considered the means by which business-sponsored media competitions exert hegemony by regulating as well as contributing to the phenomena of creativity of nationalist themes. Chapter Eight considered variant strands of hegemonic strategies, and related versioning of the nation. Chapter Nine considered the 'languages-of-power' (Anderson 1983: 47) as it relates to the visual iconography pertaining to standardised displays of nationalism in the festival. It might be recalled that the Ganapati *utsava* is but one, albeit major, public performative event in a calendar of other events. By concentrating on one of the events, it is possible to outline dynamics in detail which could be pursued for other events in the cities, but this is outside of the scope of my study. In addition, in focusing on the relations between artworks, festival praxis and nationalism, I am conscious of the fact that my study concentrates on a Hindu public event in the communalised climate of contemporary India. It is

necessarily oriented towards a discussion of the majority view of nationalism. This is a feature which has characterised much of the literature on Indian nationalism as well. A further study would be to enquire into the diverse constituencies of the contemporary Indian city including minority communities, and their notions, envisioning and activation of narratives to do with the nation.

¹Murtis are made by professional *murtikars* whom I have written about in interim reports. However, limitations of space do not allow for its reproduction in this thesis.

²This schema bears parallels with Sarkar's (1994) study of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyaya's (1838-1894) song, *Vande Mataram* (*Salutation to the Mother*). Sarkar notes distinct images of the mother(-land) from, first, the nurturing mother of the past; second, the dispossessed mother of the present; and, third, the triumphant mother of the future. However, whereas the ideas are commonly encountered in *rashtriya mandap* narratives, they need not demonstrate the same sequential schema. See Appendix I, *mandal* number eleven, Appendix II, *mandal* number three and five, and Appendix III, *mandal* number six for examples of *rashtriya mandap* narratives.

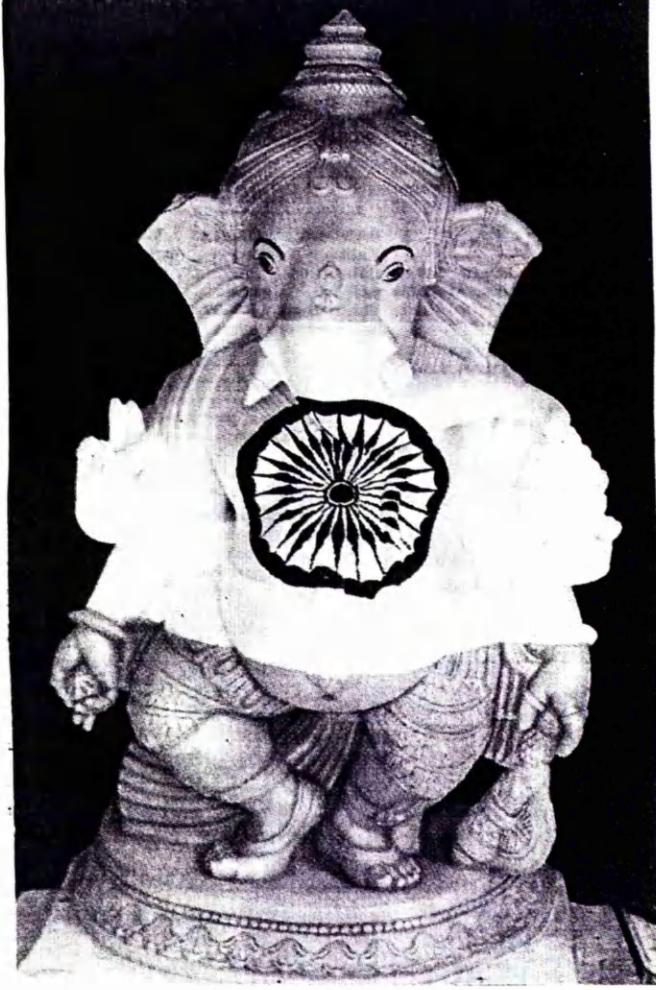
³Nehru stressed science as the new national religion and large-scale industries as temples of modern India (Pandey 1994a: 50-1). Such views can be counterbalanced with Gandhian views of the spiritual essence and village industries or rural idyll of India, which are also displayed in some *mandap* tableaux. However, to note the associations of varieties of nationalism is not to assume that they are necessarily in the minds of festival participants, for much of their arguments have been normalised as part of the nation's vocabulary. I shall return to this subject below.

⁴This is actually, a re-enactment for as I have accounted in Chapter Six, Ganapati was welcomed to earth in the rite of *pranpratishta* on the first day of the festival.

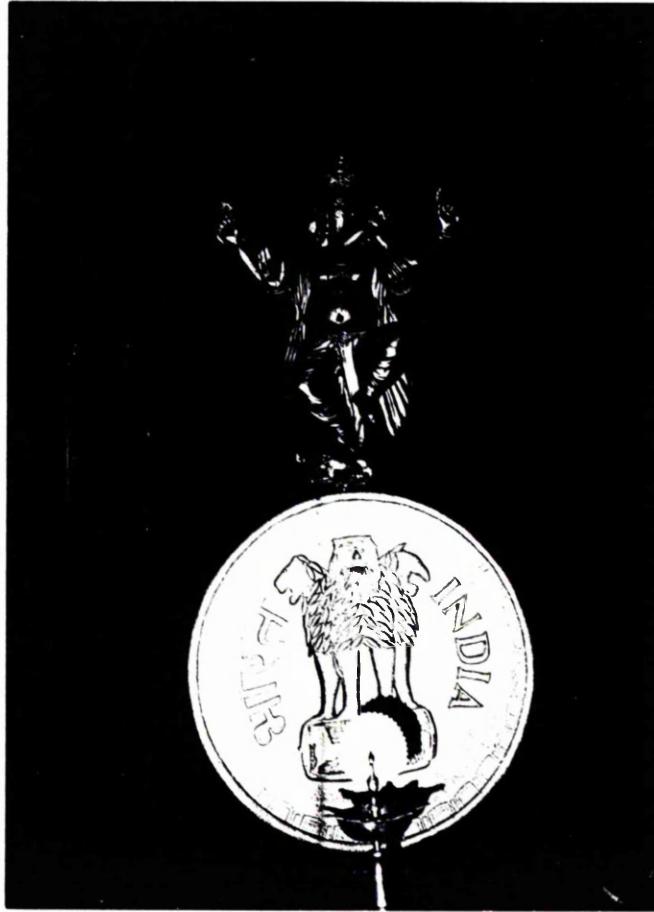
⁵For example, see Appendix II, *mandal* number four, and Appendix III, *mandal* number six.

⁶For instance, parallels are notable in Hollywood feature movies with their component parts of family values, supersonic travels and adventures, cute extraterrestrial creatures, invasions of not-so-cute extraterrestrials, heroes who save the country, if not world, from tyrant threats and so forth. The main difference with these and the Ganapati *mandap* tableaux lies in less sophistication of technology, and dedication to a religious as well as nationalist cause prevalent in the festival. Influences from Hollywood movies as with Steven Spielberg's film *Jurassic Park* are notable in tableaux with dinosaurs since 1994.

⁷In India, it is constitutionally unsound and illegal to desecrate the prime symbol of the nation, the flag. National heritage sites and the national bird of the peacock, are also included in this category, as is blasphemy against any of the nation's established heroes.



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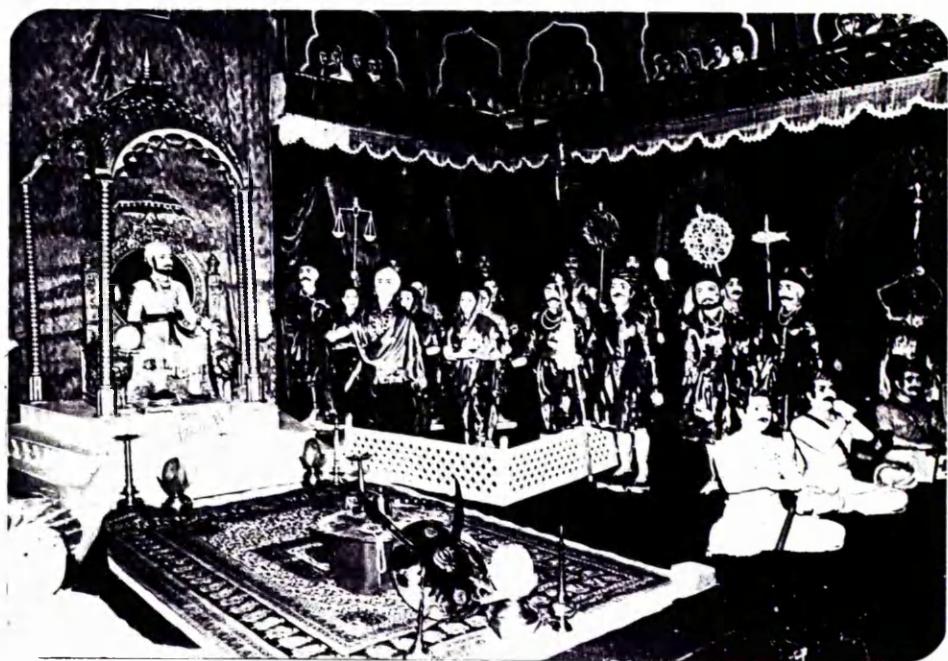


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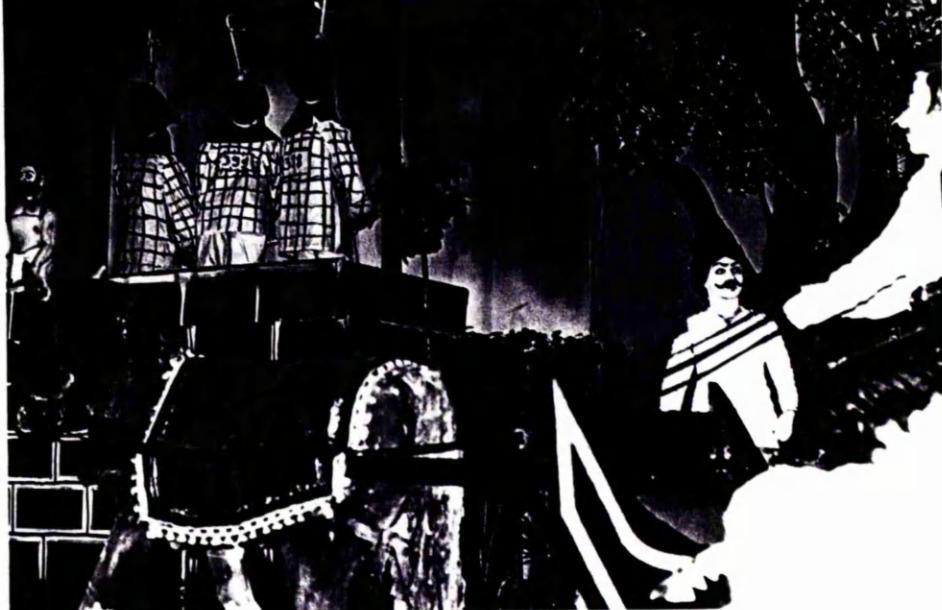


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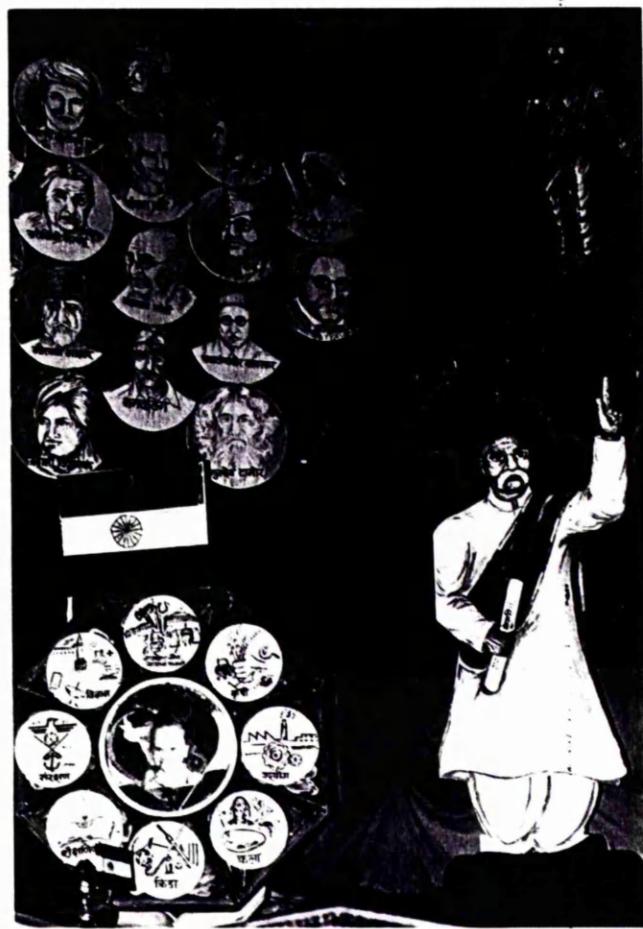
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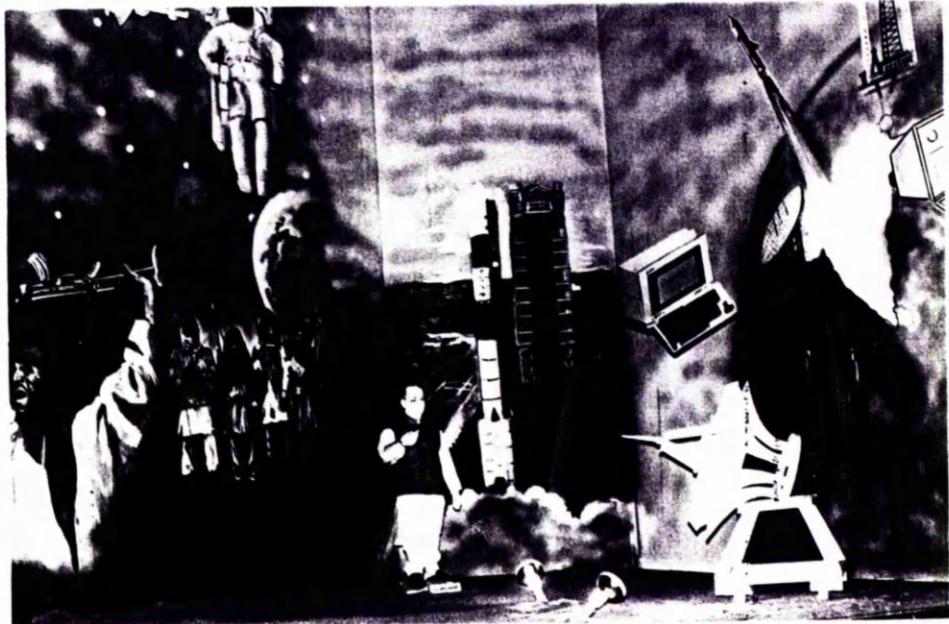


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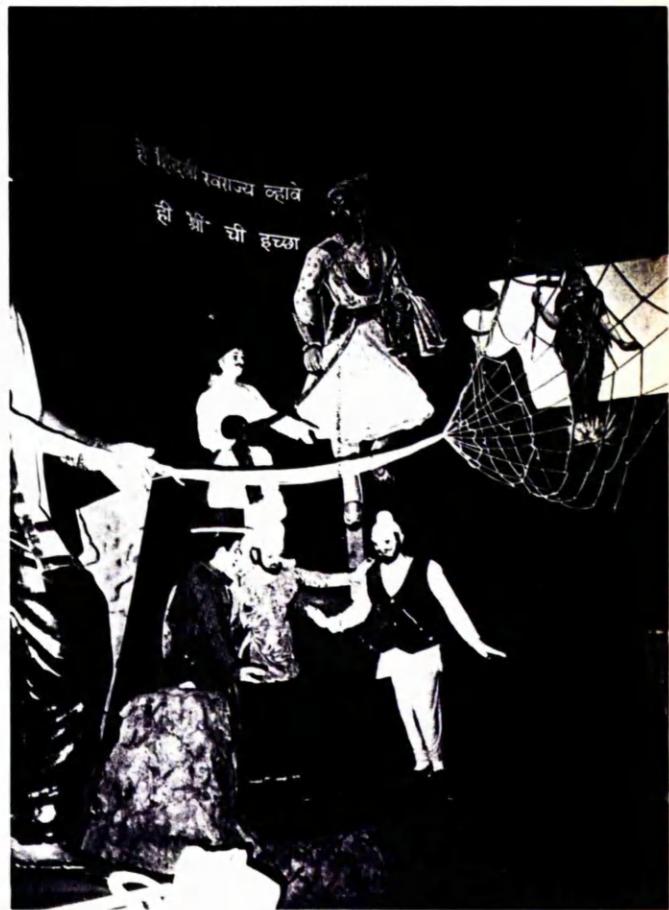
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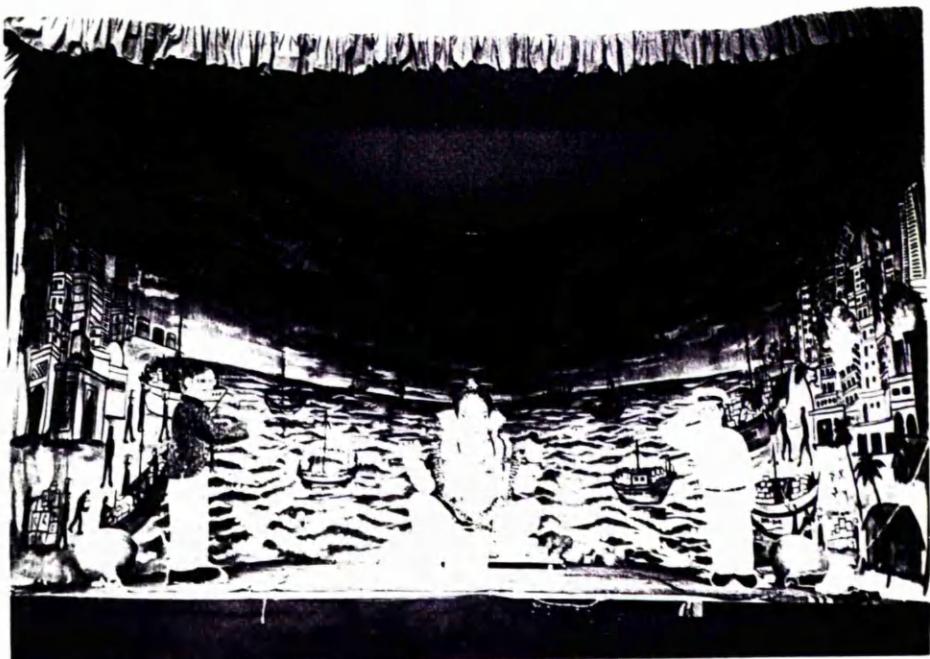
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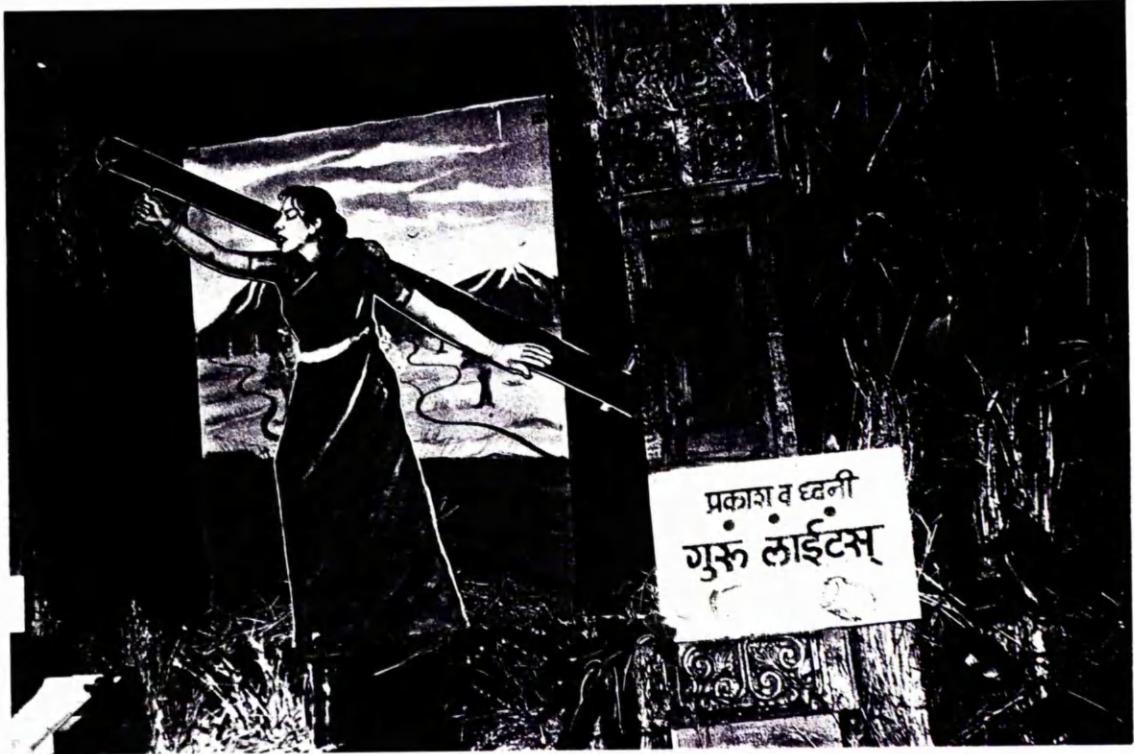


