

Rough Transcript of “The Urban Turn”

PANEL DISCUSSION AT
THE BOMBAY PAPERIE
ON SATURDAY 21 DECEMBER 2002

This transcript was created by Shonali Sarada and edited by Shekhar Krishnan.

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NOTE: the title of this transcript is taken from an essay by Gyan Prakash which appeared in the SARAI Reader 2: The Cities of Everyday Life (New Delhi: SARAI/CSDS, 2002).

SHEKHAR KRISHNAN: Welcome everyone [on behalf of PUKAR]. The panel discussion at The Bombay Paperie tonight is called “The Urban Turn”, which signifies many different things to many different people. What we wanted to do tonight was to honour the people who are sitting here, four distinguished historians and sociologists who have worked on Bombay in one way or the other. What we had hoped for is that this can be an interactive session, where we can all discuss this question of examining urban experience as part of the general turn towards understanding cities as sites for construction of different kinds of modernities, for new histories, different understandings of where we are today in cities, and what is it about this recent interest in the city that is quite peculiar and interesting or contemporary. So, I’ll just introduce everyone who is here and we’ll then segue into discussion. Everyone is going to speak for between ten and twenty minutes and then segue into discussion near about 7:30. So, I’ll introduce our guests in the order in which they are speaking:

GYAN PRAKASH is Professor of History at Princeton University, U.S.A. and a member of the Subaltern Studies Editorial Collective. He is the author of *Bonded Histories: Genealogies of Labour Servitude in Colonial India* (Cambridge, 1990), *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India* (Princeton, 1999), and has written several articles and edited several volumes on colonial history and historiography.

JAIRUS BANAJI is a historian and independent scholar based in Mumbai. He worked with unions in Bombay through the eighties, when he published, with Rohin Hensman, *Beyond Multinationalism: Management Policy and Bargaining Relationships in International Companies* (Delhi: Sage, 1990). His most recent book is *Agrarian Change in Late Antiquity: Gold, Labour, and Aristocratic Dominance* (Oxford, 2002).

SUJATA PATEL is Professor and Head of the Department of Sociology at University of Pune. She is the co-editor, with Alice Thorner, of *Bombay: Metaphor for Modern Culture* and *Bombay: Mosaic of Modern India* (both Delhi: Oxford India, 1995), and, with Jim Masselos, of *Bombay and Mumbai: The City in Transition* (Delhi: Oxford India, 2003). She is also an Advisor to PUKAR.

RAJ CHANDAVARKAR is a historian and is Director of the Centre for South Asian Studies, Cambridge University, U.K., where he is a Fellow of Trinity College. He is the author of *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and the Working Class in Bombay 1900-1940* (Cambridge, 1994) and *Imperial Power and Popular Politics: Class, Resistance and the State in India 1850-1890* (Cambridge, 1998).

GYAN PRAKASH: Thanks Shekhar, for arranging this event and thank you all for coming. I hope the discussion is worth your while. What I would like to do is to raise three or four points to begin a conversation. To start with, let us ask what is the meaning of the increased recent attention that cities have received. I will turn a little bit later to talk briefly about the causes and contexts of this growing concern with the city, but I want to suggest that the “urban turn” offers an opportunity to understand and act upon the city *as* society. This is what is new about the possibilities that the “urban turn” presents. Scholars, government officials, and activists have focused on cities before, and one can point to fine and distinguished studies of urban history and urban issues. But what is different today is the growing recognition of the city as a spatial form of society itself — not simply as a place that contains social groups and relations, but the city itself as a structure of social forms and experience.

The point that I am making about city *as* society will become clearer if we turn our attention to earlier ways of thinking about the city in India. The general trend in the period from the forties to the seventies was to treat cities as locations for a range of *urban problems* — urban poverty, housing, violence, crime, labor relations, and political movements and conflicts, etc. There were many sociological studies, for example, of poverty amongst children, problems of transportation, migration, slums, and so on. This intellectual landscape was shaped by the nationalist discourse, which regarded the city as an expression of modernization, and thought that “real India” lived in the villages. Gandhi’s exaltation of the village and village communities is well known, as is his view that cities were places of evil and corruption. Nehru, on the other hand, thought of the village as a place of backwardness and ignorance, but he too believed that the village held something of value — it symbolized the authentic India. In both cases, the exaltation of the village as the locus of national life meant that the city primarily appeared as a seat of government, and as a site of industry and commerce; *urban life* was hidden from view. Whereas affective life and experience were to be found in the village, the city was an expression of the modernization and urbanization processes that India must undergo in order to realize the goal of becoming a modern nation. Overlooking the city’s existence as a form of modern social experience, this discourse focused on the city as a location of *problems* that the state was expected to resolve.

Such an approach is amply evident, for example, in the ideas of urban planning that were current in Bombay during the fifties and sixties. Town planning in Bombay began to take shape shortly before independence. The Bombay City and Suburbs Post-War Development Committee, appointed by the government to confront the question of “Greater Bombay” published its report in 1948. No sooner did the report see public light that it was subjected to blistering attack in the pages of the Journal of Indian Institution of Architects (JIIA) for its lack of a comprehensive vision. But the crux of the attack was that the committee had failed to include experts in its ranks. This was no turf battle but an expression of the deep-seated modernist belief that experts — architects and planners — were essential for planning comprehensively and scientifically. This view was relentlessly advanced by JIIA and the journal MARG throughout the fifties and sixties. These journals portrayed urban planning as an instrument of realizing the dream of modernization, of “catching up” with the West. Planners and architects, who wrote in these journals, represented themselves as instruments of modernization technical/scientific expertise transcended politics. They spoke of securing the input of the citizenry, and their plans sought to accommodate the people, but planning tended to treat the city an abstract space, one that could mapped, gridded, and rearranged to highlight and resolve *urban problems*. There wasn’t very much sense of the city as a kind of a lived place, as a site of experience, as a place where space had qualities and meanings; instead, it was treated as a space for rational organizing and ordering.

Underlying the power attributed to planning and the treatment of the city as an abstract space open to the planners' redrawing of its contours was the historicist conception of urbanization as the pinnacle of development. This historicist trajectory posited the city — freed of all its problems of housing, poverty, and overburdened civic facilities by planned modernization — as an ideal, as a picture of harmony and prosperity, of order and rationality. But such an approach could never grapple with the actual conditions in the city. Consider, for example, the problem posed by what the sociologist Jai Sen calls “the unintended city.” A good instance of such an “unintended city” would be Dharavi. The Places like Dharavi were never intended to be part of Bombay, and yet they were always implicit in the “official city.” Seen through the lens of modernization, they appeared illegitimate and obsolete in the march of history. In fact, the “official city” cannot survive without the poor who are housed either in these slums or live on the streets and sidewalks; and the urban poor refuse to bow out of history as obsolete remnants of an earlier time.