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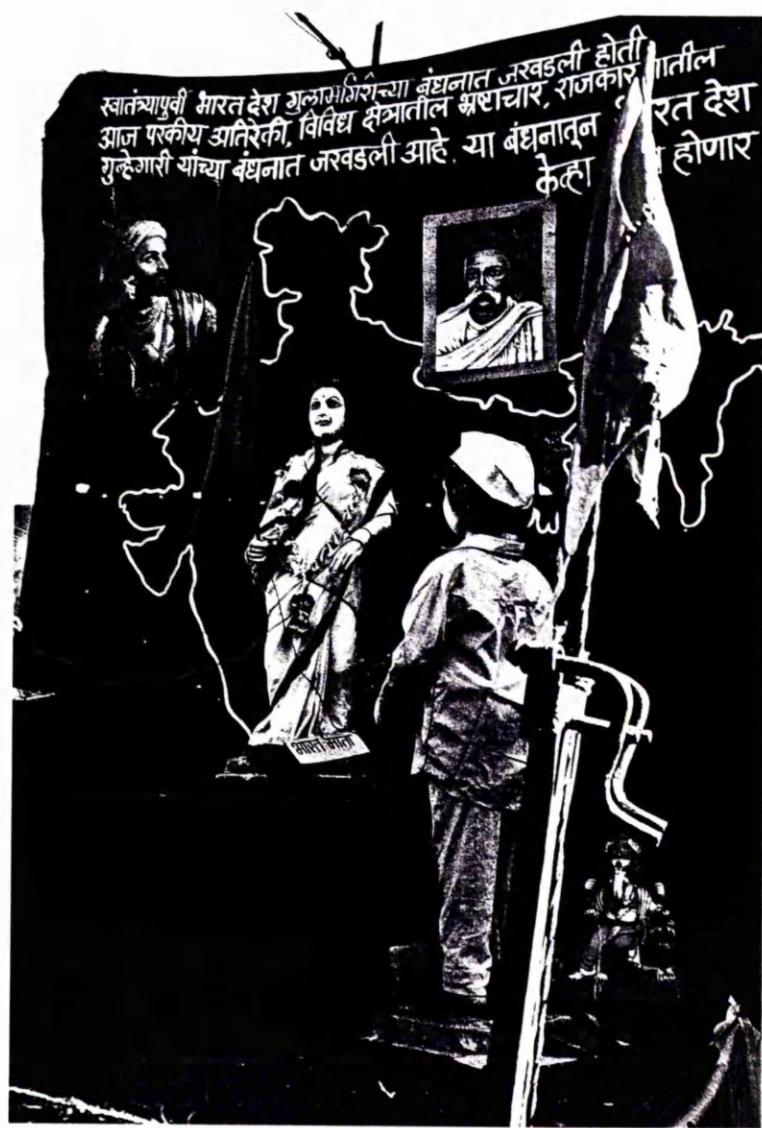


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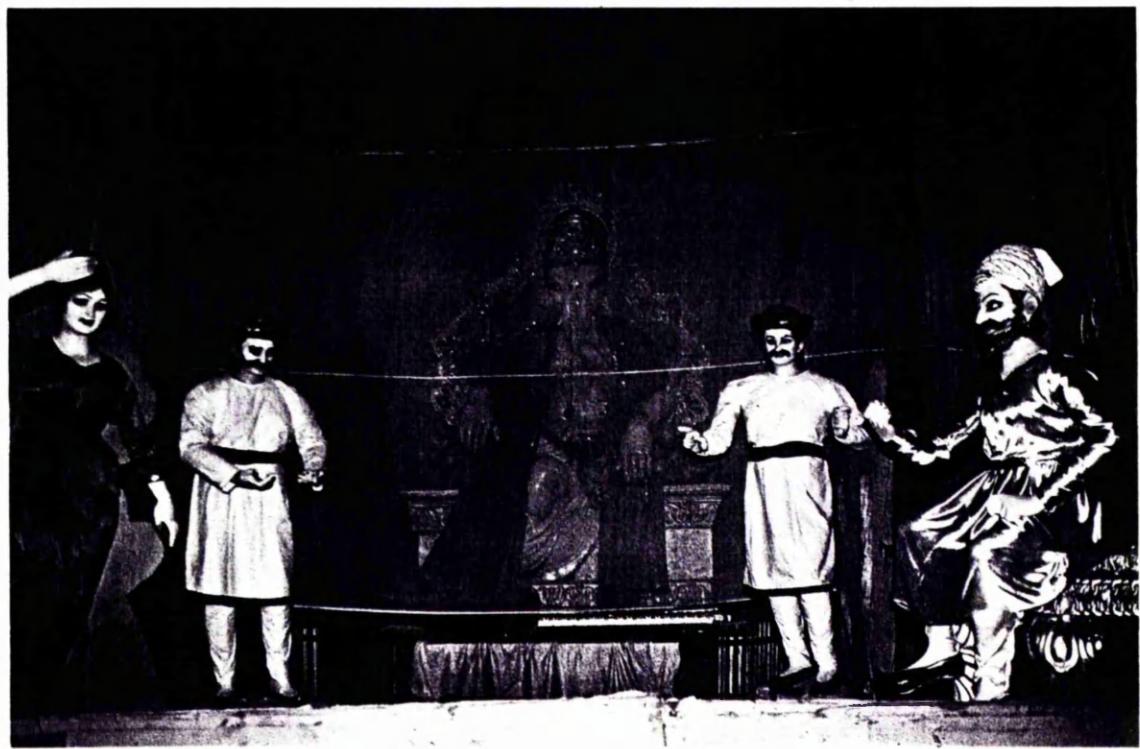




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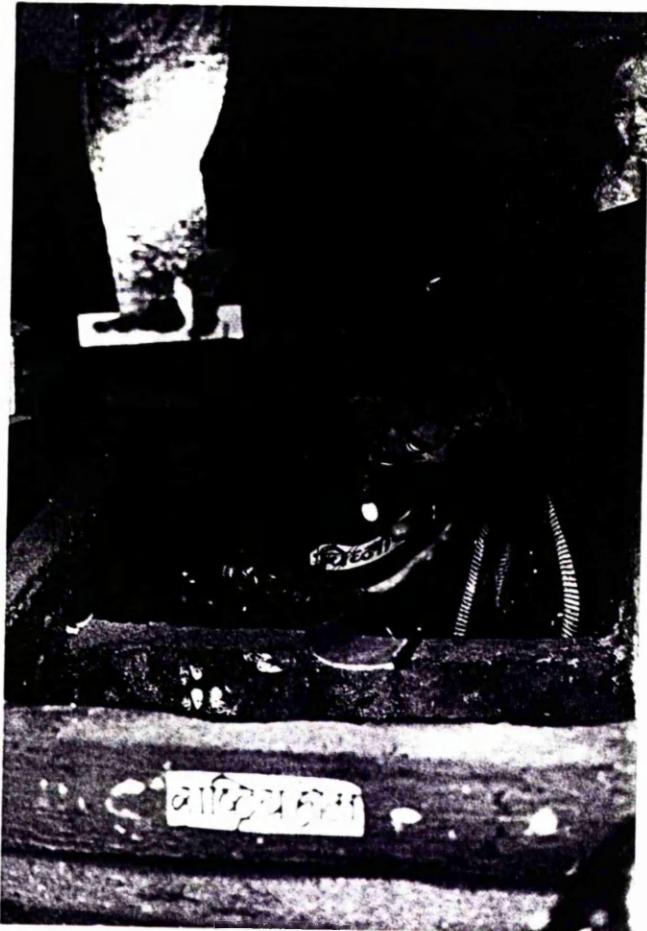


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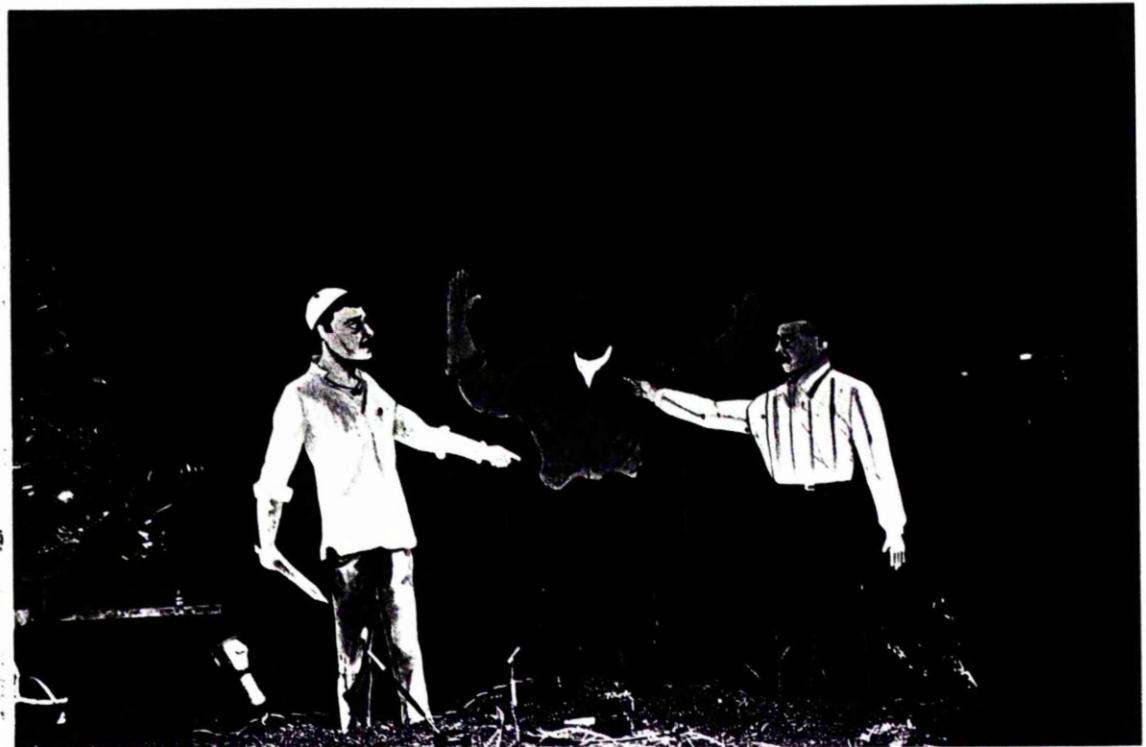
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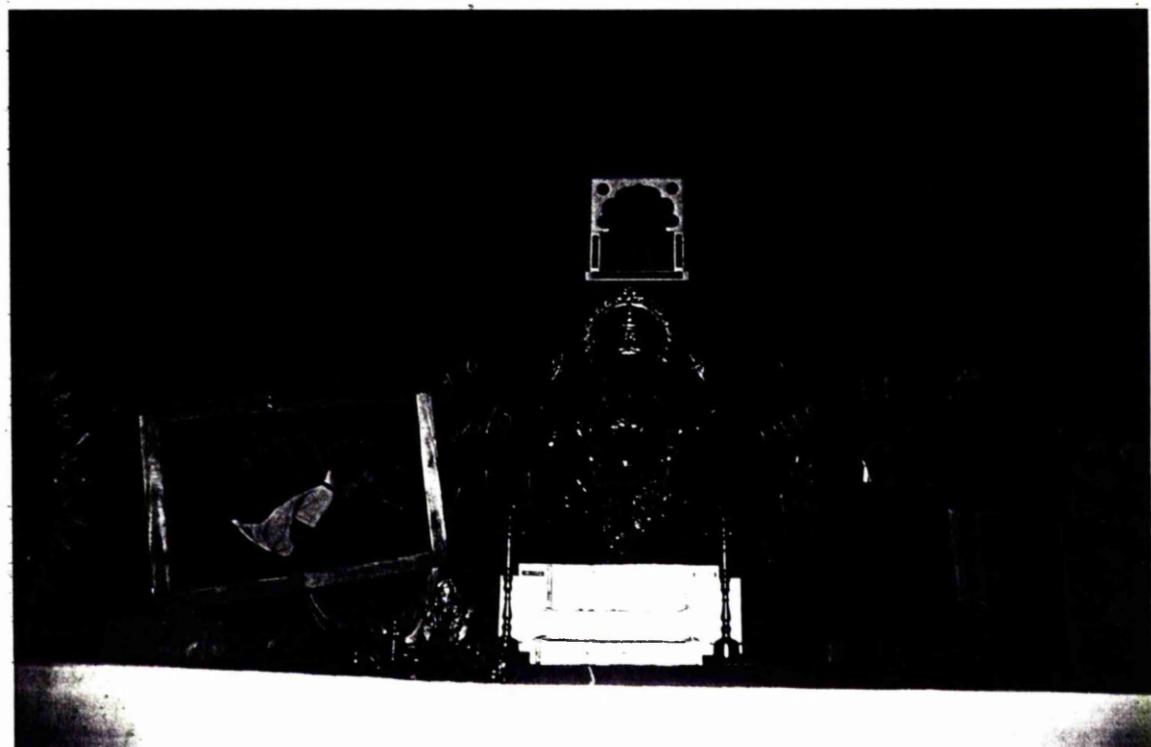
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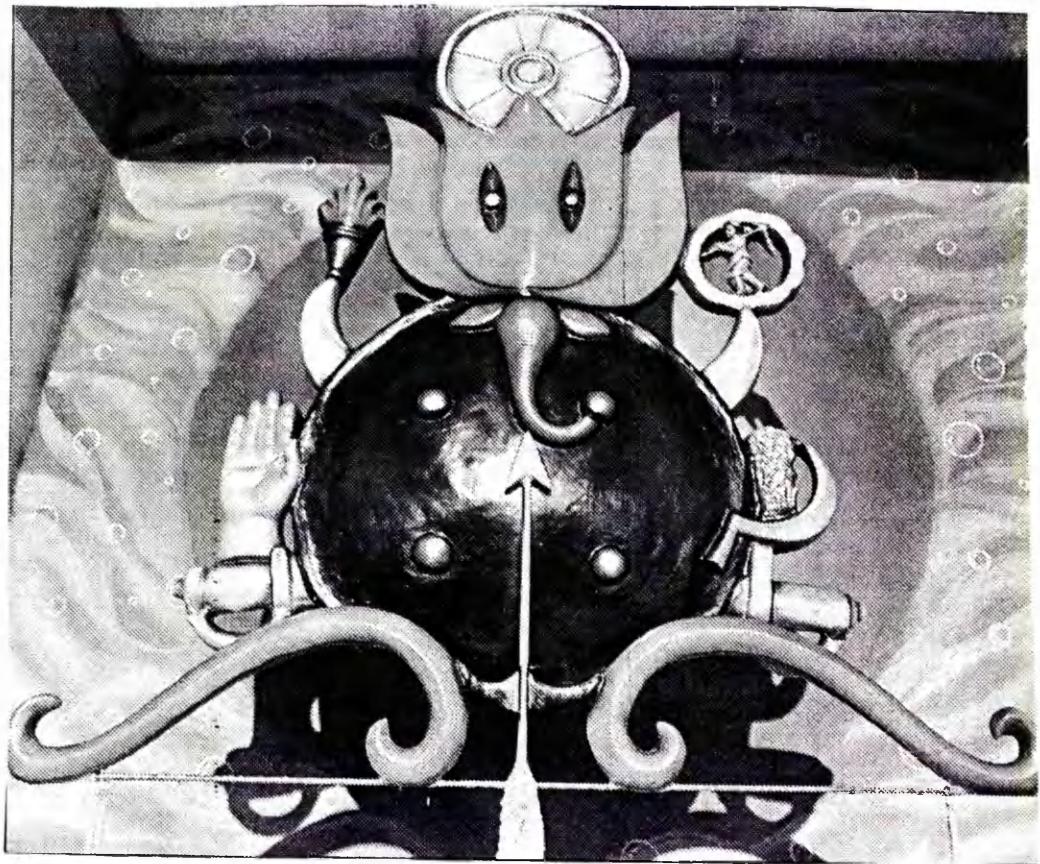


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मृतिकार
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कल्पक. शोभित गण.

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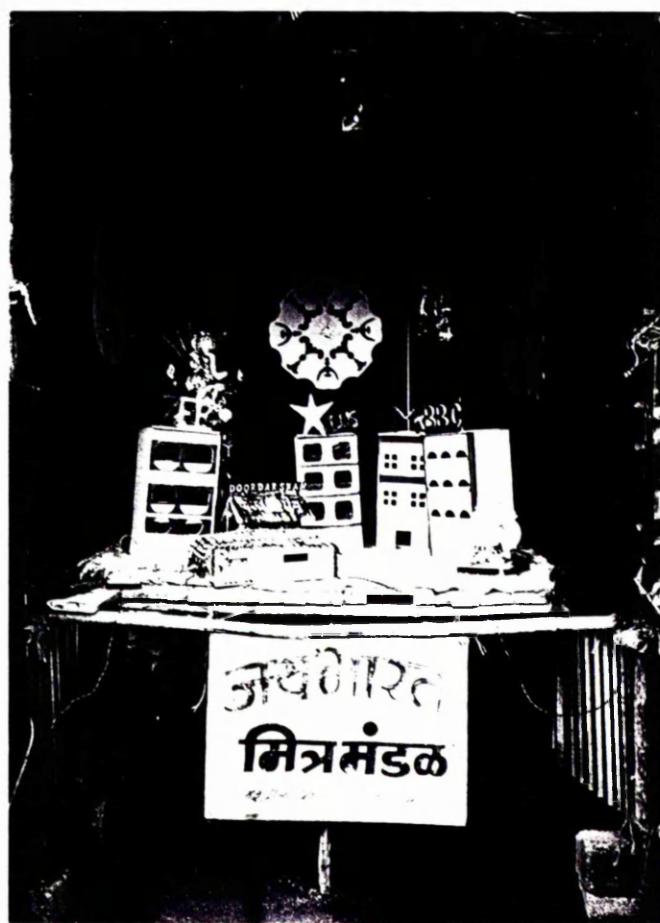
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सारंगलीपुर नालीम-राष्ट्रीय मास्ती मंदिर १९९६ दगडशेठ डलवाह प्रथा पारितोषिक

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Appendix I

The First Round of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* Competition

Over the last couple of years, there has been a steady rise in competition entrants. In Mumbai, the number of *mandal* entrants range from around three to four hundred. All of them have got to have charity status. Each *mandal* participant must fill in application forms with the details of the tableau theme, and the names of the *mandal* president, *murtikar*, and art director. These forms are sent to *Loksatta* before the festival starts. The *mandals* are checked for bona fide charity status before they are allocated a number and a section number according to their area. They are also told the day of the judges' visit.

There are four large competition divisions of Mumbai:

(i) Greater Mumbai (Victoria Terminus to Thane) which unlike the other three areas has two rounds in the competition; (ii) Mira Road - Virar; (iii) Dombivli - Kalyan; and (iv) New Mumbai. These four areas are again divided into eight zones: Zone A-H. Zone A is divided into three areas, namely Girgaum, Victoria terminus and Byculla. Zone B is split into two areas and Zone C into three areas. A total of eighty four prizes are designated for the four main areas. In 1996, there were a total of ninety four selected judges, sixty eight of which were in the first round of the competition.

Prizes were set for Best *Mandal* for First, Second, Third and four consolation prizes. Due to 1996 being the tenth year of the competition, cash prizes were double the sums of previous year - Rs 51,001, Rs 21,001, Rs 11,001 and Rs 2,501. Certificates and trophies accompanied the cash. There was also a Special Prize for National Unity and Social Awareness for *mandals* of Rs 2,501. Best *Murtikar* was split into First prize of Rs 2,501 and Second prize of Rs 1,551. Best Art Director was split into First prize of Rs 2,501 and Second prize of Rs 1,551. These four sets of Best *Mandal*, *Murtikar*, Art Director and Special prizes were set for the Greater Mumbai area and another set for the Mira Road-Virar, Dombivli-Kalyan and New Mumbai-Panvel areas collectively.

Below, I list and describe the notable points raised by judges when visiting each *mandal* and seeing their *mandap* tableaux. For those *mandals* which provided *smaranika* (*mandal* souvenirs), I also list the date of their establishment. The team of judges I accompanied in 1996 consisted of a J. J. School of Art Professor of Art, a sculptor and an advertising designer, who were former students of the school. We were allocated twenty four *mandals* in the area from Colaba to Mumbai Central in southern Mumbai concentrating on neighbouring areas of Chandanvadi, Girgaum, Khetvadi and Lamington Road. The task of visiting all the *mandals* was spread over two consecutive nights. As judging started on the second day of the festival, some of the *mandaps* had not been fully constructed - a situation that the judges were able to compensate for in their evaluations. As *mandal* entrants tended to have similar social welfare projects, questions were addressed with regards to anything outstanding or unique with *mandal* activities or displays. Much attention was paid to the display of the *murti*, the tableau design, and the courtesy of *mandal* members. At the end of each summary, I note whether the *mandal* in question succeeded in reaching the Second Round on the basis of the total of marks attributed by judges. These sums were calculated by *Loksatta* journalists the day after the First Round was over.

First Night

1. Bandari Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1960, illustration 40)

Theme: Bhavya Mahal (Grand Palace)

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: Narayan Jase

A large seated bronze-painted *murti* was placed on a pedestal in a palace interior, sculpted out of white thermocol and decorations. The perceptive judges appreciated the work for certain artistic features such as the Nagari style beams and brackets (a north Indian style of temple architecture). But the judges were left unsatisfied as there was no substantial content to the decorations. It was not considered to be the 'latest' - that is, going by the precedents set by *mandal* decorations of former years, there were no points of innovations in the *mandal* decorations. For these reasons, most evaluations came down to a bland 'ordinary' on the judges' sheets.

Vijay Khatu's *murti* was commended by all the judges. The *murti* demonstrated a graceful and elegant disposition. It had an interesting pose with one leg on the ground, and one leg on the top of the seat. The deity's trunk almost seemed to slide down the front of the face. The sculptor was respected for his modelling details and the look of *shanti* that he managed to achieve on the deity's face ('facing'). Despite the fact that it was his mentor, Dinaneth Veling, who had made the moulds which he works with, Khatu is the undisputed leader of *murtikars* in Mumbai. As well as operating the largest sculpting studio in Mumbai, he has also won many prizes to date. This *murti* cost Rs 11,000, and the total costs of decoration came to Rs 18,0000 - a reasonable sum for the size of the residential and business colony.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

2. Bal Gopal Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1978, illustration 41)

Theme: Kaliyamardan

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: *mandal* members

The theme was considered as 'traditional' (*paramparika*). The narrative referred to the story of Kaliya, the king of serpents. Kaliya lived in the River Yamuna, and was terrorising the neighbourhood. One day, Krishna went to bathe in the river and was nearly strangled by the serpent. Krishna put his foot on the monster's head and started dancing on it. Kaliya had to beg for mercy and was exiled. A large four-armed Ganapati was displayed about to leap on to the head of a five-headed serpent with a man's face holding out a sabre. The Ganapati *murti* was poised to hit out at the demon, one of his hands holding on to Kaliya's tail which wove its way around the concrete pool in the *mandap* tableau. The structure was about thirty foot high, and the judges intrigued by how the tail could hold up the heavy sculpture of the Ganapati deity - it was done with a series of steel and iron rods placed within the forms. The presentation of the god and serpent-king was displayed in an interesting fashion, as 'if it was flying'.

Whilst impressed by the grand display, the judges felt that the theme was not taken far enough. There was no intentionality expressed about the choice of the theme by the *mandal* members, as was gauged when judges' questions as to why chose the

theme were not answered to their satisfaction. Therefore the judges thought the work conceptually incomplete. 'Perhaps it could have been adapted to be about the killing of one of India's enemies,' suggested one judge. A lack of interpretation and intentionality by the *mandal* members about the chosen subject was considered as the shortfall in this case. Consequently, the display of the story of Kaliya and Krishna was not substantively different from any other depiction on the theme.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

3. Balgopal Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1972, illustration 42)

Theme: *Ajanta-Ellora caves*

Murtikar: Surve Bandu

Art Director: Dinesh Shinde

This *mandal* was celebrating its twenty fifth year; thus a boost of activities with *mandal* members was notable that year. The decorations were also elaborate - a covered walkway led into a corridor which was covered with papier mache friezes of the kind one finds in the Ajanta and Ellora caves. This opened into a cave formation with a Shiv *linga* set in an artificial pool. On one side of the pool was a bridge that led into the sanctum sanctorum where a large standing brown Ganapati against a grey tablet was placed. The *murti* had two arms, and considered as quite exceptional compared to the prevalence of four-armed *murtis*.

The *mandal* members, many of them male youths, seemed almost aggressive in their eagerness to impress the judges, as the judges later surmised. Some of the members even bemoaned the fact that they did not win the competition last year. Despite the disapproval of such attitudes, the judges admired the papier mache sculptures for their skill and dexterity.

The members had made an effort to relate the historical and religious monuments to contemporary Indian life, by discussing tourism. The *mandal* members explained that the tourist industry is an 'indirect export' which helps India, therefore it is good for national welfare. This held the judges' interests, one of whom, however, later felt it was too contrived and pitched so as to win a competition rather than created from genuine sentiment for the religious occasion. However, this was based on judges' instincts rather than substantial evidence, and was therefore not dwelled upon.

The elaborate decorations had been constructed within a budget of Rs 30,000, including Rs 10,000 for the *murti*. The judges thought the *murti* unusual for its colour and pose - almost flat as if it was a frieze. It complemented the surroundings. The design for the *murti* was taken from a newspaper cutting and given to the *murtikar* who made it. One judge commented on the monotone quality of the set in its shades of brown, and did not approve of the flattish quality of the *murti*, and its lack of 'expression', by which was meant that the god's religious qualities were not successfully expressed by the *murti*.

Most of the material used for the *mandap* decorations was second-hand, and many of the *mandal* members helped out voluntarily in the construction which minimised labour charges. Good community team-ship was demonstrated in the construction of the *pandal*. However, the walk-through experience of the *mandap* was not seen as properly thought-out as the theme was too 'scattered'!

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

4. Surya Mahal Mitra Mandal (established 1966, illustration 43)

Theme: Parnakuti (a scene from the Ramayana about Ram and Lakshman).

Murtikar: Hemant Phatarpekar

Art Director: Santosh Marathe

A large brown glittered Ganapati was shown in a jungle setting. The deity sat, holding a peacock feather as a pen, and wrote on a tablet. Around it were painted and sculpted images of trees, huts and a well. The visitor was surrounded by the fenced-in scene where live animals such as chickens and goats were allowed to roam. There was even a real monkey chained to one of the tree branches.

The *mandap* tableau was surprising especially the monkey on the tree, but the judges in the end considered it as too gimmicky. 'What purpose did it serve?' was the main question posed. One of the judges, to the *mandals* credit, noted the background of the *mandap* painted with green foliage, which merged well with the three-dimensional branches of the trees.

The theme of the display was considered interesting, but factually incorrect. For whereas Ganapati wrote the *Mahabharata*, he did not write this scene out of the epic, *Ramayana*, which seemed to be the message of the tableau. Therefore the display was considered as misleading. Further, the exterior of the *pandal* had a scenario of a Ganapati placed in a structure with a woman and a *murti* of Krishna pulling it along. It did not have any obvious relation to the presentation inside, and thus, further detracted from any merits the *mandap* display was held to have.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

5. Akhil Mugbhatt Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1932, illustration 44)

Theme: Bharatiya Sanskriti (Indian Culture)

Murtikar: Madhukar Mistri

Art Director: *mandal* members

Placed at the end of an alley way, busts of Shivaji and Tilak along with large orange flags greeted the visitor. Inside the *pandal* was a large sitting Ganapati in the tantric form with a representation of a snake as a sacred thread (*janave*) around its stomach. The *murti* dominated the scene and there was little else of substance to the tableau, except for a display table of trophies and busts of Tilak and Shivaji, as appears in many other *pandals*.

The *murti* was appreciated for its interesting *pauranic* form, showing debts to the *Puranas*. Yet the *murti* also demonstrated some slight adaptations as a testament to the innovations of the *murtikar*. The *murti* was made out of clay (*matti*) which was unique for such a large *murti* for they are generally made out of plaster of Paris for its light weight and ease of convenience. It intrigued the judges, who due to their specialist interest in art, asked about its method of manufacture. Clay was considered as the more 'traditional' material for the *murti* as well as being good for the environment in that it did not pollute the sea with toxins. Even though credited for the splendid *murti*, this *mandal* did not fare well overall due primarily to the lack of other substantial features in the *mandap* tableau.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

6. Balmohan Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1947, illustrations 45-46)

Theme: Shivaji Rajyabhisheka (The Coronation of Shivaji)

Murtikar: Madhukar Mistri

Art Director: *mandal* members

The tableau showed a presentation of the coronation of Shivaji. The paintings on the back walls and the automatons were copied from popular posters of the court scene with dignitaries from all round the world. A narrator at the side of the platform recited the details of the story of Shivaji's coronation. By using a series of hidden rails, a model of Shivaji went to sit on the throne to the viewers' far right of the four foot high stage. Another model dressed in the form of one of his ministers came up with a satin cushion on which was placed Shivaji's crown. Yet another minister picked up the crown with his arms being raised so as it could hook on to the small nails on the side of the crown. He then advanced towards Shivaji, and gently placed the crown on the head of Shivaji, who then got up and moved to the centre of the stage.

A small two foot figure of Ganapati in regal attire was shown dancing on a snake in the Indian numerals, fifty, as 1996 was the *mandal*'s fiftieth anniversary year. The *murti* was placed to one side of the scene, and not that prominent - a feature that the judges noted to the *mandal*'s discredit. Further, even though praised for its graceful pose and original stand, the *murti*'s style and pose did not complement the coronation scene for it was considered too 'light' and jovial for the historical scene presented. As one judge later commented, 'Just as you wouldn't wear a shirt that doesn't go with a particular pair of trousers, you need to think about how the model of Ganapati suits the surroundings. For instance, an Icelandic scene looks best if the Ganapati is in similar colours.'

The judges felt that there was a genuine religious sentiment amongst the *mandal* members. The whole community was involved in the creation of the scene. As the narrative was not provided on audio-tape, school children from the vicinity took turns in being the narrator. The movements of the models were all hand-operated by men underneath the stage, operating a series of pulleys. There was an earnest effort made by all to make the scene work. Nonetheless, the crown did occasionally fall from the hands of the minister, and even when placed on Shivaji's head. This was amusing for the judges, but embarrassing and even appalling for the *mandal* members who, after a failed effort at placing the crown on the head, implored the judges to stay for another performance.

The *mandal* caught the judges' attention for being the first 'moving' scene (*calacitra*) being made in Mumbai.¹ Photographs of former scenes created in the 1960s and 1970s were pasted on the wall for the perusal of visitors.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

7. Khetvadi 8th Lane Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 47)

Theme: *Puratana Vastu* (Traditional Things)

Murtikar: Gajanan Tondalkar

Art Director: *mandal* members

A tall orange Ganapati standing on a large grey chest, the total structure approximately twenty five foot high, dominated the tableau. Gajanan Tondalkar is renowned for his tall Ganapatis, having acquired fame for a *mandal* in Lalbaug where he makes '*Lalbaug ka raja*' ('the king of Lalbaug'). One of the judges commented on the proportion of the *murti* not being right - the 'facing' (by which was meant the human features of the elephant-god) was too small next to the body, although the pieces individually were modelled very well. This *murti* was little different from

Tondalkar's standard models, and the surrounding decorations were of little significance. As one judge quipped, 'Nothing special, just a tall Ganapati.'

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

8. Khetvadi 11th Lane Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 48)

Theme: Sindhurasanaca Vadu (The Slaying of Sindhurasana')

Murtikar: Ana Tolvadkar

Art Director: mandal members

On approaching the *mandal* at the end of a wide pathway, Hindi film music was heard. This was switched off when the *mandal* members saw that the judges were approaching. It was quite evident that the *mandal* members knew that the judges would not approve of the music, and this was in fact the case.

The tableau was constructed as if it was the inside of a cave, and a grey *murti* was placed at the centre with one foot placed on the demon, Sindhurasana. Neither the scene or the *mandal* left a favourable impression with the judges. The area behind the *murti* was just covered with black waterproof lining. One judge jokingly commented that forms for such *mandals* are very easy to fill in: 'All that's needed is to fill in the name - nothing else is required.' Evidently the *mandals* did not fulfil the criteria of the competition. One judge remarked that some *mandals* still did not understand that they needed a theme, not just a beautiful or grand *murti*.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

9. Khetvadi 2nd and 3rd Lane Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 49)

Theme: Mahal (Palace)

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: mandal members

The *mandap* was in the process of being constructed out of white thermocol to make a palace interior. Members were diligently painting signs and constructing the palace walls. The *murti*, already installed, was a typical Khatu model sitting resplendently on a large mouse (*mushaka*, Ganapati's vehicle). The representation was of a *paramparika* (traditional) *murti*. Around the *murti* was an archway with the profiles of his consorts, Riddhi and Siddhi.

The *murti* was adored for its colouring. Its silver body showed a slight touch of pink, and its eight arms held out gold attributes with a gold *mugut* on the top of the head. There was a 'grace' about the sculpture achieved through skilful modelling which was rated highly. The judges, prepared to overlook the fact that the tableau was not complete, but still felt unsatisfied with the 'incomplete' concept of the piece. One judge commented that representations of palace tableaux do not say anything in particular. Answers as to why the *mandal* entered the competition left the judges unsatisfied.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

10. Khetvadi 5th Lane Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 50)

Theme: none specified

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: mandal members

The highlight of the tableau was the 35,000 twenty five paise coins used to cover the sitting *murti*. Newspaper coverage was pasted outside the *pandal*. One member stood outside waxing lyrical about what the visitors were to see. Then the devotees were allowed in. The *murti* was considered spectacular and innovative by the judges, but perhaps a little gimmicky in view of the fuss made by *mandal* members to draw public attention.

The decorations were in the process of being put up, with hardboard cut-outs of Mahatma Gandhi, Tilak and Shivaji. The judges could guess that the scene was going to be something about India's national heroes, a theme which crops up time and time again. The cut-outs were seen to be rashly made, and the surroundings of the *murti* were considered bland.

Judges talked amongst themselves about the possibilities of setting the coin-covered *murti* in an appropriate scene, such as one about India's money scandals involving the likes of Sukhram (very topical at the time), Harshad Mehta, even the former Prime Ministers, Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. This would have demonstrated an interesting complementarity between the coin style of the *murti* and the topic of the tableau.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

Second night:

11. Chandanvadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustrations 51, 128)

Theme: Bharata Rashtriya Ekatmata (India's National Unity)

Murtikar: Ravi Madhuskar

Art Director: Tulsidas Sadar and Vithal Bhairau

This was the first *mandap* tableau which the team of judges had seen that used audiotaped sound and narration in the First Round of that year. The tableau was made up of wall sketches of Lal Qila and the Gateway of India. Inserted into the wall was a veiled opening behind which a three-headed Ganapati *murti* was installed. On the stage to the viewer's left were hard-board cut-outs of young boys in their customary dress labelled as Hindu, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Kashmiri and Bengali. In the middle of the stage was a representation of the map of India with tearful eyes, held upright on a hand with emblems of India's different religions represented on each of the fingers. This was surrounded by a vignette of four men tugging at a rope tied to the map. The taped narration went as follows:

Song: 'For the sake of freedom, we could have our heads chopped off, but we won't bow in front of the oppressor.'

A golden festival will be celebrated on the golden year of independence. Today's generation have forgotten the great patriots who gave up their lives to make this country independent. They have forgotten the person who said, 'Freedom is my birthright!' We celebrate their birth and death anniversaries as a rule, but we have turned our backs on the principles they upheld.

Now consider this a little. [A standing map of India is lit, chained by ropes which are being pulled by four figures.] These are people who had the right to freedom from birth. Now they're pulling the country apart by terrorising it. It is like the times of the Mahabharata and Ramayana when the gods were fighting for the samudhra manthana. They were trying to cross the sea and taste the 'amrita'. At that moment, the mountain collapsed and they found fourteen gems. Similarly, these over-smart people are tearing the boundaries of India apart and terrorising the country today. Today's rulers are trying to destroy the common man. What is the result of their rule: unemployment, hunger, poverty as they fill their own pockets as happened with the Bofors and Havalal share scams.

To counter the national economic loss due to such scams, they try to collect more money from the poor.

*'Every step we take will be for the country.
We gave our hearts, now we will give our lives.'*

As we move towards the twenty first century, whose principles are children going to follow? Is it going to be the patriots who gave freedom to our country or those people who have no face and are totally unprincipled.

Oh three-headed god from the Konkan, Ganesha! You come to earth every year. Give these people who are ravaging this earth like fire, enlightenment and guide them. Live up to your name as 'the remover of obstacles' and rid the earth of malpractice. This is the request made by the Chandanvadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal.

*'My Hindustan is the best place on the planet
We are its children, it is our pride.'*

[A model of a boy with a parachute in the colours of the Indian flag descends on to the stage.]

The judges considered the tableau theme as good, and its narration thought-provoking even though variations of it were familiar to the judges from former years. Of those seen so far, the theme was the 'latest' in that it related the narrative and display to modern life for it was about efforts to create religious harmony in contemporary India. The parachuting boy was an interesting way to represent the independence of India. But the hardboard cut-outs were not that outstanding.

The three-headed *murti* was considered beautiful - it was well-proportioned and there was a look of *shanti* on the face. Its positioning in the middle of the stage and the use of subdued lighting enhanced its sculptural qualities. However, merits for the *murti* alone was not enough to guarantee success for the *mandal* overall. The shortcomings of the *mandal* came from the perceived lack of organisation, and no *mandal* Board representative being present to see to the judges' queries.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

12. Sri Anantvadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1962, illustrations 52-53)

Theme: Pujapaka Saman ka Ghar (House made out of Puja Items)

Murtikar: A. P. Khandvelkar

Art Director: mandal members

Tucked in a crowded lane in Girgaum, this *mandap* was set in the middle of a chawl courtyard inhabited mainly by Gujarati families. The chawl is renowned for what is described as nothing short of a miracle. In 1992, a sackcloth was laid out to dry on a high line. It fell on to the ground, and landed in the shape of the figure of Ganapati (*svyambhu* Ganapati). Photographers, the Police and a *murtikar* were called immediately to see for themselves. Afterwards, the *murtikar*, Pradeep Madhuskar, preserved the form in plaster of Paris and made a marble replica. The marble *murti* is kept in the corner of the chawl in their permanent *mandir*, now known as the Jullivala Bapa Mandir.

To the side of the permanent shrine, stood a hut covered with a patterned series of three types of items one would use for a *puja* including plates, straw-pans, and leaves. Inside the hut was a three-faced, six-armed *murti* of Ganapati made out of clay. As a *mandal* member explained, three was the operative number for the theme of the decorations.

The judges were enamoured by the beauty of the *murti*. The look of the eyes seemed natural, as if light was shining from inside. The poses of the arms were

beautifully synthesised and modelled. The *mandal* members explained why they have now chosen to have clay *murtis* after successive years of winning *Girnar-Loksatta* prizes for *murtis* made out of plaster of Paris.² *Matti* was the material mentioned in the *Shastras* - therefore it was more *dharmik*. One member remarked that it 'pleased the heart' to immerse a clay *murti* (see Chapter Six). This was the second large clay *murti* the judges had come across, signalling the revival of the material for large *murtis*. The judges were interested to know how such a heavy *murti* was held up. It was constructed with a skeleton made of aluminium wires. The *murti* far outshone the surrounding decorations, and fared better than the other categories of evaluation for the *mandal*.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

13. Akhil C. P. Tank Road Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1970, illustration 54)

Theme: Mahal (Palace)

Murtikar: Rajendra Jhad

Art Director: Shivas Bhagval

A twelve foot *murti* sat on a throne with lions under its arms (*simhasana*). The setting was of a palace, made out of a series of thermocol columns and red chiffon. The judges were largely unimpressed. Even the *murti* seemed too 'heavy' with a bloated look about the face. It was awkwardly placed and seemed to lack grace, life and vitality (*pran*), and was particularly evident in the fingers which seemed as if they were stuck together (*cikatalele*).

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

14. Khetvadi 12th Lane Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 55)

Theme: Gora Kumbhar

Murtikar: V. D. Goregaonkar

Art Director: Suresh Matai

Large boards with newspaper cuttings about the thirty foot high *murti* inside, 'the biggest in Mumbai', were the first items that greeted the visitors as they walked up towards the *mandap*. On entering the *pandal*, the judges noticed that the *murti* was not exactly the height stated for it stood on a raised platform on which was an archway surrounding the standing *murti*. The actual figure of the Ganapati *murti* could not have been more than twenty six foot high. In a bid to outshine other *mandals*, the members had decided to publicise the height of Ganapati with the base included. The rest of the set was being painted and constructed for a scene of Gora Kumbhar with huts and trees. The story of Gora Kumbhar, a low-caste potter, relates his pious and devoted behaviour to Ganapati. Along with his wife, they prayed to the gods so fervently, that they were rewarded with another child to replace a son who was trampled to death in a mound of clay.