This view of the city has worn down with the erosion of the developmentalist state and its commitment to planning. With it, the idea that the nation subsumes the city no longer holds force. Of course, there was never a time when the lives of the city and the nation were synonymous, but many thought it to be the case during the Nehruvian era. Take a brief glance *Blitz's* pages of the fifties and sixties, and you will notice that it saw Bombay and India's fate joined. This is not to deny the manifold links and interactions that undoubtedly exist between the nation and the city, but that urban struggled to emerge out of the shadow of national politics and the nation-state during the era of developmentalism. It has to be said that part of the reason the emergence of the urban from the shadows has to do with globalization. Whatever one may think about the argument about the diminishing autonomy of the nation-state under globalization, clearly the expansion of neo-liberal regime in the wake of “de-industrialization” and demise of developmentalism has brought global forces to bear on the life of cities like Bombay. Now, in place of modernization and national development, the teleology of the market seeks to establish its dominance. But insofar as globalization uses cities as strategic centers, it also brings them into view more sharply. At the same time, the process of urbanization has rapidly advanced. Vast stretches of the Indian countryside are now increasingly integrated into neo-liberal economy and contain characteristic urban forms of economic and social life. It is in this overall context that one can place the “urban turn.”

At a time when neo-liberal forms are changing Indian cities fundamentally, it is all the more relevant and urgent to understand the city *as* society. By this I mean, as I said at the outset, the modern city as a particular configuration of social relations and experience; that is, not just a site where politics and society happen, but itself an embodiment of, as well as the condition of possibility for, society. In other words, it is vitally important to read class, ethnicity, religion, economy, culture, and politics in the very texture of the city — in its built and institutional forms, and in the spaces and rhythms of everyday life. Another way to frame my proposition is to suggest that we think of the city laterally, as a layered structure of power, experience, and memory. The language of temporal and fulfillment — either of modernization, nation, or the market — cannot address the co-existence, for example, of the modern and the “traditional,” the “official” and the “unintended” cities. We must understand these — and other such seemingly contradictory forms — as modes in the socio-spatial organization of the city.

It is at this level — in the organization, the texture, and surface of the city — that one locate the story of capital, labor, trade unions, the demise of the textile industry, and the rise of the so-called informal economy, etc. in Bombay. When the narrative of capital is plotted in terms of the space of the city itself, when capital's history is read in everyday forms and rhythms of urban life and experience, it is then that we will gain a fuller understanding of

Bombay's historical existence as a social form. I have used capital just as an example; I do not mean to suggest that it exhausts Bombay's story. Equally important, one could argue, has been the configuration of the city by politics. Consider, for instance, the ethnic and communal imaginaries of the Shiv Sena that have shaped the city and that can be identified in its socio-spatial life. Here, the exemplary work by Thomas Hansen shows how the Sena used the space opened for the assertion of plebian identities by democracy to violently insert its toxic combination of nativism and anti-Muslim propaganda in Bombay's political life and forms. The result is that one cannot escape the Sena's presence anywhere in the city; Bal Thackeray and his followers now overwrite the very space of Bombay. Yet another story waiting to be told is the constitutive presence of Bombay cinema in the city's life forms. There are many other worthy analytic lenses. My point here is not to simply suggest myriad of analytic lenses, but to stress that the city itself be identified and understood in the structure and functioning of these forms.

To think of the city as a layered space of different forms is to recognize and act upon it as an organization of power. After all, as I have suggested, what sets apart the middle-class buildings from slums is not time but space, the space of power. And, again, what separates the communalist fantasies of the Shiv Sena from progressive projects is not stage of history but political desire. Much to the frustration of fascists, the city is not an organic entity with all its parts integrated and ordered to produce a singular life. Henri Lefebvre writes that urban space has a structure more like that of flaky pastry than the homogenous and isotropic space of classical mathematics. This is how we should understand Bombay, that is, as a space that contains several patterns and layers in its flaky structure.

Because of its historical formation as a structure of different and discordant socio-spatial forms, the city also resists the narrative of rise and fall. This is worth keeping in mind because the story of the death of the city is in the air. Those who love Bombay speak wistfully of its imagined cosmopolitan history. In Rohinton Mistry's new novel *Family Matters*, there is this wonderful character, Mr. Kapur, who runs a sports equipment shop in Churchgate and is fatally wedded to the idea of cosmopolitan Bombay. He speaks nostalgically about Bombay as a shining city on the sea, a place where races and communities had lived in peace and amity. Now, it was ripped apart by ethnic strife. So, stealing a line from Richard II, he offers a melancholy invitation to his Parsi employee: "Let us sit upon these chairs and tell sad stories about the death of the city." I have no hesitation in confessing that I find something very attractive in the spirit of this imagination. I do not identify with its specific elitist content, but it does evoke the idea of the city as a place of difference, which I find worth cherishing. But difference also implies discord, discrimination, and confrontation — something that the mourning for the remembered city fails to register. Because Mistry's Mr. Kapur does not take difference seriously enough to imagine the city as a layered surface of contradictory and conflicting practices and desires, he believes that his beloved city's era of brilliant cosmopolitanism has been succeeded by the dark phase of ethnic intolerance and violence. But Bombay's history as a structure of layered spaces and experiences resists this evolutionary representation; it suggests that what we are witnessing today is not the death of the city but the demise of the idea of the city as an organism of singular modernity. Bombay has experienced far-reaching transformations, an important aspect of which is the erosion of the ideal of the modern city as a unity. The ruins of this imaginary force open Bombay's present to its past as a place of porosity, difference, and indeterminacy. They also pose an ethical challenge to re-imagine urban life, to think afresh how the modern city, now worked over by globalized capitalism and democracy, can be a space for strangers to live together. I think I will stop here.

JAIRUS BANAJI: Well, I thought it might be more coherent if I simply read out something short. It's not very long, so I'm not going to bore you, and if I have a bit of time left over I might just add a few things, so... This was partly inspired by, or sort of prompted by, a reading of David Harvey's *Spaces of Hope*. I don't know how many of you have seen that, but it's a very important book, with a very powerful set of arguments, a strong plea for imagination, but imagination which is grounded in social relations, in spatiality, in the dynamics of anything that is going about and around us, so to speak. What he does is to explore the idea of utopia as something which finally evolved to become real, in order to acquire a material form has to achieve closure, and of course with the kind of current post-liberalization agendas that you see world-wide in metropolitan centres, what you finally get are what he calls degenerate utopias. Disneyland is a paradigmatic case of a degenerate utopia. In fact, Bombay to a large extent is being transformed, large parts of it into a full Disneyland... So, we on the left or left-of-centre, secular, progressive, etc. etc., have to be able to come up with feasible alternatives. But alternatives require imagination, they require the power of imagination, and we have got to be able to argue for those alternatives as practical and feasible... And really, this is a huge agenda which hasn't even been seriously discussed by us, so let's think about in those terms. This really is a breakfast to that idea, the idea of alternatives. It's more descriptive, more analytical.

If one were asked or if I were asked what were the significant trajectories that affect the life, quality and shape of the city, I mean Bombay, I'll be tempted to choose the following three:

1. A war of attrition against organized labour that has dragged on now for well over twenty years. It's a war of attrition in the strictest sense.
2. The evolution of a degraded and communalized political culture in the city partly under the influence of wider national developments, symbolized of course by the ethnic imperialism of the Shiv Sena. You know the Shiv Sena has a kind of strangle-hold on this city which is infinitely depressing. It's like a dog which has got you by the leg, and it wouldn't let you go or else that's in a sense a metaphor for the Sena's relationship to this city: it has a strangle-hold on it and it won't let go.
3. The third trajectory I think that is significant even more recently is the rise of a new urban entrepreneurialism, again David Harvey's term, based on a rigged real estate market and collusive transactions between individual business groups. Not all business groups but particular business groups, builders/developers, municipal authorities and government generally. So, there is a sort of set of collusive transactions between these various powerful entities, which are shaping the nature of the fabric of this city.

Now of course, these histories or stories of the city, these three trajectories I talked about inter-lock in significant ways, and I'll come to that in a moment. But consider the upshots to the consequences of each of these trajectories:

The most obvious upshot of the first kind of trajectory is joblessness and the breakdown of community in some traditional sense. Now I don't subscribe to the mystique of community, so I don't subscribe to a communitarian discourse generally, I try and avoid the term, but really, with the growth of joblessness in Bombay, on a massive and staggering scale in the last fifteen-twenty years, we do have the breakdown of community in a traditional sense. It makes it all the easier for rarefied and repressive notions of community to fill that vacuum.

Bombay has seen massive and sustained downsizing since the late seventies, when loss of employment began in a scattered and un-dramatic way with managements routinely deciding to leave vacancies unfilled i.e. job vacancies unfilled, and the majority of unions simply not

challenging this. There was an idea among the unions that as long as my arse was covered, I didn't have to bother if management said "fine, in this agreement, if there are any vacancies as far as we are concerned for the next three years or whatever, we are not going to fill them" and the unions wouldn't lodge a protest, because those vacancies didn't affect them directly. So, there was this notion of a proprietary relationship with the job, which is what we are (encashising on now?), and I will come to that in a minute. So, the unions failed to challenge this in the seventies and eighties, with disastrous consequences.

The main upshot of the second story — the first one was joblessness — the main upshot of the second story — i.e. the story of communalization is the city that has lost any sense of its commonality. A population scarred by its complicity in the communal carnage of the early nineties, and by complicity I mean across the wall — i.e. all of us — and the population enthralled by its own impotence before the spectres of authoritarianism and violence that dominate its public spaces and political life. You can't move five minutes in a bus without seeing Bal Thackeray's photo or picture or painting staring down at you: it's obsessive, it's absolutely obsessive and it's sick, and I find it an infringement on my rights as an individual citizen. I find it appalling that I have to live, that I have to move in a space where I have to see him about six, seven times over before I reach home. Okay? I mean it's obscene, it's absolutely obscene, but no one does anything about it and it's just there. It's a colonization of space in the strictest sense.

So this, this is a population which is shaped by a political culture in such a way that it's actually mesmerized in a sense, enthralled as I say by its own impotence before the spectres of authoritarianism and violence. And there is a dialectic at work here, because the power of an organised group is really the powerlessness of the series (?) — that's all there is, just an optical illusion. A group is powerful because everything that is not group is powerless, is impotent. The series is impotent, that's where the group derives its power from: from domination and control of the series. So, to fight a group, you have to have another group, you cannot fight a group with a series. You cannot fight organisations with non-organisations. In order to fight the Shiv Sena, you need something equally powerful. As powerful as the Shiv Sena or less than powerful, whatever it is, it's another organisation, only another organisation can take that struggle on. Whatever form that takes, I am not talking about the form, but it has to be organised. You cannot fight something like the Sena and its political culture and its authoritarianism without something that is at least organised.

And perhaps the main upshot of the third story i.e. the story about urban... is social exclusion in a very big way, and the corporate drive to reshape the city's fabric in the image of an ostensibly secure consumerist middle-class, which almost believes that we are now at the end of history. That of course is a global story, it's not just Bombay, it's all metropolitan centres throughout the world. It's the middle-class which is suffering from an acute bout of amnesia: it seriously believes that history is over. I am stepping into my terms, that sort of reinforces that idea. None of this offers a sustainable future for the mega-city or the monster city of the projected twenty million plus. But whose choices were those? In other words, these stories I am telling you, these trajectories I am talking about, whose choices were those? Okay, that's the sort of question we have to ask, to begin to ask.

So very briefly about each of these: The management offensive that gathered speed in the eighties saw itself subordinating labour in the interest of what used to be called rationalisation, it's a quaint term in the modern world: rationalisation, but capacities were miniscule and fragmented. We're talking about Bombay industry in the seventies and eighties, and this kind of piecemeal rationalisation was simply a way of buying time and staving off the larger decisions that Indian promoters were unwilling to make, and local foreign managements unable to make, because the power to make those decisions didn't lie

with these local foreign company managements anyway. They lay with headquarters elsewhere. And as far as the Indian promoters were concerned, they were just not willing to make those kinds of decisions. I am talking about decisions of investment. Bombay manufacturing suffered from endemic cumulative underinvestment, that staggered over years and years, thanks largely to policies restricting expansion of capacity or even actively dispersing production. By the late eighties however, and certainly in the nineties, most companies were on a drive to break the power of the unions — to de-unionise the labour market and downsizing, i.e. voluntary retirement schemes, was their chief means of doing that.

So, I am distinguishing two phases: a phase of rationalization in the seventies and eighties, but by the late eighties and nineties a phase of... an attempt to break the power and stranglehold of the unions, and de-unionise the labour market. Now this presupposes that managements were no longer willing to take collective bargains seriously, and even willing to dispense with legality to establish their right to be more... I mean the law is used very pragmatically by managements in this city. They have no illusions about the law. They use the law as a resource, as an instrument of power. When they need to break it they will break it. So, they don't approach the law from our illogical perspectives, or with some sense of bourgeois sanctity, and so on. They have a strictly pragmatic view of the law, and if they can bribe a judge, they will bribe a judge to win us a favourable judgement. Now all of this was happening in a social vacuum, i.e. in a country without proper social security legislation. So this onslaught on the unions, the attempt to de-unionize the labour market, get rid of the unions entirely, to revert organized into unorganised labour, to change the categories of what is bargainable, not bargainable, etc., all of this was occurring against a background where we have no social security system. Now, parenthetically this is just an idea I want to throw out to you — it's a parenthesis — Bombay's absolutely remarkable and unique head start in attracting international firms as early as the forties and early fifties were cynically thrown away. We lost a real valuable opportunity there. The potential of these firms to make substantial investments and their willingness to deal with internal unions should have attracted a set of policies designed to leverage these powerful potential assets — e.g. to stabilise a certain kind of industrial relations culture, and use it as a model for other enterprises. Nothing of this sort happened of course and most politicians treated foreign companies as sources of patronage for their own clienteles. Why were companies like Pfizer carrying a labour load, an employment load of twice of what they said they needed? It's because they had to give employment to people locally. The Agri community is very powerful in the Thane region. People like D. Patel (name?), etc. were insisting that you had to take on so many workers as casuals, etc., it was so politicised. Recruiting, recruitment policies were thoroughly politicised as a function of local power relationships, and consequently, when they had to actually shed labour later on, it was not even a rational economic decision, so much just as an attempt to get rid of legacies from the past. What I am saying is that had we had rational policies in place in the fifties, we would have tried to encourage a certain kind of industrial relations culture in the city. Encourage economies of scale, encourage large-scale production, fewer units in the city but larger units, larger capacities in the city with stable workforces, highly qualified and trained workforces, and a strong sense of bi-lateralism between management and union. That is the kind of industrial relations culture we should have tried to foster, and then use that model to force the other kind of medium-scale enterprises to follow suit, Indian businesses to follow suit. But we never did that.