Although an interesting *murti* for its *pauranik* qualities, the judges disapproved of the sensationalist methods adopted by the *mandal* to draw more people in to the *mandap*. The tableau and publicity was quite literally an extension of the truth. The scene decorations were not considered as original in interpretation of the story of Gora Kumbhar.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

15. Khetvadi 13th Lane Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 56)

Theme: Jalandhar Scene (a demon)

Murtikar: Ramesh Tendulkar

Art Director: V.V. Chavan

A pearl covered Ganapati was placed in front of plainly decorated walls. Neither the *murti* nor the scenery impressed the judges. The visit did not generate any significant debate.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

16. Lokmanya Tilak Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (illustration 57)

Theme: Vishva Kosh Shri Ganesha Darshan

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: mandal members

A series of hardboard clouds were layered behind each other, as the scenery rose upwards to Ganapati placed in a glittering silver crescent moon. The *murti* held a book, the *Vishva Kosh*, in his hands. A figure of Narayan Muni, the mischievous saint, was placed in the clouds looking up to Ganapati. An audio tape was played where Ganapati and Narayan Muni talked to each other. Narayan Muni posed questions to Ganapati about what he was doing, who replied that he was writing the history of the nation. Just as he wrote the *Mahabharata*, he will now write about the saints of India - Tukaram, Kabir, Jnyaneshvara and Ramdas, the nation's history, its politics and so forth into this book (*grantha*). Ganapati recalled the need to adhere to the principles laid out in the *Mahabharata*:

'Greetings, friend. The Lokmanya Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal welcomes you.'

[Narada] Narayan, Narayan, Oh Remover of Obstacles, I bow at your feet. Accept me. But what are you doing? You're not writing again? This land of India is the land of sages/saints and very brave people who made great achievements. It is the land of great people like Kabir, Tukaram and Jnyaneshvara. Brave people and kings were born here. People sacrificed their lives and liberated this country from oppression. What did the common man get in his hand on the fiftieth year of independence? Poverty, political instability, thousands of scams. Have people forgotten the lessons of the Mahabharata?

[Ganapati] No, the principles of the Mahabharata will never be forgotten, but man in the Kalayug has forgotten them. Who is responsible for this, but the rulers. After the kings, came rule of the people, democracy. Then it was only the Kauravas who were born. The Pandavas were lost in time and overcome by the Kauravas. Just for their own existence, people are almost dragging their feet through life. That is why there is a need to re-ignite the principles enshrined in the Mahabharata for today's world.'

The cost of the *mandal* decorations alone were just under Rs 1 lakh, the large *murti* costing Rs 35,000. For a poor area of Mumbai located in the heart of a red light district, this was a phenomenal amount to spend on decorations. This *murti*, unlike other Khatus models, was considered as lacking vitality. The fingers of the *murti* looked as if they were stuck together (*cikatalele*), although the colours were very

striking. It was noted that the *lunghi* of Ganapati was typical *pitambara* yellow, a *shastrik* colour, to the *murtikar*'s credit.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

17. Gamdev and J. K. Building Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1931, illustrations 58-59)

Theme: *Shivshahice Pahat (The Dawn of Shivaji's Rule)*³

Murtikar: Prakash More

Art Director: Sanjay Baghar

A drawbridge over a pool of water led into the heart of the *mandap* where an elaborate scene of several vignettes surrounded the *murti* of Ganapati. They included painted images of Lal Qila and the Gateway of India in Mumbai, and hardboard cut-outs of Bal Thackeray with his hand held aloft, Shiv Sena ambulances, a map of Maharashtra, Vidhan Bhavan State Government House, farmers, workers, water, aeroplanes, and the Konkan Railway.

These vignettes were brought to life by the taped musical lyrics and narration which went as follows:

'The god of Maharashtra is Ganapati. With your help and blessings, let Maharashtra reign supreme.'

Song: 'If Maharashtra dies, the whole nation dies,

Without Marathi people, the vehicle of the nation will not go forwards

The Maratha is the real brave fighter of the battle

And Maharashtra is the backbone of the nation.'

[A figure of Shivaji is lit up and *lavni* folk music follows] *'Maharashtra is renowned for producing brave fighters of freedom*

And worthy of much praise

For the conscientious individuals who worked and created Maharashtra and democracy

The brave hard-working individuals who made the nation

To begin attaining this democratic nation, Shivaji fought for freedom.'

Shivaji established the Maratha nation.

[A map of Maharashtra with the words, 'Jai Maharashtra' is lit up.] *'Mumbai is in Maharashtra, but what is there of Maharashtra in Mumbai?*

Mumbai is a great place

It is a place which provides a chance to work or set up business

Anyone can earn money here

It is a place that accepts all outsiders.

Yet in my own father's house, if you speak out against some of the injustices, it is considered as if it was like committing a crime.

It's unusual.'

The Shiv Sena emerged from this Maharashtra with its leader, Balasaheb (Bal) Thackeray. As different people from different parts of India come here and end up exploiting Mumbai, all Maharashtrian brothers and youth became united under one flag. Balasaheb has raised consciousness of the fact that we are not only Indians, but also Maharashtrians.

Song: 'The mind is satisfied when the heart sings, 'Shiv Sena jhindabab (Long live the Shiv Sena), Shiv Sena jhindabab'

The Shiv Sena was formed to help those in difficulties

'It pleased Ganapati as well as the people. Shiv Sena jhindabab!'

The Shiv Sena network was spread throughout Mumbai.

'Whoever works hard gets results.'

They gave employment in businesses to youth which enhanced their status in social life.

'It will be a blessing for Maharashtrian youth who are stubborn.'

Our Maharashtrian god taught Maharashtra a lesson.

'People have overcome enormous difficulties. Shiv Sena jhindabab!'

There is no limit to the work that they have achieved, not even the sky is a limit. The rule of Balasaheb was predestined to end up at the Vidhan Sabha Assembly. He upheld Hinduism, and called out to the people to ask for their support. They prayed to Bhavanimata.

'The saffron flag flew at the Vidhan Sabha - a flag that stood testament to the hard work of supporters. Since the answering of our prayers to Bhavanimata, we can now celebrate loudly. Arise Ambha! Arise!'

Mother Bhavani was pleased. As she was pleased by seeing all those that had sacrificed their lives, we now have the united government of the Shiv Sena and BJP. To make the Shiv Sena rule a reality, Balasaheb Thackeray did many things. He didn't even care for his own health. With his powerful voice and thoughts, he spread his magical powers in the Mantralaya. By achieving power on behalf of Maharashtrians, it was like seeing a mountain of sorrow crumble. Death (Time) took his wife, Minatai, and son, Bindhu Mahadev, away from him. Balasaheb Thackeray was shattered and upset. The entire Shiv Sena was in deep sorrow. No one could think straight. People became silent, and looked at each other helplessly. In this time of sorrow, Balasaheb thought that if he didn't tend to the people, the poor might lose out. Like the god, Shiva, accepting defeat, Balasaheb also accepted the sorrow. He developed programmes for the upliftment of the poor. He started programmes to distribute cheap food (junka bakhar).

'People have a different sense of attachment to Bal Thackeray. You should experience his sweetness.'

He started the Shiv Programme for the unemployed.

'As they understood unemployment, they buried unemployment. In search of work, people used to move from door to door searching for work.

They moved towards democracy.'

A programme of forty lakh free houses for slum development was started.

'Tear down the slums! Tear down the slums!

Bring light to the darkness!

Now we're going to get clean free houses.'

From village to village, he made drinking water available.

'A programme of water availability has reached every village. Just like Ganga water.

Since water has reached all parts, forests of trees have been planted.

My leader, my villager, let's walk fast and move ahead.'

He gave support to the Konkan Railway project to help upliftment of backward areas calling the project Maharashtra Airways.

'Now the Queen of the Konkan will zoom through the hills.'

The Shiv Sena started projects for the upliftment of people, which should benefit many people. Due to this, the common man feels appreciated. The common man feels that knowledge of the Maharashtrian way of life should influence the National Defence Academy, the Indian Administrative Services, and the Indian Police Services. Along with the forty lakh houses, people in old chawls should get new houses. With the co-operation of Shiv Sena shakhas, entrepreneurs and the government, the prestige of Maharashtrian language and culture should be promoted. Thus the social and political fields will be combined. The Shiv Sena are progressing towards the Red Fort with great alacrity. Can anyone have the guts to conquer India now?

Oh Ganesha, the prashad we have offered, we do to ask that we continue to do the work of the nation. Give our party a long life.'

In sum, the tableau celebrated the rule of the Shiv Sena, and the great good it will do for the people, not only of Maharashtra, but also of India.

Judges were nonplussed by the blatant propagandist use of the *mandap* tableau as a mouthpiece for the Shiv Sena. The *mandal* members explained that the theme considers whether we really do have *Shivshahi* in Mumbai with the new government, as in Shivaji's times. They talked about basing their facts and figures on surveys and papers available from the State Parliament. They denied direct involvement of the Shiv Sena in the *mandap* activities, even though it later transpired that the president of the *mandal* was a Shiv Sena member of the Mumbai Municipal Council. The judges were left unconvinced and did not take the members' explanations too seriously. This effected the evaluation of all the categories on the forms.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

18. J. K. Building Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1942, illustration 60)

Theme: no specified theme

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: Ravendra Parab and Deepak Azgaokar

A Ganapati *murti*, two of his four hands holding a *vina*, was shown set in a galactic scene with shooting star effects. Lights striking round 'disco' mirror globes enhanced the effects. The judges appreciated the *murti*. It was described as another 'Vijay Khatu special' with a traditional (*paramparika*) face. There was a graceful pose to the *murti*, which reclined slightly to the side. The *mandal* members were conscientious and presented files of social work and accounts to each of the judges. However, the judges later surmised that there was little of outstanding merit with the *mandal* and their work.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

19. Slater Road Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1969, illustration 61)

Theme: none specified

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: Sanjay Bhavkar

A large sitting *murti* of Ganapati was placed in a simple tableau decorated with coloured thermocol. The surround was multi-coloured, and the *murti* silvery grey which the judges thought did not complement each other very well. However, the *murti*'s proportions were considered as technically very good - the head was well-balanced with its stomach and limbs.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

20. Bal Gopal Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1973, illustration 62)

Theme: Sundar Mumbai (Beautiful Mumbai)

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: *mandal* members.

A towering brown Ganapati in the dancing pose held a snake in two of his hands above his head in the manner of an ancient prototype of the deity. Around it were placed a few vignettes - a Police station and a primary health centre, peopled by models of a doctor and mother and a child. Various municipal signs were laid about the place with messages such as 'Pearls Polio Vaccination: They remove the threat of polio disease'; 'When should you have your second child? When the first begins to go to nursery.'; 'Do not commit the sin of having an illegitimate child'; 'Remove Pollution'; 'Keep cleanliness'; and litter bins with 'Use me' on them and so forth.

The *murti* interested the judges for the invocation of a not too widely known ancient prototype. The message of the *mandal* was clearly for the benefit of Mumbai's inhabitants and was lauded by the judges for its uniqueness and social usefulness. I pointed out that there were several Mumbai Municipal Council posters pasted up by *mandals* that year and asked whether could this was due to the impending council elections in six months time.⁴ However, the judges did not consider the tableau as propagandist. The judges conceded that even if this was the case it is not blatantly

obvious and, unlike the Gamdev and J. K. Building Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, one could give this *mandal* the benefit of the doubt.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

21. Chikhelvadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1925, illustration 64)

Theme: none specified

Murtikar: Shridhar Goregaonkar

Art Director: Ashok Satam

This *mandal* had a small modest display in the middle of a chawl. The Ganapati *murti* was placed in an open semi-fort structure. The judges noted the interesting use of textile screen painting techniques for the windows. The decorations were considered good in that it made interesting use of a modern art technique, but there was no thematic substance to the display

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

22. Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1960, illustration 65)

Theme: Halebid Shivmandir

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: Chandrakant Palo

The *mandap* display was of the interior of a typical *mandir* found on the historical site of Halebid. It was made out of thermocol which was spray-painted grey. Columns and walls were finely carved with friezes of lions and elephants. At the end of this colonnaded interior was an opening through which a seven foot bronze coloured *murti* of Ganapati could be seen sat on a throne. The base of the throne was also moulded with the delicate figurines and was considered to complement the interior of the *mandir* replica well. Different soft-coloured light coupled with the fact that there was no music played, was felt to give the scene a serene ambience. Spotlights behind pillars enhanced the artwork.

The judges were struck by the finesse of the artwork and thought that the design of the *murti* suited the scene marvellously. The bronze of the *murti* contrasted well with the grey of the mandir interior, and the blue behind the throne introduced a touch of cool colour to the bronze *murti*. The frieze within the *mandir* was continued on the base of the throne in bronze.

There was felt to be a wonderful air of serenity which was skilfully created by the lighting design. Temple interiors had been executed by the *mandal* over the last few years, with photographs of former displays hung on the outside wall. The judges also made a special note of the clean surroundings, and the systematic way of working as demonstrated by the *mandal* members.

The *mandal* went into the Second Round.

23. Navamaharashtra Nagar Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1972, illustration 66)

Theme: none specified

Murtikar: Vijay Dhaibavkar

Art Director: *mandal* members

The *mandap* was situated in a slum area, and the electrical power had gone when the judges arrived. Thus the *mandaps* had to be seen in semi-darkness. White busts of Tukaram and Jnyaneshvara flanked a pool in which stood a standing Ganapati. A mountain scene surrounded the pool, and two elephants were shown with their trunks held high. Apparently, when the power was on, the elephant trunks sprayed out water on to the standing *murti* in the middle.

At this point, the judges almost went through their duties by rote rather than interest. Similar designs had been seen in earlier years. The *mandal* lacked substance and did not leave enough of an impression to lift it from the sea of other ordinary *mandals* in Mumbai.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

24. Bal Gopal Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1968, illustration 67)

Theme: *Mumbai*

Murtikar: *Vijay Khatu*

Art Director: *Dinesh Marde*

The *mandap* was painted in the form of a brick house, and wallpapered on the inside with brick paper. In front of a luminous orange *murti* was a pile of bricks; to its side a pot of money. Luminous orange posters with hand-written messages and municipal posters to save water, grow trees and fight against pollution were pasted on the three walls around the platform. The posters were written with morale-boosting verses such as:

'God always gives help to those that keep their mind and hands strong' [that is, hard-working and thoughtful]. '*Man ane mangat khambir as, aslyavar parmeshvar sahayeh detoc.*'

'Even if surrounding circumstances are very unfavourable, a person should realise his inner strengths and abilities as the basis for confidently stepping out to overcome the difficulties. Having overcome them, the person can reach the summit of an imposing peak of excellence.'

' "One gets what they are destined to get"
He who says this is a fool.
Destiny is another name for prowess and daring.
Don't accept destiny or passivity.
The word destiny is prevalent amongst fools.'

Taped narration, of the type familiar to judges, accompanied the decorations. It went as follows:

'Welcome! My house, that is god's house, is like a mandir. What is a mandir? Firstly, it's a place which is built out of collections of donations. People from different walks of life give donations as per their capacity. Then architects build the foundation of the temple. The murti is installed, and the rite of pranpratishta is done. After this, the building feels like a real temple. We take our shoes off at the entrance, because dirt and the pollution of life should be kept out.'

The next topic which we look at is the fact that Muslims and Christians go to their place of worship to pray on a specific day of the week. But we Hindus do not come together on one particular day, as we're divided into vaishnavite and shaivite sects. However Ganesha is the first god that we all pray to. Both groups consider him as the main god. So why don't we come together on Tuesdays and forget our differences between sects, high and low castes in our worship of Ganesha.'

'Why should we come together? Firstly, it will bring about social solidarity. Secondly, we can exchange good thoughts. And thirdly, as Hinduism is based on division, we can come together and forget our differences. This is the basic but strong belief and desire of this mandal.'

The decoration was considered interesting for its message, but not well executed. The four foot sitting *murti* did not seem to exude *shanti* and seemed to be overpowered by the vast almost empty space it was located in. Apart from the pile of bricks and the *murti* in its small *mandap*, there was nothing else on the stage. The judges did not stay too long at the *mandap* knowing at a glance that winning qualities were not exemplified by the *mandal*.

The *mandal* did not get into the Second Round.

¹See Chapter Five for more details about the *mandal*'s history.

²This included a *murti* made by Pradeep Madhuskar in 1992 for the *mandal*. The large sitting *murti* was composed of 98 *svyambhu* Ganapatis (as found in the *Asthavinayaka*) joined together to form the body of a large Ganapati, and a green Ganapati on top to form its crown (*mugut*). These 99 Ganapatis combined with the Ganapati they formed went to make 100, which was a fitting tribute to the centenary of the first *sarvajanik* Ganapati *utsava* in Bombay. In 1993, Madhuskar again got a prize for the *murti* at the *mandal* - a conflation of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh in the figure of Ganapati.

³Even though *Shivshahi* classically means the reign of Shivaji, the term is also used to refer to the rule of Shiv Sena. Shivaji acts as a historical trope for the contemporary ambitions of the Shiv Sena (see Chapter Eight).

⁴Posters that appeared on many *pandals* in 1996 included those about female education: 'The fulfilment of a promise' (*Vacanpurti*); women's employment; 'Golden opportunity for women' (*Mahilana Suvaransanghi*); electricity; 'We are bound to the promise of making life bright' (*Prakashman jivanasathi vacanbaddha*); pollution; 'You can stop these things' (*He tumhi thambav shakta*); slum rehabilitation schemes (*jhopadpatti punarvsan yojna*); information about Greater Mumbai Corporation such as population, the number of roads, parks, playgrounds, rubbish collection, medical colleges, primary and secondary schools, and the number of students; and posters of development in Mumbai including the Shiv Sena-BJP's promise of forty lakh free housing for slum dwellers. The Mumbai Municipal Council is responsible for all the public amenities, public services, public organisations, and development of the city; which as one Councillor jokingly put it, concerned 'water, lights and gutters'. After the state government, the municipal council is the next most powerful organisation for which elections are made.

Appendix II

The Second Round of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* Competition

The judges for the Second Round of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* competition gathered together a day after the First Round was over. Sheets with the twenty chosen *mandals* were handed out to the Executors of four teams consisting of three judges each. On the sheets were listed all the marks that each *mandal* had accrued in the First Round from all the Greater Mumbai region. These were split into four categories based on categories on the evaluation sheets:

- (i) Best *Murtikar* - marked out of 60 according to the six individual features to note about the *murti*;
- (ii) Social Awareness and National Integration - marked out of 30 according to categories judging features of the *mandal's* demonstration of social and national subjects especially (a) to what degree is social awareness and national welfare communicated through the scenery, and (b) to what extent is social cohesion demonstrated through the decorations;
- (iii) Overall Performance - marked out of 90 based on all the categories judging features of the *mandal*; and
- (iv) Best Art Director - marked out of 30 based on all the categories judging features of the art direction.

The team that I was with for the Second Round comprised of the creative director of an advertising agency, a writer/graphic designer and a J. J. School Professor of Ceramics. We were given five *mandals* to visit in southern Mumbai, one of which I had visited in the previous round. The other four had got through on the basis of evaluation by other teams of judges.

The judges were instructed to pay special attention to those features that had already been marked highly by the previous round of judges. Judges in the Second Round of the competition had *mandals* that had been through the screening test of the First Round judges and thus had quality *mandals* and tableaux to evaluate. All of the *mandap* tableaux were displayed with a substantial narrative, and sound and light effects. Additional points that emerged in this round was the need to have a narrative which demonstrates a rich cultural and educational purpose, without losing its entertaining potential to engage children. Judges concurred that the narrative and display ought to be well-informed, enlightening and even surprising and amusing. Cramped spaces in the *mandap* were deemed unsuitable for the public, and appropriate music for a *mandap* tableaux were noted. Lighting effects to increase the feeling of *shanti*, and to illuminate the Ganapati *murti*, so that the face appeared as radiant as possible were commended. Complementarity between *murti* and scenery was again remarked upon, as was the continuity between different chambers of the *mandap* display. Suitable surroundings and art direction made the *murti* look that much more beautiful in the eyes of the judges. Thus it is never always a technical evaluation of the *murti*, but one that also seeks some kind of soul satisfaction which is attained by full all-round consideration of its surroundings as well.

Art direction was considered best when everything was synchronised well, including text, lights and movement of models. High expenditure did not necessarily make for a better *mandal* and tableau in the judges' opinion, especially if the source of the funds could not be fully accounted. In fact, simpler features such as the skill in

making papier mache models caught the judges' imagination more than extravagant displays.

Most of the time, Second Round judges were in agreement with the decisions of the First Round judges. But sometimes, some *mandal*'s did generate a divergence of opinions between First and Second Round judges. It happened with the Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal which was felt to have too much unaccounted for funds as well as an inconsistency in theme between the anteroom and *mandap* decorations. To a lesser extent, this was also the case with the Pangeri Chawl Ganeshotsava Mandal whose members were considered to be not totally sincere about actual costs.

Second Round judges' debates generally centred on the costs and sincerity of the *mandal* members, the latter being a fairly subjective judgement. There was more pressure on this round of judges to make sure only those that sincerely deserved the high prizes at stake should be considered. Thus their evaluations made certain that all qualities were taken into account. It was the task of this round of judges more so than the previous round to make sure that they could estimate whether fund resources were wisely collected and used. *Mandal* members were not always truthful, so it was left to the better decision of the judges to see whether what they say is credible or not.

Due to the high quality of the material in the Second Round, the criteria of judgement in the Second Round was that much more tougher than the First Round. It was apparent that only those with some substance or originality to them entered into the Second Round, so these round of judges had more 'food for thought'. Sometimes as a result of the high quality of contenders, it was more difficult to judge the winners. The judges also made it a point to evaluate what was presented in front of the judges for that year, rather than go on past reputations. Judges genuinely felt a social responsibility to guide opinion and choose those *mandals* that set a good example to others.

As with the First Round judges, these judges sought educational yet entertaining works which showed some refreshing and surprising touches of genius. They applauded themes to do with Maharashtra's heritage. However, the marks of the Second Round judges were still contestable as there was still the Final Round of judging to go through.

1. Navaprakash Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1980, illustration 68)

Theme: *Asthavinayaka*

Murtikar: Vijay Patkar

Art Director: Vilas L. Ghadigaonkar

A small stage boxed in gauze on the front and foliage and trees on the other three sides, showed various figures in different positions. There was a hut to the right of the stage. The characters in the story made an appearance either through being brought on to the stage, or through being spot-lit. The tableau's Ganapati was not immediately visible, but made an appearance through being spot-lit at the end of the narration.

The scene related the story of the young boy, Praladh, who was a devotee of Ganapati to his father's chagrin. One day Praladh chanced upon a *svyambhu* Ganapati, and he and his friends began to worship the *murti*. The villagers complained about how Praladh was leading all the boys astray. Praladh's father came to beat his son up. Praladh carried on praying to Ganapati regardless. Eventually, Ganapati made an appearance in the figure of a Brahman. Pleased by Praladh's devotion, he granted him a

wish. Praladh asked that this site be sanctified and be remembered by all. Thus it was named Sri Balveshwar, and exists to this day as part of the eight sites of Asthavinayaka.

The narration was as follows:

'Welcome'

A merchant called Kalyan was living happily in a place called Nandigram. He had a son called Praladh. Since childhood, the boy was devoted to Ganesha. Once he showed a stone in a distant field to his playmates, and called him Ganesha. They all started worshipping it.

The stone that they selected was beautifully shaped. Collecting some sticks and timber, they erected a temple; and with great devotion, they started worshipping the stone. Some of Praladh's playmates began reciting the name of Ganesha continuously. Then they all started their worship with great enthusiasm in this way. Some of his playmates were merrily singing and dancing in praise of Ganesha. Such was their great enthusiasm that on numerous occasions, they were unaware as to when the sun was setting and it was getting dark.

On one such evening, a few villagers started complaining to Praladh's father saying that Praladh was leading their sons astray. One villager said, 'O Kalyan, because of your son, my children go out of the village in the evening and waste their time playing around. Because of this, we will file a complaint against you with the village headman.' When this complaint was heard, Kalyan, the merchant, took a stick in his hand. He approached Praladh in a very bad temper when he was peacefully meditating in front of Ganesha. Kalyan started beating Praladh with the stick in his hand. Praladh's back started bleeding as a result of the strokes. Whilst beating Praladh, Kalyan said to him, 'Let me see what Ganesha of yours is going to come and help you out of this beating.'

[An Asthavinayaka song is played.]

'At such occasions, I have a great desire to be of service to you; and day and night I am worried as to your comfort and well-being.'

During the punishment, Praladh started chanting the name of Ganesha repeatedly as an invocation: 'O God, you remove the difficulties of those who worship you. Because of this, even though I am stuck in a tragic situation, I do not feel the slightest discomfort because my father has beaten me. At such times when I am engaged in devotion, you should punish the person responsible immediately.'

Song: 'I cannot imagine what sinful act I have done now. In your holy precincts, there seems to be admiration of those who have fallen from moral conduct'.

At the end of this prayer, the Lord Ganesha revealed himself in person in the shape of a Brahman and thus all of Praladh's difficult circumstances vanished altogether.

[Thunderous sounds, followed by mellifluous sitar sounds accompany the appearance of the Brahman on the set.]

That person said, 'O Praladh, I am extremely delighted at your devotion in me. Now ask for any boon that you choose for yourself.' Praladh said, 'Dear God, I feel most blessed at your very darshan. If you insist on granting a boon, then may this place be sacralised so that you can be graceful to all people and remove their difficulties. Grant me this particular boon.'

'I am going to fulfil all your wishes. may it be so.'

Then the person of Ganesha vanished into thin air.

[A large orange *murti* of Ganesha is made visible, as orange lights are focused on him.]

And that particular place later became very famous as Shri Balveshwar.

'Blessed is the Lord.'

Based on the evaluations of the First Round judges, the executor asked the judges to concentrate on the Overall Performance of the *mandal* and the *murti*. The Second Round judges appreciated the theme for its cultural and educational purposes. It was particularly useful for children to learn more about Maharashtra's heritage. But the judges held the reservation that the narrative was dull. It could have been more entertaining, and therefore, enjoyed by all.

The *murti* was placed right at the back of the stage, although there was a smaller one used for *puja* outside of the display. It was difficult to appreciate it for its design through the gauze, and the fact that it was only made visible at the end of the narrative. However, the way the *murti* appeared was spectacular. With the use of sound and orange lighting, it appeared in the dark set against grey columns highlighted by a similarly coloured orange paint. The *murti* was wearing the traditional *pitambara* yellow *lunghi*, and highlighted with gold ornaments. The colour orange was suited to the colours of the *svyambhu* Asthavinayaka, and thus the *murti* was of the appropriate design for the tableau.

The use of the gauze on the boxed stage was unusual, and the swiftness of moving from one scene to another was notable. Through effective lighting and co-ordination, the *mandal* members were able to effortlessly relate the story. One judge complained of the small size of the stage, and the cramped space in the *mandap*. One had to wind through a narrow walkway around a tree and the scaffolding of a building site to get in to the small enclosed area.

The *mandal* did not do incredibly well in any one category and did not win any prizes. As I was given access to the list of scores from the Second Round of judging after the event, I account for numerical results after each *mandal* description. Second Round judges had given 33 out of 60 for the *murti*, 10 out of 30 for National Integration and Social Awareness, 34 out of 90 for Overall Performance, and 11 out of 30 for Art Direction. The *mandal* only gained more than fifty percent for the *murti*. As far as the *murti* went, the Second Round judges were in agreement with the First Round of judges. Although for Overall Performance, there was little compatibility between First Round and Second Round judges. This is due to the stricter criteria of judgement for the Second Round as compared to the First Round. As I have shown for my coverage of the First Round, there are several *mandals* that in the opinion of judges should not have entered the competition at all. In such circumstances, it is feasible that the judges mark slightly higher than they would in the First Round where the quality of competitors is a lot less.

2. Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1968, illustration 65)

Theme: Halebid Shivmandir

Murtikar: Vijay Khatu

Art Director: Chandrakant Palav

This *mandal* came through from the evaluations of the judges in the team that I had accompanied for the First Round (see Appendix II, *mandal* number 22). Second Round judges were asked to concentrate on the *murti* and the Art Direction in particular.

The judges in the Second Round were similarly impressed by the quality of the craftsmanship of the *mandir* interior. They were struck by the finesse of sculpting a line of elephants and lions all round the *mandir*. It was agreed that the *murti* was also well displayed, and looked very beautiful in its setting. The *murtikar*'s work was shown to its best capability. However, two of the judges in this round thought that some music would have been appropriate: 'There are so many studios in Bombay, that they could have created good music for the scene.' Whilst the previous round of judges considered this to enhance an atmosphere of peaceful *shanti*, these judges seemed to be saying that *shanti* would be best experienced if there was suitable music for the set.

Nonetheless the judges were agreed on the feeling of *shanti* from the *murti* in its setting.

The *murti* was marked 45 out of 60 and went on to win First Prize for Best *Murtikar*, which was decided in a final sitting watching video recordings of all the Second Round *mandals* with all the other Second Round judges (see Appendix III). The *mandal* attained 10 out of 30 for National Integration and Social Awareness, 60 out of 90 for Overall Performance, and 21 out of 30 for Art Direction.

While the *mandal* did well in the category of Art Direction, it was not enough to convince all the judges in the final sitting who ended up picking *mandaps* with taped sound and narration for prizes in this category. It would seem that the quietness of the *mandal* did, in the end, act against it especially in an urban culture where it is sound and noise that tends to rule the roost. It appears that people in Mumbai tend to be struck by the 'loud' and the 'obtrusive' rather than the less conspicuous displays. The former is not to mitigate the sense of *shanti* experienced at the *mandaps*, for as I have discussed in Chapter Six, it is possible to experience *shanti* in noisy surroundings.

3. Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1951, illustrations 69-70)

Theme: Our Freedom Struggle

Murtikar: Rajendra Jhad

Art Director: Anant Savant

Greeted by the *mandal* members dressed in their best white clothes along with their wives in their best saris, the judges were given almost a royal reception. This *mandal* had won the Best *Mandal* award last year and was well known to the judges. The judges were invited to sit down on a sofa outside of the *mandal*, whilst casual conversation was made. Then the judges were led into the *mandap* itself. En route, the *mandal* president pointed out the prizes they have won, and the papier mache sculpture of Shivaji on horseback standing outside a large fort exterior. Inside was a large anteroom to the sanctum sanctorum with the *mandap* tableau. Musicians sat on a circular platform surrounded by water and played traditional songs as in Shivaji's times. After walking across this room, steps led into the *mandap* proper.

A large *murti* of Ganapati was presented sitting on a giant *mushaka*. A black arch surrounded it. To the left and right were more black structures, one of which had a hangman's noose hanging from it. Various cut-outs littered the grey hilly stage ranging from Jnyaneshvara, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919, Sir Michael O'Dwyer being shot in Caxton Hall by Uddam Singh, contemporary politicians fighting for political posts, the freedom fighters, Vasudev, Gandhi, Tilak, the vote box and the flame of freedom. The tableau related the heroic deeds of past saints and revolutionaries who promoted and fought for the culture and freedom of India. It was a commemorative piece of work to the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence.¹

The taped narration went as follows :

'Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag welcome you in the presence of Jnyaneshvara on his seven hundredth anniversary.'

'Coincidences are the works of the gods. The coming year is going to be the golden age of independence. Freedom fighters offered their warm blood and laid down their lives for the country. They brought the 'goddess of freedom' into peoples' homes. We try to remember them on this fiftieth anniversary. It is not just an exercise in history, but it is like looking at the Mahabharata written with blood.'

What did they do in protest against oppression? People started a cauldron of fire to show their anger. This is the story of those people.

The torch of freedom was first lit. Vande Mataram! It was 29th March 1857, the place - Calcutta - the soldiers of the 24th Regiment were gathered on the square. One soldier came forwards. He announced loudly in the air, 'Today I take my vow to fight for freedom of the country. Freedom is calling out to you all. Let's kill our English enemies. Arise!'

The English sergeant was angry at this stunning announcement. He was very angry with the man, and was about to get hold of him and kill him. But suddenly five Englishmen were shot dead.

Mangal Pandey lit the spark of freedom. He made a good start. On 7th April 1858, Mangal Pandey was hung to death. Due to the sacrifice of blood, the entire country was set ablaze.

Bahadar Shah Jaffar, Tatya Tope, Rani Lakshmi Bai etc. all fought for the freedom of the country. They did not bow to the English. Before they died, they left their mark by indicating to the British that the fight for freedom will soon be won. We will not let the British rule us. We'll even disturb the crown of England. After the first protest of 1857, the fire was lit. But this was quelled. But later, the fire was fuelled by Vasudev Bawant Phadke. The fire of protest was never short of protesters. It did not die out, for there were no lack of protesters who gave their lives. The fire was kept burning bright. Prafundh Chakravarti, Bhudiram Bose, Anant Kandheri, Ram Prasad, Bismil, Surya Singh, Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, Sukhdev, and the father of the great hymn, 'Vande Mataram', Bankim Babu.

So all went to the gallows. Even if they die young, let them be reborn on the same Motherland. So they can again fight for freedom. 'May I be born in the same womb, and may I die for the same cause.'

Great freedom fighters are not born. They are made. People who show the path of enlightenment and pursue a cause, are great men and are different. One such great leader was a person who at the age of fifteen expressed anger at the hanging of freedom fighters. He cut his finger in front of god, and put a tikka of blood on his forehead. And he vowed to fight for the nation. 'If I die whilst working for the nation, I'm not bothered. There is no better work than this. Let me be successful in my aims, and let the protest go on.'

He rose from the ashes of earlier protesters. This person became the jewel of the twentieth century. His name - freedom fighter, Veer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.

Another man was inspired by Savarkar. He went to England and in the Imperial Hall, he killed Lord Curzon by shooting him five times whilst crying out 'Vande Mataram'. With this act, he shook England. His name - Madan Lal Dhingre.

This was inspired by Savarkar. Just as powerful and influential was Britain's number one enemy, Lokmanya Tilak. At one gathering, Tilak was the main speaker. The topic of the meeting was on how to achieve freedom. One of the members got up and spoke loudly, 'Those who speak for the country and think that the country will somehow become free on its own - all these people are nothing but eunuchs'. For a moment, the atmosphere was very tense. Tilak noticed him, was moved, and thought to himself that he had found a diamond.

1896: the entire city of Pune was held in the grips of plague. Colonel Rand and his soldiers used to go to everyone's house and trouble the people. You get an idea of the harassment from an article in the newspaper, Sudharak: 'For so long now, they were satisfied by just stealing from the people. Now they have gone over the limit, and started harassing the women. The people of this country who are not man enough to stand up to this are not fit to be on this earth. Men who cannot protect their own women are not found anywhere else. Why are you all crying like the cowardly character of Bhagubhai? Kick these stupid people out!'

However, even in this respect, there are certain human sentiments which require delicacy. The 'red monkeys' have managed to tease you. They raped your wives, but still you try to behave like saints. Such a society should be ashamed of itself.'

Such thoughts worked on the minds of some individuals. They were the Chaphekar brothers - the eldest Damodar of 27 years of age, then Balkrishna and the youngest, Vasudev, of 17 years of age. All three were married. Having taken the blessings of Tilak, they made a plan. 22nd June 1897, on the diamond jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign, there was a grand ceremony at a feast held at the Governor's bungalow. Vasudev sat in a bush outside the bungalow.

Damodar and Balkrishna waited with two friends in Ganeshkhind [Pune] for Rand. It was 12 o'clock. The vehicles outside the Governor's bungalow started leaving for home. Damodar's group could not see Rand's vehicle, nor could they hear Vasudev's cries. Their minds were restless with anticipation. Suddenly their hands started shaking. They could see a buggy coming up which was

very similar to Rand's. They could not think straight, nor could they hold on. They thought Vasudev must have been caught. Balkrishna was upset, but did not want to miss killing Rand, so moved towards the buggy. He jumped on to the buggy, and pointed the gun inside. But it was Lieutenant Ayerst who was in the buggy. Unknown to him, it was the wrong buggy. Still, he shot Ayerst. His wife's screaming, and the noise of the bullets spoiled their plan. As Balkrishna moved towards his brother to say that he had shot Rand, they heard a cry, 'Gondhya [the nickname for Rand] is coming.' Balkrishna could see the buggy coming up with Vasudev running behind shouting. Balkrishna tried to aim his pistol, and shouted, 'Vasu, move aside!' Balkrishna pushed Vasudev aside and jumped on to the buggy. He then pulled the trigger, and without seeing who it was that he had shot, he ran away. One of the traitorous Indians told the English that it was the Chaphekar brothers that committed the murder. The British punished them by hanging them to death.

There is no other place in the world where there has been three men from the same family who died fighting for their principles. Three married brothers who died for the sake of the country. History has never again witnessed such an incident.

Simultaneously three women became widowed. Normally this is considered unlucky; but in this case, woman who still had living husbands were made to feel ashamed. Who says they're unlucky widows? A poet wrote: 'A woman whose husband died for the country, is not a widow; but is as auspicious as a married woman.'

1857-1947: To achieve freedom, fighters gave everything they had. On 15th August, 1947, India got independence. From slavery to freedom; love of the nation, devotion to the nation.

But today, freedom of speech has been abused to advocate devotion to religious divides, language, state, and the main culprit, political power. Shameless, poisonous creepers have spread everywhere.

Oh Ganesh! Freedom from these evils lies in your hands. There should be another dawn of revolution for change.

Just like Sita, a revolution never dies. It has to be reborn. That is what we believe. A revolution is like a support to Ram, just as was Sita. Sita supported Ram even when they were in exile. And that is what the revolution is also like.

Afterwards, due to malicious gossip, Sita was sent to the forest. When Ram ruled, Sita descended into the earth. The revolution is like Sita who went into the earth.

These feats which supported Ram whilst in exile, can be seen now. The footprints of revolution can be seen on earth in search of tomorrow's leaders. They are in search of those leaders who do not come out of vote-boxes, but rise from the earth, and were born from this very land. They will do unlimited work for the country. We are waiting for their brave work. Vande Mataram!

Song: 'Give us so much strength that our beliefs do not weaken.'

First Round judges had marked this *mandal* highly for National Integration and Social Awareness, and Overall Performance. The Second Round judges were dubious about the costs of constructing the *mandap*. The stated figure was Rs 4 lakhs. It was quite clear to the judges that these funds could not have been collected from the residents. It seemed that the *mandal* had got into the Second Round more so on the reputation for good and innovative work from former years, rather than proper consideration of this year's work. Even though the *mandap* was designed in a spectacular way, extra expenditure did not necessarily make for a better *mandal* and tableau in the judges' opinion, especially if the source of the funds could not be fully accounted for.

Another point made by Second Round judges was that there was not enough continuity between the large foyer with the musicians and the room with the tableau. Perhaps there could have been a taster of what was to come presented in the anteroom.

One of the *mandap* features liked by the judges was the splendid *murti* with its face radiantly lit. The skill in making the papier mache Shivaji on horseback outside the *pandal* was also admired. It was these simpler features that caught the judges' imagination rather than the extravagance of the live musicians - a very costly activity - and the size of the ostentatious fort construction.

The *mandal* acquired 33 out of 60 for the *murti*, 14 out of 30 for National Integration and Social Awareness, 56 out of 90 for Overall Performance, and 14 out of 30 for Art Direction, but, unlike the previous year, did not go on to win any prizes.

4. Pangeri Chawl Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1963, illustrations 71-72)

Theme: Scientific Development (Vidnyanaci Garuda-Jhepa ani Manava'- literally 'the eagle-like flight of science and mankind')

Murtikar: Arvind Chavan

Art Director: Maruti Shinde and Pradip Pandit

Outside the *mandap* was a globe on top of which the *sant* Jnyaneshvara was sitting. 1996 was the seven hundredth anniversary year of his birth which was painted on the wall behind. Inside the *mandap* a steep display of small mannequins was created. Ganapati sat like a *raja* with Maharashtrian headgear at the top of the display. His face was lit up with a revolving ball of light. Underneath the *murti* was a small projector screen on to which shots of various scenes were shown including those of computers, school children, great thinkers such as Lenin and Marx and so forth. Around this central piece were vignettes of Arjuna shooting an arrow, rockets, Tukaram flying up to heaven, test tube babies, a man with a telescope, students, the sage Vyasmuni, Valimiki and so forth.

Each of the vignettes were lit up as the narrative proceeded interspersed with changes of projection images. The theme of the tableau compared activities and events that could be seen as egalitarian and scientific which are indigenous to Indian scriptures, and the ideological and scientific innovations originating in the west. Whilst applauding the benefits of scientific development, the narration also spoke of how they were more accessible to rich people than poor, and could even work against poor people especially when it came to educational matters. Scientific innovations could result in the deterioration of a moral society, especially when television was used to promote a culture of sex and violence. The final message was that scientific development needs to go hand in hand with knowledge of Indian culture and heritage, and thus it can be to the moral and cultural benefit of all people in India.

The narration went as follows:

Welcome. Millions and millions of years before, in the vast expanse of the universe, life was created on this very small planet. From that time onwards, the continuous wheel of time began. Human beings were endowed with the priceless gift of superior intelligence. Now as we approach the twenty first century, do you have any idea how far mankind has progressed in the scientific era ? Why and how do events happen in this world as they do? To search for the answers to these questions is to lead into unknown territories. But nowadays mankind is beginning to come to some understandings. That is to say, the scientific era has allowed us to understand that there is no objection to think that what mankind is aware of nowadays wasn't known many many years ago.