Now the connections between these stories can be filled in, I mean I am not going into any detail. For example the spread of a more active kind of communalism in the factories and working-class suburbs in the aftermath, or would-be defeat of the Textile Strike in the early eighties. Now when does the Shiv Sena become really important in Bombay? In the early eighties. Okay, so the spread of a more active kind of communalism in the aftermath of the

defeat of the Textile Strike did a great deal to undermine any sense of concerted resistance to the managerial offensives of that period and later. Why was there no organised union resistance to what was happening? Basically, or partly because the Shiv Sena was expanding. The Sena did not believe in toppling unions, but in controlling them internally. The first company in Bombay that went in for a mass voluntary retirement scheme (VRS) was Ciba Geigy in Bhandup. Nine hundred and two workers made a one-shot settlement, all accepting voluntary retirement schemes in 1993. It was the first major VRS settlement — 902 workers, all at one shot. And I know from my work in the eighties, that though this was a union formerly controlled by G.R. Khanolkar, who is a communist, his union was called Red Flag union and Ciba Geigy was, formally speaking, with Khanolkar. The committee itself, i.e., the managing committee of the union, was dominated by the Shiv Sena. That's how the Sena worked, it would not displace Khanolkar, it would control the committee internally. I know that because I used to interview the people at Ciba Geigy quite regularly at that time. Beneath the façade of a formerly coherent labour movement lay the disquiet and growth of a communalised common sense, that would paralyse the unions throughout the nineties.

Now, the destruction of jobs was fuelled by a hyper-inflated real estate market. VRS is the powerful link between stories one and three. Workers are persuaded to give up “their” jobs — of course it's not their jobs, they don't have any proprietary claims to those jobs, what right do they have to destroy those jobs? Right? Management are inculcating individualist ideologies of ownership of jobs. Actually, these are your jobs, you have the right to bargain them away for ever. Of course, they don't, because it's not their jobs in any proprietary sense. But anyway, workers are persuaded to give up their jobs so that managements can close factories and diversify into real estate and retain or sell the land to builders. Now Darryl D'Monte has written about this recently in the context of mill lands in the competing agendas for their re-use.

The peculiarity of urban land is that it is both an element of fixed productive capital, and potentially a source of speculation. Think about this. In other words, a kind of fictitious capital. There is no other element of productive capital that behaves in this way. In other words, if both enter as a passive element into the cost structure of the company — passive because usually land costs don't affect profitability on a day to day basis — but as an active element, as it assumes the characteristics of fictitious capital like share capital with, you know, enormous expansions and contractions of value which bear no relationship to anything in the real economy. Okay? And this is the peculiarity of land capital or landed capital which shares both these characteristics: it's both part of fixed capital, and it is a form or kind of fictitious capital. This sets up an obvious instability at the heart of urban enterprises, to the extent that speculators succeed in driving up real estate prices.

One corporate group that is found firmly placed at the junction of stories one and three is the group headed by Ajay Piramal. He acquired Roche Products from the Swiss firm in 1993, changed its name to Piramal Health Care in 1995, spun off the pharmaceutical business to Nicholas-Piramal in 1996, and renamed the residual company Piramal Holdings. You will think what is the residual company? After all, once you've spun off your main business, which is the pharma business, what is the residual company? Well the name indicated what it is — Piramal Holdings. He then proceeded to buy off other shareholders in Piramal Holdings, in order to de-list a lucrative real estate business, Piramal Holdings, from stock exchanges, which he succeeded in doing in 1998. Because once you reach 90%, you are entitled to de-list. The shell of Roche's Tardeo factory now supports the shopping mall called “Crossroads”. And several more of these are planned by the Piramals, not just here, but in Pune and elsewhere.

Here in microcosm, is what Bombay as a whole is witnessing under the unchallenged march of urban entrepreneurs. All these stories are simply icebergs. And the least visible of these three icebergs is this corporate one. And that's my main grouse about Darryl's book, that he hasn't done any investigative journalism in the book, because if he had, he would have come up with presumably staggering stories of corruption. Staggering stories of corruption! I mean he confines all his references to quoted newspaper accounts. So there's no transparency about any of these trajectories, any of these icebergs. But the least transparent of them is the corporate iceberg.

One thing that is clear is that the outcomes, which shape the illusion of this city, are a product of the quality of regulation. More precisely, a seeming lack of regulation. If you talk about lack of regulation, but it's only a *seeming* lack of regulation. In fact, of the way regulations are structured to suit private business interests, so that with this kind of regulatory capture. A regulatory capture is an American term, and it refers to the fact that the regulatee's — i.e. those who are supposed to be regulated actually controlled are regulatees. Now with this kind of regulatory capture in place, the public has no public authority to turn to. That's true of Bombay, the Bombay public has no public authority to turn to.

Private interests continue to shape the fabric of the city in forms that are socially destructive and aesthetically repulsive. The largest constituencies are simply excluded from all decisions that affect their lives, both at work, out of work, and in the city. They are progressively disempowered and dispossessed, and permanently vulnerable to the appeals of political forces that have collaborated actively in their dispossession. They are vulnerable to languages of despair that offer empowerment through violence against the weak, vulnerable to the kind of dehumanized brutality that Bombay saw in 1992, that Gujarat saw in 2002.

If we are going to reassemble a viable political culture for Bombay, we have to be able to re-establish control over the city, against those who have destroyed its sense of accountability. One place to start is by asking who made those choices and why.

SUJATA PATEL: I am glad that, while ending, Jairus talked of Bombay in 1992 and Gujarat in 2002. There are three issues that I would like to discuss. He's preempted some of my arguments, because he has already put them, but if we have to look at what he calls the speculative and spurious... the group that emerges with real estate and how they control urban markets, and what is their relationship with the communalisation that takes place. What happens in Gujarat is resonated also in the way urban areas are organised, not only in Bombay, not only in Ahmedabad, not only in Baroda, not only in other places, but also in Chennai, also in Calcutta. What we are seeing is a process which is nationwide. It is not something restricted to Bombay.

So, my first point is that while talking about Bombay, we have to understand, we have to think about the urban world that is constituted in India today. And this is not restricted to Bombay, this particular experience in Bombay occurred from the late seventies and early eighties onward. It has also occurred in similar ways in similar cities, maybe in the seventies and eighties, but it's occurring in faster ways in the nineties onwards. This experience that has taken place in Bombay, if it's not restricted to the city, it's also an imagination that a large number of people in the city want to identify with. And that may sound contradictory to what he just said.

I recall from a few years ago, when I had taken some students to the Konkan, and we were looking at the displacement as a result of Enron. Konkan villages are full of women and children and very young men, but not older men. And one of the things that came, resonated all the time, was what they wanted the Konkan to be — they wanted the Konkan to be

Bombay. And this is the imagination that is held by a large number of people in the city, which sustains the programmes and policies, which are occurring in very contradictory ways, defining urban spacing in the city. This is defining and legitimising the three processes that Jairus has talked about. Without these, this would not have occurred.