Why do we not consider the miraculous happenings (camatkarika ghatana) in the four Vedas, eighteen Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagavad Gita etc. or contemporaneous religious books as a part of science?

The author of the Mahabharata, Maharishi Vyas, was the 'super-computer' of his days (kalatil 'super-samganaka'). From the mouth of Vyas emanated nuggets of knowledge in the form of words. And giving shape to these words was Shri Gajanan, the short-hand stenographer of Vyas ('laghulekhak steno').

In the Mahabharata, Rani Gandhari [Dhritarashtra's wife, mother of the one hundred Kaurava brothers and one daughter] tried to rid herself of her embryo, when Vyasa came and split her embryo into a hundred and one pieces [Each were to be kept in an urn full of specially intoned clarified butter]. It is described as an occurrence of surrogate motherhood (nyoga-paddhati - literally method of appointment) and makes a remarkable comparison to modern-day test-tube babies, don't you feel?

The Kurukshetra war in the Mahabharata is really the first World War. In this war, Sanjaya was given the power to see and hear everything that was happening on the battle place for his ruler, Dhrutarashtra in Hastinapur. Don't you think this has striking similarities with modern times when we are able to see wars that are happening in different parts of the world with the help of the television?

Another event from the Mahabharata war concerns the killing of Jayadratha. Arjuna had made a vow that before sunset, he would kill Jayadratha or else he will take his own life. The sun was setting so Shri Krishna temporarily hid the sun from Arjuna and said hurry and kill the man.² What is described as a miracle in the Mahabharata can now be explained on the scientific basis of an eclipse, don't you think?

Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, had briefly mentioned various ideas on the basis of his intellect. He wrote of total destruction (brahmastra), weapons for rainfall (parjanyastra), and fire weapons (agneyastra). Several different weapons like this and their power of destruction (samharaka shakti) can be compared to highly advanced missiles (atipragata kshepana astre) we have today, don't you think?

Not only this, but Maharaj Tukaram's bodily departure into the heavens (sadeha Vaikuntha prayana) in a divine chariot (pushpaka vimanatuna, literally an air vehicle) is also of a similar nature. What miracle made this vehicle ascend? And today's speedy dream-aeroplanes (swanatila vegavana vimane), do they not seem comparable in your view?

According to modern scientific views, these events in the past are regarded as imaginary flights of fancy (kapolakalpita manalya). The reason being that things that cannot be proven cannot be accepted as genuine knowledge. But if you have an open-mind with a thirst for knowledge ('jnanaici tahana' asalelya shuddha manala) the scientific basis underpinning them can be instinctively understood which has even been accepted by great materialist intellectuals (buddhivya, jadavadi vicaravantane suddha) like Lenin.

One of our ancient seers, Kanad, had a notion of the atom ('amu ci' samkalpana) and its destructive powers. But when [modern] man found out about the splitting of the atom, the destructive power was used in the form of an atom bomb in the Second World War and millions of innocent lives were destroyed. At the time of the atomic bomb testing, when a terrible explosion in the form of a bright [mushroom] sphere of light (tejogola) was visible, the inventor was reminded of the twelfth verse in the eleventh chapter of the Bhagavad Gita.⁴ On the other hand, we have a great scientist like Dr. Homi Bhabha who comes in the line of an endless tradition of intellectuals who used atomic power for the benefit of mankind.⁵

Nowadays, knowledge that is available in ancient Sanskrit books, is being studied by people around the world. Sanskrit which is virtually dying amongst our own people, is studied in great depth in Germany. In their schools chapters from the Gita are studied.

A hundred and fifty years ago, Karl Marx expressed surprise at the philosophy written in Indian books. The world thinks very highly of him because he promoted socialism. But seven hundred years ago, Saint Jnyaneshvara who was excommunicated, had no fuel in his house. He bent down on all fours and with the extremely poor and anti-intellectual of people (jnanaivirodhī samajata) asked Parmeshwar ji for a boon which will benefit the human race (pranimatrancya kalyanasathi 'Pasayadana' magitale) - something which we still have not understood to this day.⁶

Having looked at this picture, where do we stand today? This question is only natural. We do not study the Jnyaneshvari and Gita. Some thinkers (buddhivadi) amongst us still think that these old books are useless. Their tendency is actually anti-knowledge (jnanaivirodhī). They think that that which can be proved through practical experimentation (prayogani) should be regarded as acceptable [knowledge]. However, knowledge gained from the instincts is extremely valuable (mola) even though it has no basis in practical experimentation. If you wish, do not accept this as knowledge, but equally do not ignore it.

Modern science has satisfied man's needs. As a result of science, very modern instruments are made available such as cellular phones, computers etc.⁷ However, it is also clear that novelties made from the use of scientific knowledge, are very expensive and only really available to those who earn substantial sums of money and those who are exploiters (lutmar). Equally, gangsters from jail can talk to their gunmen and killers and get their work done.

Recently, S.S.C. examination papers were leaked (phutale). That affair causes confusion to this day. Next year, the papers should not leak. Is extreme precaution futile in this scientific age? Recently, Japan has introduced a computer phone for the wrist (managatavarila samganaka phone) which would solve exam paper after paper for the sons of rich men. When people begin to object to

wearing anything on the wrists as a precaution, then a small pill for the ear (*ekhadya golievadha*) will be made available and still they will be able to cheat in their papers. In the end, poor students will have to appear for re-examinations or entrance examinations. This sword will permanently hang over their heads (*talavara kayamaci latakata rahanara*).

Computers were invented instigating a revolution (*kranti*) in human life. These computers have reduced the burden on our brains. The need for manual labour has been reduced. The need for thinking has also become less. For a country like India which is abundant in manpower, how much more can it cope with? In the end, machines invented with scientific knowledge has made more men unemployed. Do you not feel that this has made men indolent (*nishkriya*)?

Contemporary television, a medium of several channels has been made available to us with the blessings of science. But it provides less education for the people (*lokshikshana*), and presents more immorality (*anaitikatece*) and violence in the name of entertainment.

Nowadays, from individuals that are highly educated to very ordinary people in society, one can see the deterioration of culture and conduct against scientific viewpoints [that is irrational behaviour - *vaijananika drshtikona viruddha*]. If we continue to see this then our steps may not fall in line with the twenty first century, but instead fall back into the nineteenth century.

If we want to change this situation then with the help of our culture and awareness of Vedic knowledge (*vaidik jnanace pankha* - literally on the wings of Vedic knowledge) we can make use of scientific viewpoints for the benefit of the human race. In this infinite space of the universe (*vishvacya*) one high flight (*unca bharari*) will occur and that is truly the eagle-like flight of science for mankind's future (*pranimantrancya bhavishyasathi*).

[A Sanskrit verse is then sung]

'In the heaven a thousand suns will simultaneously rise,
If it may not be exactly like that, then at least there will be a semblance of that event.'
(*Divi suryasahasrasya bhaved yuga ad uttitha, yadi bhah sadrsti sa syat bhasat tasya mahatmanah*)

First Round judges valued the *mandal*'s work for its Art Direction. Similarly, Second Round judges considered the narrative to be very enlightening and even surprising and amusing. It was the first *mandap* that they had seen which compared Karl Marx's theories with verses about equality as written by *sant Jnyaneshvara*. The comparison between the past and contemporary times, east and west, was very refreshing, and demonstrated innovative creativity on the part of the art directors. However the subject matter of scientific development was not entirely new, for it had been used before. What was delightful was the entertaining way it was presented, living up to the Konkan tradition of Ganapati shrine decorations in their homes. The Ganapati *murti* was given pride of place at the top of the steep display, and the revolving ball of light on his face was appreciated.

Queries as to the cost of the decoration left the judges full of doubts about the sincerity of the *mandal* members, however. The *mandal* members replied Rs 10,000 which was highly unlikely for the elaborate and well-thought out display. It acted against the *mandal*'s reputation, and marks were not as high as they might have been.

Judges needed to take into account the expenditure. It would be aired as a matter of debate if discrepancies were apparent in the income and expenditure of the *mandal*'s annual budget. Usually, by estimating the costs of the display, looking round at the economic character of the locality, and an estimation of the number of householders the *mandal* catered for, it was possible to estimate whether the truth had been 'dressed' up, extortionate 'donations' had been demanded or other improper practices had been indulged in. The competition organisers did not want to encourage an increase in expenditure on *mandap* tableaux (which some *mandals* seemed to think is the case if they are to win prizes), only an increase in social and religious conscientiousness. Judges used the question of expenditure and how those funds might have been raised as a means with which to evaluate the sincerity of the *mandal* members' conduct.

This *mandal* scored highest for National Integration and Social Awareness and Art Direction - 20 out of 30 and 19 out of 30 respectively, 34 out of 60 for the *murti*, and 69 out of 90 for Overall Performance. Whilst generally in agreement with First Round judges on Art Direction, the *mandal* did not go on to win any prizes on the final selection day.

5. Akhil Shivdi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal (established 1934, illustrations 74-79)

Theme: Encouragement in the Past and Development in the Present

Murtikar: V.J. Kanulkar

Art Director: Gulabrao

A large *mandap* done out like the inside of a cave revealed four insets in the wall. From left to right, they included :

- (i) a vignette with hardboard cut-outs of Shivaji and his men alongside builders and developers, amusingly called 'Ganesh & Ganesh';
- (ii) the next one showed Tilak in jail alongside a gangster phoning from prison on his cellular phone;
- (iii) the third inset on the other side showed Jotiba Phule and his wife teaching women alongside two men assaulting a woman whilst one videoed the whole affair (a reference to the Jalgaon scandal); and
- (iv) the final one showed V. D. Savarkar longing for Mother India as he stands exiled on the Andaman Islands alongside smugglers bringing in RDX bombs

Ganapati was revealed inside one of the caves to much aplomb at the end of the narrative. In the middle of the four inserts was a small pool. The taped narration went as follows whilst lights highlighted each of the four insets:

'Welcome...

'From the inspiring bright past to the directionless path in the present.'

Protector of cows and Brahmans, and symbol of Indian independence, Chatrapati Shivaji used to play with mates from the Mavla caste in his childhood. With these people, he conquered many impregnable bastilles regardless of the conditions of their whereabouts - in wild regions, mountainous crevices, through sun and through rain.

Today there is a competitive fever swallowing parts of the whole world for which there is loss of life. People act selfishly without any consideration of our motherland. Leaders have pawned the country for their own selfish interests.

Mahatma Jotiba Phule staked everything he had for female education and with his wife, Savitrabhai, he initiated a campaign for female education.

Today, young girls are subject to rape, incidents like the Jalgaon rape scandal, being burnt alive at school, insufferable persecution, loutish behaviour, bad morals and outrage.

'Home Rule is my birthright, and I shall get it', Bal Gangadhar Tilak cried out with such a lion's roar, and without any fear of the tyrannous reign. Tilak was the uncrowned emperor residing in the hearts of all Indian people.

Today, those who arrange bomb explosions openly interfere with justice simply by giving orders on cellular phones even from law courts; and terrorists threaten with gang-war.

Regardless of the waves of the high ocean, the general of independence, revolutionary hero, lover of the motherland, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar longed for the sight of India.

Nowadays, from this same ocean, evil men smuggle goods to and fro, to accumulate for their own ends. Thus intoxicated with power, it encourages the cunning and evil characters to disfigure the face of India by using weapons like bomb explosives RDX.'

[Music is put on full volume, the fountains in front of the middle area are put on, and the sides of the middle cave open up to reveal Ganapati sitting resplendently on his seat.]

First Round judges had judged the *mandal* highly for its *murti*, Art Direction, and National Integration and Social Awareness. The Second Round judges were also impressed by the quality of the Art Direction. Everything was synchronised very well, including text, lights and movement of cave doors and fountain to make for a very satisfying experience. The comparisons between the past and the present had an interesting and fresh twist to them. The text was well-informed and intelligent.

The effect of the *murti* was heightened by the wonderful effects of the cave opening and the fountain waters switched on. Later the fountain waters were left on whilst visitors could do full *darshan* of the *murti*. The surroundings and Art Direction made the *murti* look that much more beautiful in the eyes of the judges. Thus it is never always a technical evaluation of the *murti*, but one that also seeks some kind of soul satisfaction (*samadhana*) which is attained by full all-round consideration of its surroundings as well (see Chapter Six).

The costs of the *mandap* came to Rs 60,000 including Rs 10,000 for the *murti* - considered a reasonable sum for the locality. Gulabrao, the art director, was a professional artist who had done various art direction assignments for advertisements and films. His knowledge and experience of dramatic effects was well exemplified by the *mandap*'s art direction as well. The *mandal* went on to win First Prize in Art Direction. It also fared well in evaluations of the *murti* - 48 out of 60, National Integration and Social Awareness - 21 out of 30, and Overall Performance - 72 out of 90.

¹As with commemorative events to do with the Ganapati *utsava*, the year of Independence, 1947, is included in the calibrations here, such that 1996 was in fact the fiftieth recurrence of Independence Day on August 15th.

²Arjuna had made the vow out of personal revenge as Jayadratha had killed his son. On the day of Jayadratha's birth, there was a heavenly prophecy that the child would grow up to be a skilled fighter, but in the midst of a battle, an enemy of exceptional valour would cut off his head. Jayadratha's father, Vridhakshetra, cursed that whoever caused his son's head to roll on the ground would have his head shatter into a hundred fragments. Krishna knew of this unjust curse and helped turn it against Vridhakshetra himself. Thus on the day of the battle with Arjuna, Krishna caused the day to darken. Jayadratha poked his head out of his protective shell and Arjuna managed to fire his arrows at him in such a skilful manner that Jayadratha's severed head was carried aloft on his arrows, and gently landed in the lap of his father who was sitting in prayer and meditation. At the end of his prayers Vridhakshetra got up and the head of his son rolled down on the floor. In accordance with his own curse, his head instantly burst into a hundred fragments.

³Tukaram is more often described as a saint (*sant*). *Maharaj* implies the sense of glorious, rather than royalty.

⁴This verse in the *Bhagavad Gita* explains the state of the earth after a terrible apocalyptic explosion.

⁵Implicit in this discussion is the idea that those in the west destroy the world out of materialistic greed and egotistic values, whereas the Indian scientist lives more for what service he can be to mankind and society. This paradigm of the west as lacking sentiment, compassion and civilised values is compared with the ideal of the altruistic, servile Indian innovator.

⁶Even though one might pick historical inaccuracies in this account, it is the purpose to which this local history is put to that should be of most concern. The hegemony of an accurate tabulated history lends such narratives an aura of falsity, and of propaganda. However objective history as we understand it in the west succeeds by subtle and invisible distortions of the nature of time, the character of event, and the legitimacy of the characters that populate historical narratives. It has become normalised and equivalent to real time and history.

The purpose of this narration is to demonstrate that the seeds of a socialist ethic also lay in Indian history. Modern people always look towards the west for pioneering thoughts and inventions. The *mandal* asks why credit Karl Marx with the messiah role, and proposes that everyone should look towards Indian thinkers who have led society forward and fought against injustices. Maharashtra has had a strong tradition of reformist saints as with Jnyaneshvara, Tukaram, Ramdas etc. Here, it is

recalled that Jnyaneshvara who lived in a depressed and anti-intellectual environment, preached equality of all groups and wrote a book to these ends.

⁷In 1995, cellular phones were newly introduced into main cities in India, namely Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and Madras, and then later other cities as well. They became the latest prestige symbol. Many film stars in Mumbai, for instance, as well as seeing these instruments as highly advantageous for their hectic schedules, were also seen posing with them in several magazine photographs. The phones were priced at exorbitant sums, more so than in other countries, and were for many an object of fantasy and intrigue. Three years afterwards, cellular phones are less a novelty, yet still remain unaffordable for many Indians. Most journalists, for instance, have since 1996, been supplied with pagers for efficient communication. Cellular phones still remain an upper-middle class convenience tool.

Computers have been around in India for a couple of decades now, but have only really begun to enter the commercial markets since the 1980s. With the success of Silicon Valley in Bangalore and an indigenous industry being developed for the manufacture of computers, PC's as opposed to Apple Macintoshs (which remain scant) are evident in most successful business, office and commercial sectors. Banks have begun to be computerised throughout the country since the mid-1990s, and internet and e-mail connections have also been supplied.

Such communication technological breakthroughs and developments were instigated in the 1980s under the encouragement of Rajiv Gandhi's government. They have been given an extra tonic by the liberalisation programmes initiated by Manmohan Singh's economic reforms since 1993 where more foreign and multi-national corporations have been allowed collaborative business for the Indian markets.

Appendix III

The Final Round of the *Girnar-Loksatta Ganeshotsava* Competition

Unlike the other two rounds of the competition, this round consisted of intensive discussions between all the Second Round judges watching recordings of each of the *mandals* that were in the Second Round. This discussion was held two days after the Second Round. The recordings had been done by a camera team the same day as the Second Round judging.

Twelve judges along with *Loksatta* journalists and editors sat around a television set watching video recordings of all the twenty finalists in order to agree on the winners. It was up to each team of judges to be able to discuss all the *mandals* that they had seen in order to explain to the others each of the *mandal*'s good and bad points, for there was not always enough time to sit through each of the *mandal* recordings which sometimes could take up to fifteen minutes each. Photographs of *murtis* and tableauxdecorations were handed out for each of the *mandals*. With twenty *mandals* to go through, main points were noted down for each with particular attention paid to categories the *mandals* had already been marked highly for, and winners decided by animated discussion afterwards. I briefly account for the *mandals* and the themes that they dwelled upon along with the results that they had accrued in the Second Round, followed by main points that emerged in the judges' debates after videoed viewings of all the Second Round *mandals*.¹

1. Shankavadi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Jogeshvari East.

Theme: Bandista Bharatamata, Pashmukta karu ata (Captive India, We will Release it from Bondage)

Overall Performance: 50 out of 90

Social Awareness: 14 out of 30

Murtikar - Ramesh Ravale: 33 out of 60

Art Director: Gopal Manohar Jadhav: 14 out of 30

Unlike the other *mandals*, this tableau had a Hindi narrative, indicative of the non-Maharshtrians living in the area - a north eastern suburb of Mumbai. The theme of this *mandap* was an exposition on the threats against national unity as posed by separatists in Kashmir and Assam, and threatening events such as the Mumbai bomb explosions of 1993, said to be executed by foreign terrorists. The *mandap* display showed a map of India with its respective states, next to the large tricolour flag of India. A figure of Bharatamata (Mother India) stood in front, and small buildings were set to the side which fell down when the narrative discussed the Mumbai bomb explosions. The states of Kashmir and Assam were lit up as the narrative discussed separatist movements. Then the map of India was lifted to reveal the *murti* as prayers to Ganapati were made to keep the nation safe and intact.

To place the marks attributed to this *mandal* in the Second Round in context, the *mandal* fared averagely well in all categories against the highest mark of 86 out of 90 for Overall Performance, 22 out of 30 for National Integration and Social Awareness, 55 out of 60 for the *murti*, and 23 out of 30 for Art Direction.

Although such displays about national integration were approved of by the judges, they had appeared time and time again. Buildings falling down on the set were

seen in a few *mandal* decorations in the previous two years. This *mandal* therefore did not demonstrate any novel touches to this type of *mandap*. The *mandal* did not win any prizes.

2. Shri Ganesh Vyayak Shala, Goregaon West

Theme: *Vishnu Purana*

Overall Performance: 69 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 10 out of 30

Murtikar - Babal Brothers: 36 out of 60

Art Director - Rajaram Sarphare: 20 out of 30

The *mandal* was marked highly for Overall Performance and the Art Direction in the Second Round. The set was sprawled out into different sections with ten scenes 'almost as if one is in a museum display.' Each display showed different avatars of Vishnu. Scenes included human-sized displays of Narasimha, Krishna , Buddha, Parshuram, Ram and so forth. The last display showed Vishnu and Lakshmi in an earthly paradise with cut-outs of clouds ascending up to the heavens At the top of this were the gods in the heavensand Ganapati sitting underneath a revolving umbrella.

The judges that had visited the *mandap* were enthusiastic about the concept and its sophisticated execution. They remembered the scene with Krishna holding up Mount Govardhana as being particularly spectacular. Real water was used for the display of Krishna's protection of the earth from the angry and heavy rains of the god, Indra. The concept was considered to have been thought through very carefully, demonstrated very good observation on the part of the art director, and each display even had its own musical *raga*.

Judges speculated about the costs of the display, and the problem of *mandal* members exaggerating the truth. 'Could this be another 'Shiv Sena special?' ', one judge quipped, pointing out the possible involvement of these *shakas* with fund donations.

Another comment concerned the fact that the display had little social or nationalist messages for today. It was just a rendition of the traditional story in a very skilful way, but not interpreted for modern times. This is one reason why the *mandal* did not do better than win one consolation prize for Overall Performance (see below for overall results).

3. Sarvajanik Ganesh Mandal, Malad.

Theme: *Mi Hindustan Boltoy, Atmachitra (I speak Hindustani - an Autobiography)*

Overall Performance: 62 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 18 out of 30

Murtikar - Rajan Jhad: 40 out of 60

Art Director - Raju Patil Seva Sangh: 16 out of 30

The theme of the *mandap* elaborated on the development of national culture over the last hundred and fifty years. With a cut-out replica of the nation talking about its recent history, the narration went through a number of freedom fighters such as Savarkar, Gandhi and others who have done good for the nation to present its case. The making of the nation over the last hundred and fifty years was presented rather than a celebration of the fifty years old history of the formed nation. Later, an opening in the map of India opened up to reveal Ganapati sitting on a throne.

The judges watched the video for unique points whilst those judges that had seen the *mandal* explained what was going on. The lay-out of the cut-outs around a standing map which opened to reveal Ganapati was considered interesting. The use of Lata Mangeshkar's songs from the film, *Kalapani* about the freedom fighter, V. D. Savarkar, at this point was also commended for its effects.

The *mandal* was being contested for Overall Performance, but did not quite clinch the deal in the Final Round. It did not win any prizes.

4. Shiv Sena Pursakrut Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Kandivali.

Theme: Pravacan (Teachings through Song)

Overall Performance: 67 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 20 out of 30

Murtikar - Ganesh Art: 47 out of 60

Art Director - Satish Satam: 17 out of 30

The *mandap* setting was that of a *mandir* interior. The Ganapati *murti* was shown against a beautifully painted sky and revolving globe lights. Around it were mannequins of *kirtankars* (singers) with Maharashtrian headgear and moving their arms along to the narration. The narrative spoke of the long history of saints in Maharashtra who popularised ideas about social equality and goodwill. This was interpreted by the *kirtankars* through song.

The *mandal* was being contested for Overall Performance and the *murti*. The *murti* was indeed considered beautiful in its setting, but as it turned out, not compared to some of the others yet to be commented upon below. The *mandal* was close to winning a consolation prize for Overall Performance, but failed on the point of not relating the *kirtans* to a modern-day context. The *mandal* did not win any prizes.

5. Ekta Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Borivali

Theme: Sanskar Bharata (Indian Culture)

Overall Performance: 59 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 18 out of 30

Murtikar - Nandkumar Shivalkar: 39 out of 60

Art Director - Sanjay Salavi, Dilip Murudkar and Vijay Mandadavkar: 15 out of 30

Around a *murti* of Ganapati writing a page in a book sat several models of boys and girls in the act of learning to read and write. Ganapati recited good things about India which the boys and girls repeated. They asked questions as they might a teacher, to which Ganapati replied.

The *mandal* was considered for the category of National Integration and Social Awareness. The *mandal*'s project encouraged literacy and awareness of social and cultural matters about India. The judges considered that the tableau was particularly effective in communicating to children, as it delivered its message in a fresh and lively way. Yet compared to some other *mandals* who effected this task much more interestingly, it did not succeed in winning any prizes.

6. Sri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Dahisar (illustration 80)

Theme: Svatantriya Suvarna Mahotsavi Varsh (The Golden Anniversary of Indian Freedom)

Overall Performance: 86 out of 90

This *mandal* did exceptionally well in all categories and went on to win three prizes: First Prizes for Overall Performance, and National Integration and Social Awareness, and Second Prize for Art Direction. Consequently I visited the *mandal* for myself, and have reproduced the narrative here.

In the centre, was a representation of the Indian flag which acted as a kind of narrator for the tableaux. Around it were small vignettes - three long ones on each side, continuing the levels of the three colours of the flags, such that they became symbolic picturisations of the respective colours. The narrative spoke from the point of view of the flag which, it was claimed, should be held high and proud. In order for this to happen, people must respect their country and kin. Each of the colours of the flag symbolised something in particular: saffron represented bravery, renunciation and knowledge; white represented peace, truth and holiness; and green represented the beauty of the motherland, its vegetation, fruit, rains and fertility. Each of the six scenes represented stories to illustrate these points. They were lit up as the narration reached the appropriate point. The narrative went as follows:

'Welcome! Hail to our motherland!

'In all of the universe the most successful and most dear is our flag. Our flag should remain high'.

But how can it remain flying high?

Attached to one end of a stick, you have placed me in the hands of little school boys like a toy.

Why are you looking hither and thither? I am your tricolour flag.

The freedom that you have earned stepping down from the sacrificial platform, draped around oneself like a jewelled cloth; that freedom is now almost fifty years old.

To celebrate this, you have come to visit me in the presence of Ganesha. A million thanks for that.

I have received your garlands, your expressions of victory. Long live your cries of victory.

I have received your military salutations, all those that I could not possibly have imagined. While our people were being hung, while they were shedding blood, I had a sort of a dream. It was about how the poor were provided with shelter, clothing and food to nourish their hungry stomachs. Let's try for this kind of freedom, this kind of realisation, O Fate! The freedom in the golden festive years - this is my vision. Take my inner (spiritual) self into your thoughts.

Look at my saffron colour. Look at it very closely. What does this colour of mine say?

[A vignette to the side of the flag is lit up showing various figurines.]

Bravery, renunciation and knowledge.

Look at the Mahabharata. The great warrior, Karan, charitably gave his own earrings and armour away as an extreme sacrifice to a Brahmin (dan).² Similarly, Ramdas nurtured a philosophical king like Shivaji. By the sacrifices of several freedom fighters and both known and unknown martyrs, our country was made free from slavery. Even the common people now support eye donations, blood donations and food to the victims of earthquakes. People have contributed their efforts from these acts of total sacrifice.

Having seen these grand examples of sacrifice, a little girl asks her father, 'Baba, what donations have you made?' The father says, 'I have donated my vote.'

Of what use is this donation if not given to a deserving person? Now just consider the squandering of donations: The blood donated is used in foreign lands, eye donations are also thrown away in foreign lands. The role played by freedom fighters is now being assumed by terrorists. And consider this example of 'bravery': Nobody is prepared to save a child drowning in a well! Is there any generous person who is doing anything positive here? They're all standing on the edge of the well and just looking at the drowning boy, saying, 'Alas! Alas!'

[The second vignette corresponding to, and symbolic of the white colour of the flag is lit up.]

(ii) *The peace that is symbolised by white - its truth and holiness. White represents the sanctity of Ram - devoted to one truth, one wife and one speech. White conjures up the splendid vision of Ram and the cool personality characteristic of Hanuman. Without making any loud mention of concepts like peace and competence, the means of great joy for all people lie simply in this harmony of peace and devotion.*

Satisfaction: Little children manage to represent the extremely noble and holistic image of India's cultural activities. The young student, who is overcoming all these difficulties and seeking after light from the darkness of the night is representing the truth and nothing but the truth.

(iii) *As an outcome of black market money, there is exam paper leakage, and the proliferation of extra tuition. Is this about truth and holiness?*

What are these dirty blemishes which appear on my person? Do they represent my corruption? They are the impressions of civic values that one picks up in adolescence.

One cannot suffer to see the transformation of a sanctimonious house into a public bar. The holiness seems to have now become swallowed up in a muck of wine bars. We now see women in the form of waitresses in bars. Is this the culmination of our fight for freedom for women? Where are we heading?

(v) *The green colour. Our motherland - land of plentiful rain, fruit, cool atmospheres (caused by mountain breezes), dark green with plenty of cornfields. Hail to our motherland! But has it remained like this? My motherland on which birds and beasts can freely thrive, where there is auspiciousness on this land.*

(vi) *Now between me and my owner, a bitter strife is happening which is going to cost lives. And the important men of this society are just sitting there clapping their hands.*

And look at this degradation of women.

[A woman is shown being beaten up by a man.]

Woman are supposed to be a symbol of auspiciousness.

This is the condition of our world.

The vegetation, trees and creepers are being destroyed, and in its place is emerging a jungle of steel and cement. Where is that world of plentiful rain and fruit now? Where is that land of plenty again?

[The lights focus on the flag alone.]

O man, there is still some time and hope left. Open! Open your eyes! What is the message of this Wheel of Ashoka?

[The two panels with which the flag is made opens up to reveal the murti of Ganapati.]

Listen carefully. And in the presence of the murti of Ganesha, once more repeat your vow: 'It will be done! I will do it!'

Let not its pride vanish, even if it takes our lives, we will show everyone the conquering of the universe. Then we will complete our vow: 'The tricolour flag is successful and precious in all of the universe. Our flag should remain flying high.'

The Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal tableau was appreciated by the judges for its unique look at the flag. Generally the colours are taken to symbolise the different communities of India, but this *mandal* took a more poetic, yet equally valid, 'symbolic' look. The tableau was also represented in an interesting fashion, with the prime focus given to the flag flanked on both sides by three levels of vignettes. Then the sides of the flag opened up to reveal Ganapati.

The theme was varied enough to hold people's interest, but not sprawled all over the place including anything and everything without rhyme or reason. The tableau commentary did not just go through a litany of freedom fighters which is the case with several *mandap* tableaux, but brought the message down to the common man and his/her responsibility to keep the flag flying high. Thus it was not run-of-the-mill in its interpretation and promulgation of the message of national integration.

7. Sarvajanik Sri Ganeshotsava Mandal, Dahisar

Theme: Saptapadhi (The Seven Steps of Life)

Overall Performance: 56 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 17 out of 30

Murtikar - Dushyanth Hatkar: 35 out of 60

Art Director - Sharad Pol: 15 out of 30

The *mandal* stood out for its unique subject matter in the display of a man and woman at their nuptials taking their seven steps symbolic of the steps they will take in life around the sacred fire. Cut-outs of congregation members were set behind the moving mannequins, and large feet with sacred messages were pasted at particular points around the *mandap*.

Despite the originality of the tableau, and skill in its execution, the judges felt that there could have been a more clearer social message imparted. It was not enough to demonstrate the *saptapadhi* ceremony, rather, relate these admonitions for the couple to people in society at large. Thus it did not sustain the judges' interests for long and the *mandal* did not win any prizes.

8. Akhil Shivdi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Shivdi (illustrations 74-79)

Theme: Encouragement in Past and Development in Present

Overall Performance: 72 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 21 out of 30

Murtikar - V.J. Kamulkar: 48 out of 60

Art Director - Gulabrao: 22 out of 30

This *mandal* has already been described (Second Round, *mandal* number 5). A large *mandap* decorated like the inside of a cave revealed four insets in the wall. They were based on the theme of comparing glories of the past as exemplified by prominent people such as Shivaji, Tilak, Phule and Savarkar, and the corruption of the present, as exemplified by greedy developers, unscrupulous gangsters, molesters of women, and smugglers of explosives.

Again, the judges found the Art Direction most compelling. The execution of the subject matter was considered sophisticated yet simple. It was dramatic without compromising itself to sensationalist tactics. The *mandal* was also considered for the excellence of its *murti* - it complemented the *mandal* one, was well-proportioned, and showed a dynamic pose with one leg up on the seat and one leg down. But this *murti* paled next to the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal *murti* in the eyes of the judges.

The *mandal* went on to win First Prize for Art Direction, as well as Third Prize for Overall Performance. The latter was at the bequest of the judges who had visited the *mandal* members and were convinced by their sincerity in their work for the community.

9. Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Mazgaon (illustrations 69-70)

Theme: Our Freedom Struggle

Overall Performance: 56 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 14 out of 30

Murtikar - Rajan Jhad: 33 out of 60

Art Director: 14 out of 30

This *mandal* has been commented upon above (Second Round, *mandal* number three). Going into the fort construction, one walked into a large anteroom. Musicians sat on a circular platform surrounded by water and played traditional songs as in Shivaji's times. After walking across this room, steps led into the *mandap* proper.

A large *murti* of Ganapati was presented sitting on a giant *mushaka*. The tableau around the *murti* related the heroic deeds of past saints and revolutionaries who promoted and fought for the culture and freedom of India. It was a commemorative piece of work to the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence.

Mazgaon Dakshin Vibhag Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal generated a debate about the notably low profile that the Shiv Sena are making in terms of their visibility in *mandap* decorations. Whereas, last year there were numerous *mandaps* that had blatantly Shiv Sena propagandist message with hardboard cut-outs of Bal Thackeray, this year there were a lot less. The judges surmised that this was due to the notoriety and slurs made against certain Shiv Sainiks especially about corruption and murder (see Chapter Eight). Thus, the majority of *mandals* that were controlled by Shiv Sena branches tended to stress the religious and mythological rather than the topical this year. This publicity display of religious subject matter was also possibly a campaign to further their religious and moral standing in the eyes of the public.

The extravagant costs of Rs 4 lakhs were a far-cry from the success of this *mandal* last year with their less expensive but more effective display about 'The Question of Water' the previous year. This *mandap* display had a booming narration, rather than a sophisticated and lyrical one as of last year, and the *mandap* display was figured with very small cut-outs, eclipsed by a very large Ganapati that was towering above it. There was no complementarity with this large *murti* and the small figures, nor indeed, with this room and the anteroom with the musicians next door. It was more show than substance, and thus did not win any prizes this year.

10. Pangeri Chawl Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal , Byculla (illustrations 71-2)

Theme: Scientific Development (Vidnyanaci Garuda Jhepa ane Manava' - literally 'The eagle-like flight of science and mankind)

Overall Performance: 69 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 20 out of 30

Murtikar - Arvind Chavan: 34 out of 60

Art Director - Maruti Shinde and Pradip Pandit: 19 out of 30

This *mandal* has already been commented upon above (Second Round, *mandal* number four). Inside the *mandap* a steep display of small models was laid out. Ganapati sat like a *raja* with Maharashtrian headgear at the top of the display. Underneath the *murti* was a small projector screen on to which shots of various scenes were shown. Around this central piece were vignettes of Arjuna shooting an arrow, rockets, *sant* Tukaram flying up to heaven, test tube babies, man with a telescope, students, Vyasmuni, Valimiki and so forth.

The theme of the tableau compared activities and events that could be seen as egalitarian and scientific which are indigenous to Indian scriptures, and the ideological and scientific innovations originating in the west. Whilst applauding the benefits of scientific development, the narration also spoke of how this was more accessible to rich people than poor, and can even work against poor people especially when it came to educational matters. The narrative also pointed out how scientific innovations can result in the deterioration of a moral society, particularly when television is used to

promote a culture of sex and violence. The final message was that scientific development needs to go hand in hand with knowledge of Indian culture and heritage, and then, it can be to the moral and cultural benefit of all people in India.

The *mandap* narrative was appreciated for its overall message and in its interpretation of the Hindu scriptures, and the tableau ^{was considered} ~~entertaining~~ and informative. The subject matter was fresh, and inclusions of thinkers like Lenin and Marx were considered unique for a Ganesh *mandal*. However, the inclusion of papers such as *Navsakal*, *Loksatta* and *Samna* on the projections as an illustration of modern literacy was considered slightly manipulative perhaps. For it was uncanny that it was these newspaper-run competitions that this *mandal* was entered into. The cut-outs were considered as slightly too small, but the fact that they had been made by local talents was commended.

The *mandal* went on to win a consolation prize for Overall Performance. The prize was awarded primarily to encourage local artists' work and the community orientation of the *mandal*'s work and *mandap* tableau. The *mandal* was also put forward for the prize of Art Direction, but failed next to the Sri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal of Dahisar due mainly to the smallness of the models, and disparate display. It did not carry the same amount of drama or performance quality as the other *mandal*, although substantively, they were comparable. This debate then turned into one with local talents as and against professional art directors. The involvement of the community was obviously a strong point in this *mandal*'s favour, but still not enough to tip the balance. Thus it did not win any prizes for Art Direction.

11. Navaprakash Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Ganjawala Compound (illustration 68)

Theme: Asthavinayaka

Overall Performance: 34 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 10 out of 30

Murtikar - Vijay Patkar: 33 out of 60

Art Director - Vilas L. Ghadigaonkar: 11 out of 30

This *mandal* has already been commented upon (Appendix II, *mandal* number one). A small stage boxed in gauze on the front and foliage and trees on the other three sides, showed various figures in different positions. The decorative *murti* of Ganapati was not immediately visible, but was revealed from behind screens at the end of the narration. The scene related the story of the young boy Praladh who was a devotee of Ganapati to his father's chagrin. One day he chanced upon a *svyambhu* Ganapati, and he and his friends began to worship the *murti*. The villagers complained about how Praladh was leading all the boys astray. Praladh's father came to beat his son up. Praladh carried on praying to Ganapati regardless. Then Ganapati made an appearance in the figure of a Brahmin. Pleased by Praladh's devotion, he granted him a wish. Praladh asked that this site be sanctified and be remembered by all. Thus it was named Sri Balveshvar, and exists to this day as part of the eight sites of Asthavinayaka.

The final round discussions rested more upon the technical details and substance of the story. As with the previous viewing, some judges felt that the *mandap* and the tableau was too small. But some suggested that 'small is good'. It encouraged *mandals* to concentrate on substance rather than the spectacular which always mounts up costs. It displayed a judicious use of funds, and is also more likely to involve local talents than bringing in outside professional artists. Small also had a special value in that it

encourages children to also get involved in the *mandal*'s work, as well as imparting a message which can be directly appreciated. The use of children in the *mandap* enhanced the ability to communicate to children.

Nonetheless, the *mandap* tableau did not offer a particular interpretation of the story of Praladh which could be immediately useful for contemporary life. Its shortcomings were mainly the lack of a modern-day social message. The *mandal* did not win any prizes.

12. Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Tardeo (illustration 65)

Theme: Halebid Shivmandir

Overall Performance: 60 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 10 out of 30

Murtiker - Vijay Khatu: 45 out of 60

Art Director: Chandrakant Palo: 21 out of 30

This *mandal* has already been discussed (Appendix I, *mandal* number twenty two, and Appendix II, *mandal* number two). The *mandap* display was of the interior of a typical *mandir* found on the historical site of Halebid. It was made out of thermocol and spray-painted grey. Columns and walls were finely carved with friezes of lions and elephants. At the end of this colonnaded interior was an opening through which a seven foot bronze coloured *murti* of Ganapati could be seen sat on a throne .

As with the other round of judges, the judges were struck most by the *murti* - its colouring and proportions, as well as how wonderfully the setting complemented the design of the *murti*. The bronze of the *murti* contrasted well with the grey of the *mandir* interior, and the blue behind the throne introduced a touch of cool colour to the bronze *murti*. Thus it fared well here, and went on to win First Prize for the *murti*. However, it did not attain any other prizes, primarily due to the lack of socially relevant substance to the tableau theme.

13. Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Bandra

Theme: Mulanci Mansik Jatan Ghadan. (Children's Intellectual Development)

Overall Performance: 50 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 15 out of 30

Murtikar - Shri Varaskar: 34 out of 60

Art Director - R.K. Desai: 13 out of 30

Placed around a flag of India were several cut-outs of students. Models of other vignettes swung out from the sides. The *mandap* narrative discussed the changes in educational patterns in the last fifty years. It pointed out all the prominent figures who have worked to make India a great country of learning such as Jnyaneshvara, and those that have fought against tyranny and corruption such as Shivaji, the Chaphekar brothers, and Savarkar. Then it compared this glorious heritage with the extortionate and unjust charges that are the bane of a student's life, such as Capital Tax, and corruption such as examination papers being leaked out as happened in that year.

The judges thought that a celebration of the country's fifty years through a focus on its educational system was not only relevant for the nation, but in particular, got its message across to youth. The comparison of the past where education was for the community and national welfare, to the present period where it has become a self-interested and corrupt pursuit was very topical in the light of examination papers being

found to be leaked in the last school examinations. However, compared to the other *mandal* presentations, the *mandal* did not merit enough praise to gain prizes.

14. Shiv Sena Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Andheri

Theme: Jyotiba Mandir, Kolhapur

Overall Performance: 63 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 17 out of 30

Murtikar - Ramesh Ravale: 42 out of 60

Art Director - Ratnakar Phadke: 19 out of 30

A large replica of the Jyotiba Mandir in Kolhapur lit up with an extravagant display of lights greeted the visitor. The interior was done out in the same way as the original temple, with a *murti* of Jyotiba, which according to the judges, was 'like the real thing'. In another section of the *mandir* replica was Ganapati almost lying to its side on some cushions. Visitors walked through the *mandap* as they would a real *mandir* to these separate sections.

The colour schemes of the *murti* was striking - white *lunghi*, orange *pheta* and grey body. It made the *murti* stand out from all the others. The proportions of the *murti* were also deemed as correct. Its pose was considered as interesting but unconventional. For these reasons, the *murtikar* attained Second Prize. The judges were conscious of the fact that the *murti* was slightly unconventional, particularly in its pose, but still wished to give it credit for its boldness. It was still in the end a *dharmik* pose, for there were several reclining Ganapatis in Pune, for instance. This one however was more graceful than the stocky ones found in Pune, and its colour scheme was also more 'modern' in its combination of orange, white and grey.