There are groups of people who wish to emulate the experience of Bombay, who want to imaginatively reproduce it over time, because it fascinates them, and they find the space over there. This is something that we cannot forget, because this is what sustains a political group like the Shiv Sena, a political group and a political party like the Shiv Sena, without which this sustenance, this kind of stranglehold like he said, of the city would not have taken place. And this is not only true of Bombay and the near-by areas, but is also true of various cities and various towns and of various mofussil areas, that are there. In Gujarat, the same Shiv Sena is represented by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP). So it's a different group with different names, but they are there, in various ways

Secondly, this group, now is part of what is called the informal sector, has been not in fact in some parts of the urban area, has never been a disciplined force, has never been a part of the disciplined working-class. In Bombay, there has been a history of it. But in various parts of the urban world, it has never been part of the disciplined work force, and this makes it a very volatile group. Because they are socially excluded, their demands are also very different and fragmented.

And this is the second part of my proposition to you — that we are seeing a new kind of urban world in which the linkage with either land or industry is very tenuous. It is a group of people who are getting into the work process or getting out of the work process, never continuously involved in the work process. And because of that, the notion of discipline that is there within the workers is very tenuous. And because of that there is the sense of identity, in the sense of politics, which is extremely fragmented. This becomes the backdrop for which groups like the Shiv Sena or the VHP are able to catch the imagination of the populace, and then stranglehold the city. But it is also part of the fact that this group, which is an extremely large group, has been for the last twenty to thirty years continuously excluded from all kinds of access to opportunities, not only work opportunities, continuous work opportunities, but other social securities, including housing, health, water, sanitation. And this is the key to their feeling of helplessness. And that emerges out, it emerges as an assertion of immediate identity notions. So, if we have to understand why this has happened, we also have to understand why the state had withdrawn from giving the minimal that it was giving. And why is it, and this is part of a larger question, why is it that the state always thought of planning, i.e. urban planning, not in terms of people but in terms of physical planning? You know, this is a very interesting contradiction in India. When we talk of five-year plans, we talk of social and economic plans. But when we talk of urban planning, it is always physical planning. It's land use planning, it is never socio-economic planning, and it has never been integrated within the way cities have emerged and grown and integrated into the national arena. You look at the two urban committees that were set up by the Government of India. They still go on thinking that by controlling land-use, we are going to control socio-economic spaces of urban India. And this lack of assessment and understanding affects the way in which urbanization is taking place.

The Shiv Sena, if you recall, when they came to power in 1995 — I forget which month and year it was — but they came out with a policy of how to lead development, they called it “Development in Maharashtra”, and they thought of doing it by making roads and highways. Roads and highways would mean take over land which is there, displacing people who are integrated with the land, and by displacing people, they said they will give employment to them. How? Through *paan* shops, bars, restaurants, these kind of service occupations, and

also auto-rickshaws, transport, etc., etc. This is the way they thought of and imagined how urbanisation would take place. And this is what was very very interesting, and what the young boy in the village in Konkan also told me, that if you have the road coming into our area, we'll get a *chai* shop, we'll get a *paan gaala*, we'll get auto-rickshaws coming in, we'll get buses coming in. Transport and communication is a way to build and integrate an individual's inter-social and economic life.

So, the question is — when and how did the elite change their perspectives, if at all they had any perspectives of urban India? And I think that if we look at least from archival material in Bombay, if we look at early work in the nineteen thirties, forties, fifties, both of the elite of the city as well as the working-class groups, you'll find enormous interests in how they want to live their lives in the city, both from the elite as well as from the working-class. In fact, if you look at the working-class — the songs that they have written, the poems that they have written — if you look at much of the oral literature that is there of the textile workers, the port workers, as well as other workers, you will find that there is enormous involvement with the city, and with the space around the city. You will find that even in Narayan Surve's poems, if you look in detail in the poems. You will find that how it is a city in which they want to give their life and they want to reorganise in terms of both relationships and in terms of basic needs that the city can give them, because that is a point of liberation for them.

This got missing from the sixties and seventies onwards, and this is something that we all have to try and find, as to why this new form of modernity that was emerging from the working-class — whether they were organised or unorganised — why this form of modernity that was emerging from them had got displaced, and has got fragmented over a period of time. And of course, it has got something to do with the growth of what is called the non-formal sector, but it has also got something to do with the nature and change of politics that is taking place in India. More than anything else, I would emphasise, that from the seventies onwards, from 1966, when the Shiv Sena was formed, Bombay's politics changed. It is not only because they tried to control unions, but they tried to do that for all political processes and parties. They tried to hijack all democratic processes that were in place in the city. They took over, I mean Jairus gave an example of how they did it with the trade union movement, but they did it consistently with all political processes that were there and all political parties, systematically attacking democratic processes of negotiation, of coming together, of organising so that consensus can be developed. Systematically attacking them and undermining them, until they took control of it. They took control thereby not only of the non-formal political processes but the formal ones — parties and municipalities. The governance structure then came under tremendous strain. If you look at who all were running the municipal government in the sixties, you will see top notch names — Mrinal Gore, etc., etc. And then all of a sudden in 1969 and 1970 onwards the Shiv Sena takes over, and the governance structure gets affected by the strategy they use to undermine democratic processes. And this is very significant, because for any form of new thought on the urban question, for any way to displace the fragmentation that I have just discussed with you, as well as build a new way of thinking, you need a democratic process, a notion of civility in which we have to come and agree to a minimum, so that we build a consensus together. And this was first experimented by the Shiv Sena in the late sixties. We are seeing it happening now in an extensive way in Gujarat, but it happened in Bombay from late sixties and seventies onwards. And systematically, institutions developed by the working-class, as well as by the elites, were undermined and such that when the working-class got displaced, as a result of reorganisation of the economy that took place in the eighties — especially after the Textile Strike — we find that there is such fragmentation of the working-class.

My last point is that there is a substitution to this, as far as Bombay is concerned, in the sense that the Shiv Sena is actually promoting a new way of being together, in many different ways.

And this is through cultural representations. We have our *garbha* dances, you know, it's leisure and culture, which is bringing people together, but it is also putting them in different fragments in the city. We find *garbha* is taking place in the slums, we find it taking place in upper-class colonies. Maybe the same audio is being played in two different parts of the socio-strata which is enjoying this. We find it taking place in every festival that takes place in the city, which has now taken over. One of the things that integrates the city together is the Ganapati festival, which of course holds it to ransom for two weeks, but it integrates the city together. So, there is an integrating link through culture, but that culture is not an experienced culture of the people, but it is something which is put together as representations where there is a common theme which brings them, and then disperses them, without giving meaning to them in terms of their life. This is the culture, which is a combination of frames of references given by films, by the new economies that have emerged which relate audios and videos and films together. It is also a culture which relates to mass media, and it is also a culture which is so significant in promoting actually, one new group which connects up the city together and that is the celebrity-driven media, individuals. Event organisations are taking place, and fashion and beauty, etc., all come together in this new world, which makes people think this is what Bombay is.

And lastly, let me end by saying that in that Konkan village, I found a young girl trying to be Madhuri Dixit. And I thought that was very interesting, because here is a girl who is from the village, whose whole imagination is construed by becoming a replica of this famous actress and dancing on one or two of her songs. This is the imagination that has caught up the people of this country. It extends itself out in various ways and this is how they see what constitutes urban India. And this is the most depressing part of being a citizen of a city, because it makes us ask why is it that we do not have alternatives where we can organise ourselves to think of better living conditions for all of us, better work conditions for all of us, better integrated cultural forms or experiences for all of us. What is it that has happened, that has fragmented our worlds, and has made us identify with these kind of cultural representations, which are apolitical, in fact anti-political, and the other side of that would be a communalised identity. Why is it that we have become as a city, part of this experience?

RAJ CHANDAVARKAR: Well, I am supposed to be initiating this discussion, but it's not going to be easy to conduct it really, in the sense that for all these very rich presentations, they are of course very different. So, to suggest some themes that they might have in common. One such distinction it seemed to me was that Gyan was interested specifically in developing this notion of the city as looked at, as society as he said, and at looking at what actually made the city distinct, what separates the city, what characterises the city as a social form, and in what way does the city as a social form contribute to one's thinking about... Jairus' very bracing talk raised a number of questions which seem to be directed really much more really towards how people use the city, particularly how economic institutions developed through this use, and how there have been various ways which determined or distorted the balances, the relationships between them. And Sujata I think was aiming at roughly the similar sort of questions, looking rather more closely at social formations, at the relationship of migrants, at the city perhaps, the informal sector, of the kind of processes that produce communalisation socially, and it seemed to me that there were a number of questions that emerged.

First of all, is the city distinct? Is the city an urban social space? Is there something special about the city? Many years ago, thirty years ago perhaps, as many of you know, Eric Stokes wrote an essay called "The Return of the Peasant of in South Asian History", in which he proclaimed that the "city slickers had left town". Soon after that, when I first began working on the history of Bombay, I was told not to do it, because essentially the real problems in

Indian society lay in its agrarian economy and after all, that is where people were focussing. The city slickers hadn't even left town, but like Conybear, the old Sanitary Inspector from the 1850s, the city slickers had left town without knowing what lay behind the thoroughfare's surface. Point being — what lay in the gutters. Bombay in the 1930s was the largest mileage of open sewers in any city on the world. So much for planning.

One of the problems that arose from the return of the peasant was essentially that all that attention on the peasant had served essentially to reify the peasant. As the peasant never came to town, as if the village never met the market, as if the peasant never went to market. In a sense, it would be a shame really if we turned to the city as a distinct social form, and had the same effect on the reification of the city. I am not suggesting that Gyan was suggesting a reification, but you know, in the way of pursuing the root of what is distinctive and unique about Bombay is probably to go down a root, or it could go down a root, which would yield decreasing returns. The fact is that until very recently, Bombay was almost predominantly a city of migrants. 85% of the city was born outside, in the city census population of 1921. Probably a slighter lesser proportion in the thirties and forties were born outside, and a very high proportion still in the sixties, and 1971 census. So, really we are talking about a city, the people who lived in Bombay were not people of Bombay, from Bombay. The way to the rural and larger economic setting is of course very crucial to the constitution of Bombay in all kinds of ways. In the larger cities, only the destitute and the wealthy could afford to be urban. They were the only people who inhabited the urban as a distinct social space.

The larger cities in India — and this isn't a Bombay thing — are the cities that have grown the fastest. And the reason that they have grown the fastest is because the rural poor can come to them in the expectation that if they can't find work in one area, they might be able to find work in another, and that if they are thrown out of one sector, they will find work in another.

So, in a sense, coming back to the sort of issues that Sujata was raising about the way in which Bombay was part of the Konkan imagination, the fact that Konkan is a district of women and children. This, one could say, had she gone to the Konkan in the 1870s and 1880s, it would have been absolutely no different. It wouldn't have been Madhuri Dixit, perhaps a few years later it would have been Fearless Nadia, but it nonetheless would have been somebody.

The second set of questions I suppose were about planning — how do planners think about cities. The fact is that the distinction between social planning, you know planning for social use and planning for infrastructure, or planning for space as if nobody lives in it, has been common really, I think, not just amongst Indian urban planners, but its been common by-and-large to urban planning. Attempts, initiatives to create cities as living spaces have been sporadic, they've been very interesting, they've been creative, and some of the very interesting ones have been very recent. But certainly in Bombay, the fact is we shouldn't place too much emphasis on what urban planners might or might not do. They have had great visionary dreams and they have produced usually nothing. So if you think for instance of The City of Bombay Extension Committee which did a lot of breathless work on how to reorganise the city in the 1880s, it was more or less repeated by The Bombay Planning Committee in 1909. If you look at what the Bombay Improvement Trust did, it went into panic after the plague, there was a feeling that the city had to be rebuilt, and it didn't matter what you did with slums, it didn't matter what you did with housing, where you had to put a road, you put a road, where you had to clear housing way, you had to clear housing way. Well, within about a year...

TAPE ENDED

...regularly, and it turns around, and it operates on minimal capital. A few years ago, I think ten or fifteen years ago, it was calculated that a BEST bus moved at an average of, I think it was twelve miles an hour. Of course building what is it, 50

TAPE PROBLEM

...with you know, crucial social and economic interests to make any headway with a plan, whether devised in terms of infrastructure, or devised in terms of who uses the city is really a sort of ...

There is the question of work, which in Bombay, even any city, is really rather crucial. Let me begin again with Sujata's point about jobs in and jobs out, and Jairus' point about the attack on the unions in the eighties. The fact is again that the job industry in Bombay was always/moved in between jobs in and jobs out. The informal sector was always at the heart of mill employment in Bombay. Nobody had a secure claim on work in the city. The politics of mill work, industrial work was always fragmented. What gave it shape, what gave it solidarity, what gave it coherence was politics. It was not in the structure of the working class, it was not in the culture, in the way in which communities were structured or anything of that kind.

And Jairus made a very interesting point about Pfizer and the whole question really, even though it was not Pfizer, it was the firms of the sixties, and their willingness to treat with trade unions. Would this have transformed the city? That is a very interesting idea and might be one that we would want to discuss further, but my own sense is that employers by-and-large have never been interested in tolerating trading trade unions. The only conditions in which globally, in which they have ever encountered trade unions or have trade unions, is when the strength of trade unions and their strength within the state has been such that there have been forced really to treat with them as the lesser of the evils of bargaining or sacking or bearing the cost of re-employing and dealing with volatility of the workforce. So, it would be very interesting if there was a root by which employers could have voluntarily created a system for collective formal bargaining. That would be a question that was worth probing.

What does it mean really in the end, that there is this long history of work in which people are employed, jobs in jobs out, what does it mean that in the informal sector, so called, is the primary way in which the industrial economy was organized and the hammer through which deindustrialisation took place. In a sense what it tells you, I think, is that the one thing that colonialism did in India, the one thing that was the central function for colonialism was to cheapen the cost of labour and to allow people to gain closer control over it, and particularly to allow Indian elites to gain closer control over it. As Indian elites gained closer control and were able to discipline labour, they reconciled themselves to colonialism. By the time they realised what they lost, it was by-and-large too late. That process of cheapening labour has by and large gone on at a much higher speed since 1947. And in a way, many of the problems of communalisation and of the city, the spaces of the city, the uses of the city, will turn really in the end on a much larger confrontation with how the society is governed to deal with that kind of issue. There are hundreds of other problems that I am sure you were raising, but I should probably stop now.

SHEKHAR KRISHNAN: Any questions or comments or contributions or responses now.

Q: INAUDIBLE. Bombay or industry of capital now more obvious (capitalism culture). I was wondering if you could talk about that.