Even though an impressive realistic rendition of the *mandir*, its grandness did not totally seduce the judges. They were more conscious of the amount of funds used - Rs 1 1/2 lakhs, and not surprised that the art director was a professional from the cinema world. It was well known that the *mandal* was controlled by prominent Shiv Sena ministers. This allowed the *mandals* to accumulate funds from party operations and resources. It was thus not considered as bona fide for consideration for prizes in other categories.

15. Bal Mitra Kala Mandal, Vikhroli (illustrations 81-82)

Theme: Jivan Drisht (Viewpoint on Life)

Overall Performance: 74 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 22 out of 30

Murtikar - Vijay Khatu: 47 out of 60

Art Director - Narendra Bhagvat: 21 out of 30

The theme of the *mandap* considered the examples of people's lives which were a credit to the nation. The anteroom to the *mandap* proper was covered with large placards with summaries about the life of modern-day heroes of the nation, such as the singer Lata Mangeshkar, the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, J. J. School Deputy Director M. R. Achrekar, Mother Teresa, former Chief Minister Yeshvantrao Chavan, the astronaut Rakesh Sharma, the actor Raj Kapoor, the writer P. L. Deshpande and the Indian Police Service Officer Kiran Bedi. At the far end of the room was a map made out of the portraits of other national heroes such as Bhagat Singh, Bose, Sukhdev and so forth. This room led on to the *mandap* stage where a leafy scenario

was shown with the *sant* Jnyaneshvara sitting on the wall with his sister and two brothers. A *rishi* was represented on a tiger advancing to the children.

The story related the *rishi*'s challenge to Jnyaneshvara to prove his godly powers. The wall on which they were sitting consequently moved towards the *rishi*, at which point the *rishi* was humbled into recognising the powers of Jnyaneshvara as and against his own. To the side of this vignette was a teacher who opened up a large standing book on to which projections were shown, almost as if the pages of the book were being flipped over. The other page had mottoes on it such as 'Truth always prevail' ('Nehmi kharac bolane'). The instructions from the story about Jnyaneshvara and the *rishi* were interpreted for the children through pictures and mottoes in the book.

The *mandal* had made a special point to reach out to children and provide for their educational needs with their social work. The *mandap* tableau was also made with children in mind. It was both informative and entertaining. It invoked a religious story and interpreted it such that it had a social relevance to today. The setting was well-thought out with all the main figures well-placed and on large *vahanas* or other such items. The *murti* looked right for the jungle setting on its large *vahana*. The sky and surroundings were also well-executed.

The *mandal* was contested for Overall Performance, and it succeeded in winning Second Prize in that category. It came close to gaining a prize for Social Awareness as well but was pipped to the post by the Sri Sarvajanik Ganesh Mandal in Dahisar. It was fourth in line for highest marks gained for the *murti* but was beaten by the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Tardeo and the Shiv Sena Sarvajanik Utsav Mandal. Another close contender for this category was the Akhil Shivdi Mandal, which instead went on to win First Prize for Art Direction and Third Prize for Overall Performance.

16. Vrindavan Ganesh Mandal, Thane

Theme: Utpannaci Zade Lava, Sanrudha Kara (Cultivating Trees and Plants make the Country Prosperous)

Overall Performance: 67 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 17 out of 30

Murtikar - Sidhivinayak Kala Kendra: 40 out of 60

Art Director - Nishikant Acharekar: 15 out of 30

With Ganapati sitting in a very lush garden area, this *mandap* talked of the benefits of looking after the country, and not polluting the environment. Some of the foliage even covered parts of the *murti*. Someone quipped that it looked like 'Konkan ka California.' Judges moved on to the next *mandal*.

17. Prathanik Shala Police Headquarters, Thane

Theme: Andharatun Prakashakade (From Darkness to Light)

Overall Performance: 56 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 17 out of 30

Murtikar - Praful Nandivakar: 40 out of 60

Art Director - Sunil Pawar: 13 out of 30

Against a setting of the Red Fort, various cut-outs of Tilak, Savarkar etc. were set out. These were all made by children directed by the art director. The *mandap* related

the emergence of India from the dark age of colonialism, and posed the question about the dark age being upon us again, and that we need to bring ourselves out into light again.

The judges appreciated the sentiment of the *mandap*, and the fact that youngsters had helped create the set. However, compared to the other *mandals* it did averagely well, and was not in the top running order for prizes.

18. Ekvira Mitra Mandal, Thane

Theme: Adhunik City - Thane (Modern City - Thane)

Overall Performance: 64 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 18 out of 30

Murtikar - Jaywant Mankane: 40 out of 60

Art Director - Anand Nadkarni: 15 out of 30

Many small cut-outs of life in an growing town from farmers to workers were shown around the Ganapati *murti*. The history of this area of Greater Mumbai was related - from it being part of a series of islands to its present day character.

Judges that had visited the *mandal* pointed out how extensive the research was by the *mandal* members. They informed them of how the name evolved from Shree Sthana to Thane, and even showed the first train in Mumbai. The execution of the *mandap* tableau was also commended. The information was delivered through an entertaining text. The *mandal* went on to win a consolation prize for Overall Performance in tribute to the collective educational work and research that the *mandal* had clearly demonstrated. This was despite the fact that it had scored less points from the Second Round than some other *mandals* - a promotion that was due to the consensus on its original research on Thane for the *mandap* tableau.

19. Shivneri Mitra Mandal, Thane

Theme: Pratyaksha Rashi Darshan (Vision of the Actual Constellations - that is, Zodiac signs)

Overall Performance: 76 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 19 out of 30

Murtikar - Dinkar Chavan: 54 out of 90

Art Director - Kishor Neshtri: 21 out of 30

The *mandal* had fared very well in the category of Overall Performance for the sincere social work that they had conducted, although as far as the display went, there was little to demonstrate this. The *mandal* went for the beautiful rather than the substantial in its *mandap* display. In a darkened room, signs of the Zodiac were highlighted with different coloured luminous paint in the sky. The Ganapati *murti* was placed in the centre of the constellation.

The judges felt that the display was indeed striking, but sought something more of a message. One judge thought that the representations of the Zodiac signs were not 'picturised' very well. They lacked solidity and looked a little 'plastic'. Nonetheless, despite shortcomings about the play, the *mandal* was awarded a consolation prize for Overall Performance due to consideration of the *mandals'* social work as a whole.

20. Jagmata Charitable Trust Kolbad Mitra mandal, Thane

Theme: Kanya Dam, Mumbai Water Scheme

Overall Performance: 65 out of 90

National Integration and Social Awareness: 22 out of 30

Murtikar - Chandrakant Gore: 33 out of 60

Art Director - Kolbad Mitra Mandal: 14 out of 30

This *mandal* did a presentation of the water system in Mumbai, with running lights that went on and off to trace the path of the water. Narmada Dam and Konya Dam were constructed around the *murti* of Ganapati. Its message was how to utilise water effectively and efficiently.

The judges liked the simple theme, and the execution of it using lights. It was a very socially useful presentation, and was in the running for the prize for National Integration and Social Awareness, but did not succeed due to comparatively more merit given to the Dahisar *mandal*.

Overview

The running order for seven contenders for Overall Performance prizes here depending upon scores attributed to it by the teams of judges was:

- (i) 86 for Shri Sarvajanik Ganesh Mandal, Dahisar - attained First Prize;
- (ii) 76 for Shivneri Mitra Mandal, Thane - attained a consolation prize;
- (iii) 74 for Bal Mitra Kala Mandal, Vikhroli - attained Second Prize;
- (iv) 72 for Akhil Shivdi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Shivdi - attained Third Prize;
- (v) 69 for Pangeri Chawl Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Byculla - attained a consolation prize;
- (vi) 69 for Shri Ganesh Vyayam Shala, Goregaon - attained a consolation prize;
- (vii) 67 for Shiv Sena Purskrut Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Kandiwali;
- (viii) 67 for Vrindavan Ganesh Mandal, Thane;
- (ix) Jagmata Charitable Kolba Mitra Mandal, Thane; and
- (x) Ekvira Mitra Mandal, Thane - attained a consolation prize.

By a process of elimination, this order for prizes was agreed upon. The main discrepancy between Second Round judges and this stage of judging concerned *mandal* (ii) the Shivneri Mitra Mandal, which attained only a consolation prize when it was second in line, and (ix) the Ekvira Mitra Mandal, which attained a consolation prize over and above three *mandals* that had scored higher than it. The reasons were as the Shivneri Mitra Mandal excelled in the beauty of the display of Zodiac Sign display, it did not have a social message to impart, and thus was downgraded. On the other hand, the Ekvira Mitra Mandal did have a social message to impart, plus the originality of the display was made more clearly next to the other finalists. Its research done on the locality was impressive and thus it was raised in rank over and above the Shiv Sena Purskrut Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal with its display of *kirtankars* around Ganapati, Vrindavan Ganesh Mandal with its display on environmental awareness and tree-growing, and Jagmata Charitable Trust Kolba Mitra Mandal with its display on the water system of Mumbai. There was also a regional check made in this evaluation such that a *mandal* be chosen from different areas to make it easier for residents of Mumbai to visit at least one of the winners within easy reach.

The top running order for the one prize of National Integration and Social Awareness was:

- (i) 22 for Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Dahisar - attained the prize;
- (ii) 22 for Bal Mitra Mandal, Vikhroli; and
- (iii) 22 for Jagmata Charitable Trust Kolba Mitra Mandal, Thane.

It was felt that the Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal had qualities which were useful for raising both National Integration and Social Awareness rather than the latter alone. There was no sign of political interference from the *mandal* so the contribution to social and national welfare was seen to be from a sincere heart, rather than for opportunist reasons as happens with many politically controlled *mandals*. Each of the *mandals* were respected for the commentary and educational substance, but enjoyed as well for their entertainment features.

The top running order for the two prizes for Best *Murtikar* was as follows:

- (i) 55 for Sri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Dahisar;
- (ii) 54 for Shivneri Mitra Mandal, Thane;
- (iii) 48 for Akhil Shivdi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Shivdi;
- (iv) 47 for Bal Mitra Kala Mandal, Vikhroli;
- (v) 45 for Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Tardeo - attained First Prize; and
- (vi) 42 for Shiv Sena Sarvajanik Utsav Mandal, Andheri - attained Second Prize.

These prizes went to the *murtikar*, with a trophy and certificate to the *mandal*. So it was quite easy for the judges to divorce appreciation of the *murti* from the *mandap* and the *mandal* it was associated with. This is what happened for the evaluation of the Shiv Sena *mandal* to get Second Prize in this category. There was no dispute between judges about who should get the First Prize, even though the Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal had earned a lot less numerically from the Second Round. The Akhil Shivdi *murti* was a hot contender in this final re-evaluation, but lost out due to the decision made by judges that they should back one *murti* in a conventional pose, and one which was more unconventional but still operating from the canon of innovation from within traditional precedent.

The top running order for the two prize for Best Art Director was as follows:

- (i) 23 for Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Dahisar - attained Second Prize;
- (ii) 22 for Akhil Shivdi Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Shivdi - attained First Prize;
- (iii) 21 for Bal Mitra Kala Mandir, Vikhroli;
- (iv) 21 for Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Tardeo;
- (v) 20 for Shri Ganesh Vyayam Shala, Goregaon;
- (vi) 19 for Pangeri Chawl Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal, Byculla; and
- (vii) 19 for Shiv Sena Sarvajanik Utsav Mandal.

It was agreed that the quality of Art Direction of both the Shri Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal and the Akhil Shivdi Mandal were comparable, but as the former had already been allotted First Prize in two other categories, it was time to consider another *mandal*. Nonetheless, some judges felt that the Akhil Shivdi Mandal was the more superior. The Patil Estate Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal and Shri Ganesh Vyayam Shala were discounted in the final running for their tableaux lacking a social message. The Shiv Sena Sarvajanik Utsav Mandal was also discounted in this case for its extravagant expenditure and political control of the *mandal*. The Pangeri Chawl Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal posed a challenge for the Second Prize due to some judges favouring it for its community orientation and enlightening text, but lost out in the larger percentage favouring the other two. Another suggestion was that as

the other two *mandals* had already been given prizes for Overall Performance, it was democratic to give the Pangeri Chawl Sarvajanik Ganeshotsava Mandal a prize as encouragement. But this was swept aside.

The final consideration of prizes was to check that they were evenly distributed around parts of Mumbai which indeed was the case: three in the north west of Mumbai (Dahisar), two in the north east of Mumbai (Thane and Vikhroli), and two in the south of Mumbai (Shivdi).

¹This section of the report cannot be as thorough as I would have hoped due to the fact that I do not have my own recordings and notes of each *mandal* tableau in the Final Round. Some of the *mandals* mentioned here I did visit myself, and therefore managed to record, but due to festival time constraints could not see them all. Most of the notes in this round were made as the discussions and viewing proceeded.

Recordings of the actual debates in this round were not permitted due to precautionary measures in case results should leak out, and the fact that it could implicate people in the responsible task of who's particular decisions determined the winners and losers. *Mandals* take their participation in competitions very seriously, and in the past, *mandal* members have even intimidated individuals if they did not win the prize they would have hoped for.

²The earrings and armour gave Karan the power to be invisible.

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Glossary of Marathi and/or Hindi Terms

The Marathi language shows a number of regional variations in Maharashtra - the influence of Gujarati or Hindi in the northern and eastern districts, and that of Telegu, Tamil and Kannada in the eastern and southern districts. As this research was situated in the cities of Mumbai and Pune, informants would commonly and quite readily change language between dialects of Marathi, Hindi and English, sometimes even in the same sentence. Other languages were also encountered amongst informants depending upon their regional backgrounds.

As the languages of Marathi and Hindi are cognate languages, words that have a Sanskritic origin are treated similarly in both languages, as with *mūrti* and *dhārmik*. Occasionally, similar-looking terms have distinct meanings, as is the case with *tālim*. The following are a list of main terms used in the main body of the text with diacritical markings, guided by a Sanskrit scholar whose mother tongue is Marathi. The liquid vowel 'a' in the Devanagari syllabury is only included if spoken according to indigenous pronunciation - such as with *bhāva*. If not pronounced, it is omitted - as is the case with *dhārmik*. For ease of reference, the words are listed according to the order of the Roman system of sounds.

<i>abhaya</i>	protective pose of the hand
<i>ahavāl</i>	report
<i>atīhāsik</i>	historical
<i>amṛta</i>	nectar
<i>ānanda</i>	joy
Ananta Chaturdāśī last day of the Ganapati <i>utsava</i>	
<i>ankuśa</i>	goad, especially as used for an elephant
<i>ārāsa</i>	decorations; embellishments
<i>āratī</i>	waving lights before a deity, accompanied by devotional songs
<i>āśliṭa, āśliṭata</i>	obscene, obscenity
<i>āvāhana pūjā</i>	worship for invoking a deity
<i>bakhar</i>	chronicles of historical events
<i>bhadaka</i>	gaudy
<i>bhajana</i>	adoration of a deity; religious service with music
<i>bhakti</i>	devotion; movement that stressed individual's devotion to gods regardless of caste.
<i>Bhārata</i>	the official name for India
<i>Bhārata-matā</i>	Mother India

<i>bhāva</i>	feeling; sentiment
<i>bibhatsa/bibhatsata</i>	vulgar/vulgarity
<i>calā</i>	tenement for people in low to middle income bracket
<i>calacitra</i>	moving pictures/scene
<i>cikatalele</i>	stuck together
<i>darsan</i>	sight of a divine being
<i>dekhāva</i>	scenery
<i>des'jāgrti</i>	national awakening/consciousness
<i>des'mukha</i>	local head man; civic officer
<i>dhārmik</i>	religious
<i>dhoti</i>	lower garment
<i>durbār</i>	ceremonial court assembly
<i>dūrvā</i>	blades of green grass used in worship
<i>Ganapati Bāppā Moryāl</i>	a slogan eulogising Ganapati
<i>Ganeśa Chaturthi</i>	first day of the Ganapati <i>utsava</i>
<i>Ganesotsava</i>	Ganeśa/Ganapati festival
<i>garbā</i>	traditionally, a Gujarati dance performed with sticks at the festival of Navratri
<i>gharoghāri</i>	household/domestic
<i>gramadevata</i>	village deity
<i>grantha</i>	holy book
<i>gulāl</i>	red powder
<i>Jayanti</i>	Anniversary
<i>jhindābād</i>	'Long live...'; praise; hail
<i>junā</i>	old
<i>kalpanā</i>	idea
<i>karamāṇuka</i>	mass entertainment
<i>khādi</i>	hand-spun cloth
<i>kīrtana</i>	recitation in prose and verse
<i>kīrtanakāra</i>	reciter of prose and verse
<i>kuladevata</i>	family deity
<i>kunkūma</i>	vermilion powder; auspicious mark on the forehead
<i>līlā</i>	play; sport
<i>linga</i>	organ of a body; phallic symbol
<i>lunghi</i>	lower garment
<i>mahal</i>	palace; mansion
<i>majā</i>	pleasure
<i>man</i>	mind/heart

<i>mandal</i>	social circle; organisation
<i>maṇḍap</i>	shrine inside pavilion
<i>mandir</i>	temple
<i>mantra</i>	Vedic hymn; chant; sacred prayer
<i>manoranjana</i>	pleasing one's mind; pleasure
<i>masta</i>	splendid; profuse; intoxicated
<i>mela</i>	gathering; concourse; group
<i>modaka</i>	sweetmeat commonly seen to be the favourite food of the god, Ganapati
<i>mohalla</i>	residential parts of communities in a town or city
<i>mokṣa</i>	spiritual release/enlightenment
<i>mūrti</i>	three-dimensional representation of a Hindu deity
<i>mūrtikār</i>	artist, literally, maker of <i>mūrtis</i>
<i>mūṣaka</i>	mouse - vehicle associated with Ganapati
<i>natak</i>	drama; theatrical acting; mine
<i>navinya</i>	novelty/innovation
<i>pandal</i>	marquee; pavilion
<i>pārampārika</i>	traditional
<i>pāśa</i>	noose
<i>pauranik</i>	religio-mythological
<i>pheta</i>	Maharashtrian headdress; turban
<i>pitambara</i>	yellow
<i>prabhavala</i>	ornamental plate forming the back of a pedestal of a <i>mūrti</i>
<i>pradakṣinā</i>	clockwise circumlocution around religious icon
<i>pramāṇvaddhata</i>	proportion
<i>prāṇ</i>	vitality/breath
<i>prāṇ pratistā</i>	the consecration of a <i>mūrti</i> or image
<i>praśād</i>	propitiatory offering
<i>pratika</i>	divine image
<i>pratimā</i>	likeness; statue; figure
<i>pravacan</i>	teachings through song
<i>pūjā</i>	worship
<i>purātana</i>	ancient
<i>pārampārika</i>	traditional
<i>rājā</i>	king
<i>rājnaītik</i>	political
<i>rājyābhiseka</i>	coronation
<i>rāksas</i>	demon

<i>rāngasaṅgati</i>	harmony of colours
<i>rāṣṭriya</i>	nationalist
<i>rāṣtrapitā</i>	father of the nation
<i>rath yātrā</i>	chariot procession
<i>r̥si</i>	sage
<i>sādhepanā</i>	simplicity
<i>śaivite</i>	a sect worshipping Śiva
<i>sajāvata</i>	decorations; embellishment
<i>śakha</i>	branch
<i>saṁadhāna</i>	satisfaction
<i>saṁājik</i>	social
<i>saṁsthā</i>	another term for <i>mandal</i> or organisation; constitution
<i>saṁudra manthanā</i>	churning of the ocean
<i>sānskritik</i>	cultural
<i>sārvajanik</i>	public/social
<i>satyagraha</i>	truth-force or non-violence - Gandhi's path of colonial resistance
<i>śakha</i>	branch; post
<i>śānti</i>	repose or peace
<i>Śivśāhī</i>	the reign of Shivaji
<i>sobhā</i>	grace or beauty
<i>simhāsana</i>	a throne with lions on the side
<i>smaranikā</i>	booklets or 'souvenirs' handed out by <i>mandals</i> , outlining activities, donors and sponsors, and other material alongside advertisements.
<i>sundar</i>	beautiful
<i>svyambhu</i>	self-existent
<i>svārājya</i>	home-rule
<i>svātantrya</i>	freedom; independence
<i>tālī</i>	clapping
<i>tālim</i>	in Marathi, gymnasium; in Hindi, education or instruction
<i>tikkā</i>	mark; stamp
<i>trisul</i>	trident
<i>utsava</i>	festival
<i>uttara pūjā</i>	final worship
<i>vāhana</i>	vehicle
<i>vaiṣṇavite</i>	a sect worshipping Visnu
<i>visarjan</i>	the immersion of a deity; allowing the invoked deity to depart
<i>vismaya</i>	surprise

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¹Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs were taken during the fieldwork period August 1994-January 1996, and a repeat trip to Maharashtra from August-September 1996 and 1997. Photographs prior to this date have also been included as a result of photographs I had taken during the Ganapati *utsava* on my visits to India.