GYAN PRAKASH: You know actually, what I was thinking about earlier when I was talking about history of capital is to think of the city as society now, brings up an issue about city's (own/old) structure that we perhaps didn't think about earlier...and that was in the sense...Raj was saying the question about the return of the peasant and then its flip side is return of the city. In fact I think that return of the city what it points to is its sort of back and forth relationship with the countryside as a continuing phenomenon, not in terms of rise and fall narrative. . For a whole period of time, there has been this kind of (symbiotic) relationship between the town and the country side. Whereas I think in the west, you can actually tell a kind of a story which leads towards a certain kind of urbanization of the countryside or incorporation of the countryside and a certain dominance of the urban as a cultural form which then disseminates all over into the natural territory. I think that what is distinctive in the Indian case is this kind of constant co-existence of these two forms and the dissemination of these forms from one to the other, so Madhuri Dixit one day is a Konkan phenomenon and is also a Bombay phenomenon. So that kind of coexistence of the rural and the urban takes a peculiar form in the Indian case. In Raj's book....can I do some free advertisement for your book?... he has this wonderful description of the neighborhoods in the mill districts in the 30's and the 40's. All these people who came from the village and live...and often people have written about it including (Claude Battley) who wrote this piece in the late 40's and he said "well, you know, these workers who come and live in Bombay they are not really urbanized. Their hearts are set in their villages and they want to return one day to their village and so they are not real urbanites: their hearts are elsewhere. In fact, even as they imagine their mills as their village, they are actually imagining it in the urban context. So, even their village is a completely fictive village imagined in the city. So, I would say that there is this kind of unresolved tension and back and forth ness in a city like Bombay that you don't find for example in New York. So, in New York you'll have and a de-industrialized history will be turned into or completely into middle class or upper middle class neighborhood and here, you'll have phoenix mills which is some attempt to (do like a) New York, but for various reasons collapses.

Q: So, what do you think are the implications of urban planning and management. Cause it seems like a selective kind of justification...like again, on an aesthetic level, it is interesting. More interesting than white found in New York and it triggered...easing...Not only aesthetically interesting but also easier to manage because...unconscious confrontation whereas it seems like in New York it is the norm

CAMERA SWITCHED OFF

GYAN PRAKASH: (camera switched on)...because many of these forms have actually been incorporated into certain kinds of aesthetic and commodity forms whereas in Bombay I think there is this constant tension between these competing and you know different interests and confrontation is much more tense and unresolved, which many people see as a place of authenticity and it's more real etc. I am not saying ...but it has a different kind of aesthetic dimension to it.

Q: I am just a little curious about one thing, the idea of imagining the urban and in relation to migrants. One of the problems put by R.K.Gupta (films) is when we look at culture broadly, there seems to be not only the spacialising but also the sort of sort of meta physics it seems, sort of fixidity of the location, of the art of physical location and in relation to migrants one of the problems I think in front of you...we're looking at the people in Konkan, how they're imagining themselves in relation to Bombay, what I am curious about is that to what extent migrants once they are in say Bombay, rework the imaginings of Bombay city itself and I am a little curious about this because the dimensions of this are rather amazing,

because the population of migrants isn't just merely limited to just say the small towns of India or even village India. You have migrants from towns, you have migrants from cities and metropolitans. I myself am, I can say, a migrant from Calcutta, though I would much rather be here. To what extent can these sort of things re-imagine Bombay city and the city in a sense.

SUJATA PATEL: I mean the city is anyway an imagination of its migrants today. Because they have been migrants who have set up the city so even those who have made the film industry today have been migrants from UP from Bihar, from elsewhere..from Pakistan from Sind..So ,in many ways, that got imagined in the films, in the actual content of scripts etc. So, migration as a process got imagined in many ways in the city.(directed towards audience- You are not taking about that...

Q(the same person from the audience): No, the thing is that at the moment as has been pointed out it the sort of the trend in the communalisation of politics which seems to come in because when you're outside Bombay and you look at the Shiv-Sena, you don't jus look at the Shiv-Sena as a sort of Right wing party, you look at it as a Maratha Hindu party. Sort of like Bombay is for maharashtrians and so on. But then the flow of migrants into Bombay city at every level , even in terms of people who could be called intellectuals and so on and even professionals . How do affect this kind of common...That's taking place in Bombay.

SUJATA PATEL: Well, here we are talking about politics and identities and various levels of migration with each group having their own identities and how it got organized politically. In 1966 after the Shiv-Sena was formed, in the late 50's actually, the 'Sanyukta Maharashtra' movement emerged to get Maharashtra as a state and get Bombay as its capital and the group that came together, you know the peasants and workers parties, the communist party and even the working class, they imagined that the city is a city of Marathi speakers, okay? And that was a very significant moment for the city's reorganization because the later politics that the Shiv-Sena picked up from this issue...and then from 66 onwards, they had confrontations to get atleast in the industries, marathi speaking people in the recruitment of workers and it had it's impact. By the late 70's you have a change over of the working class in terms of language identity. So, we are really talking about that kind of, one kind of assessment of what constitutes an identity and here the regional identity was important. But if you look at migrations of the late 19th century, early 20th century, and the various groups that formed a part of the middle class, Gujaratis that migrated earlier and other groups too, the migration of the middle class led to a different kind of imagination that was referred to as a cosmopolitan imagination. So, you had two migrations concluding towards two kinds of political identities, one of a cosmopolitan kind and one of a more regional language kind. And both emerged I think in the city. The first one emerged in confrontation with colonialism in the 30's and the 40's within the nationalist movement and the other one emerged also within the confrontation with the cosmopolitan elite, the working class one and it ultimately emerged as a language identity in the 60's and 70's. So, migration is very important because it carries the identities of caste and of region together, but what particular shape it takes depends on the context and specificities of politics. I can't explain more than this...

ASPI MISTRY: I have a question for Jairus and probably also Raj. Raj mentioned that jobs in and jobs out was always the situation and seemed to suggest that nothing new about this... I would like Jairus to respond whether that is so and also my personal reading just as a lay person is that yes, perhaps jobs in and jobs out, *badli* workers, mill workers was a common phenomenon. We now seem to have *badli* workers in what used to be very formal organizations. It seems to be an attempt to dissolve the formal work force completely almost and you now have *badli* workers in Hindustan Lever, in the official level... I am not talking

of factory workers, at official and managerial levels. One example that my friend who was working at Citibank at the official level told me about was that at the Bandra-Kurla complex, they have 5-6 floors and these bank people in the last financial year, towards 31st of March were given targets, and most of them worked their asses off, working over weekends and on March 31st, I think they worked till midnight to accomplish those targets, everyone working under the impression that they were going to get a raise or a promotion or that some big thing was happening for them. When they next came to office on the 1st or 2nd of April, hundreds of people at the official (officer) level found their desks completely clean of all papers, drawers cleaned out, no chair to sit on and a letter and a cheque for 3 months salary. "Thank you, your services are not required from tomorrow". And now those 6-7 stories are occupied by some agency under contract and that work has been outsourced. Now I think that this is a different.... So, I just...

JAIRUS BANAJI: Yeah, what the Bombay employers basically did in the 70's was reestablish control over the labour market. They didn't have it as long as the labour market was still volatile and expanding which it was all the way down till the early 70's. So, there was a great deal of union expansion occurring and massive amount of collective (bargaining). It was an explosion, a real explosion which you see particularly in the 60's and that of course is kind of bound up with the kind of political climate of the country at that time. Now by the 70's, managements begin to dig their heels in and the first spectacular conflict that signifies a watershed and a reversal in industrial relations is over computerization in 1973. (Voltas) demand that there should be management prerogatives over EDP and the introduction of EDP and data processing and the unions resistance to this leads to a major lockout in 1973 which Praful (Bidvai) covered in the economic and political weekly, one of the most interesting pieces of industrial relations journalism, was a comment on the lockout of Voltas of 1973. And that inaugurates an entirely new period of industrial relations in the city where managements are determined to recover initiative in the face of this huge expansion of unions which is taking place through the late 50's and 60's. And they do recover initiative, they recover it by the late 70's-80's and whereas the (patterned) industry conflict is massively dominated by strikes in the 1970's, both in terms of duration and frequency. By the 1980's the picture is lockouts...lockouts, lockouts, lockouts. Massive lockouts lasting for hundreds of days at a time... like Indian business group control enterprises in particular, have lockouts that go on timelessly and endlessly and sort of prefigure what happens in the textile strike. Was the textile strike a strike or a lockout? I believe it was a lockout not a strike, even though it was called a strike. as something that was being fostered on him as something that the mill owners would welcome. Anyway in the end it gave them an opportunity to completely restructure and dismantle the industry. Anyway control over initiatives in controlling the labour market were what the big victories that employers in Bombay won by the 1970's and 80's and this is an outcome...what you're taking about is an outcome of 25-30 years of management struggle to actually win this kind of control over labour markets. So, you have multiple employment statuses, not just in the private sector. Largest employers of contract labour in Bombay in the early 80's were who, the government owned, central government owned refineries in Trombay. They were employing 8-10 thousand contract workers, (BPCL HP) etc at that time. So, forget the private sector. The unions were protesting about contract labour in the central government too And it is important to understand the lot of the strategy and strategic vision of the private sector or industrial relations has been led by the government, something that people don't often see that it's the government pushing private capital into confrontation with labour. It's the government which encourages (anxillation) and break up of production first of all, because they have their own politicized vision of things. For them to have a large middle class as a buffer in Indian capitalism is a safety power. In fact that middle class is connected with your (generification) question really, you know, between capital and labour is this massive middle class, which seems to blunt absolutely everything in this country, which seems to slow everything down, which blunts it.

Anything that is sharp is blunted by this middle class, ultimately. (Anxillisation), encouragement of small scale, all the crap about the populous rubbish about big business, large scale production, all of which should have been thrown out of the window because it was a total nonsense. In economic terms, it was garbage to promote small scale production because that's just sweatshops, it's just slave labour that you're encouraging. But the middle class is bought into it cause they gain from it partly and the left bought into it because it was populist and (light rhetoric) against business and so on and so forth. And we are living with the consequences of that today, that even our so called large units are actually small by international standards. Liberalisation basically is driving a whole series of nails into the coffin (for) that kind of an industry. Those legacies are what we are now trying to unravel. But if there had been a consistent industrial policy which was in keeping with international practice, we should have encouraged fewer units and larger units which were competitive. And we should have subsidised those units, there should have been government subsidies to those units and we should have made them world class competition units by the 1960's. We should have been in a position to basically have done the kinds of things that the business class finally about doing in the 1990's. 30 years too late.

RAJ CHANDAVARKAR: I think the point that jobs in jobs out was not about... but the situation of collective bargaining in the 70's is really radically affected by security for permanent workers which begins to be regulated really very soon from the late 30's onwards but much more rapidly after the Bombay industry relations act, it was in the 1940's. And what you see to that is that I think probably in most sectors, an enormously widening gap between the wages of badri workers and the wages of permanent workers. The intention was to try and create a much more regulated supply of (surplus) labour which otherwise had to be politically controlled by employers in the 20's and 30's. But I think that's it really with the permanent section of the work force that you begin to get collective bargaining. Many of these people, of course unionise by unions which are now very closely linked to the democratic process of course, which are union arms and political parties. So, it is a different game but the fact is that apart from the elite, by and large workers have not had control historically over their rights of employment or have had very limited control is what I was trying to say, not that there was no...

SUJATA PATEL: Can I add something here. Economists always talk of the 1930's or 1950's or 1980's or the 1990's. You have the same data that two-thirds of workforce in Bombay is unorganized. So, same data. Raj spoke about it, 1948 (lakhawala) study talks about it, Deshpande's work of 1990's talks about it: two thirds of the work force is in the non organized sector, in the informal sector. So, what one has to look at is what was being done politically about the work force. There were strikes and there was an attempt to incorporate this work force into permanent work force by the trade union and the political processes. And that's the critical factor between 1930's and ...what is happening after the 70's is that those who become permanent work force are pushed out and that is the critical theme. And this is happening now at the upper level also, which your example gives.

Q: This is with reference to what Jairus said regarding the three reasons why Bombay is what it is now. Would you say that the underworld had a major role to play because a lot of people who are a part of the Shiv-Sena now have their origins in the underworld and the builders where you said the urban entrepreneurs, real estate and the connection between the... and the builders. They also have a lot of the underworld play a major role in all these deals and the level of literacy amongst the political people who make the decisions. Given their level of literacy, they are not the right people to make the decisions.

JAIRUS BANAJI: I don't know about that but certainly criminalization of a part of the (trade union) movement of politics, within the city, of the culture of the city and so on has

been going on since some stage of the 80's. I mean [Datta] Samant's assassination is almost like a film show, its almost like pulp fiction, except that it is reality. If There was an Italian director with an imagination to make a film about India, they would show Samant's assassination, because everything is there. It was over a land deal which was being held up ostensibly by a union. Which builders were involved? Who hired the assassins? Who gave the contract out? How is that contract linked into wider agendas for the re-development of those parts of Bombay and so on and so forth. All unanswered questions...and why did the cops stop their investigation and shut their folder? Why? Obviously, there is a whole set of interests at work here, very powerful interests...and Samant seemed to know that he was going to be killed, because he acquired this sort of slightly saintly tone in the last few weeks of his life, anticipating something major was going to happen. So, there you go... the underworld, yes is a big part of the story, at least 2 of these icebergs, as I hold them. And remember, we are not looking at reality, we are looking at the tips of reality. Seriously. We just don't know half of what goes on in Bombay or this country because there is such little transparency, so much secrecy, so much disinformation, which is deliberately spread. One obvious example of this which we are constantly consuming and seeing and which we are aware of is encounter [killings]. An encounter is staged, the public consumes it through the media etc., and you consume it together with the explanations, you consume it as a constructed story. But no one has the time or the nerve to go out and investigate and find out what the hell happened. To the extent that we allow a culture of public accountability to decline in this way, to be eroded in this way, these encounters will become more frequent in the future, it will be possible for the cops to go out and shoot anyone and call it an encounter. So that too is a sort of criminalization of the state that's going on.

RAJ CHANDAVARKAR: An important part of the story is the Rent Act and Land Ceiling and which fortifies really the collusion which Jairus was taking about between builders, developers, underworld, the government, municipality, politicians, I mean its really been at the heart of the working of this economy. And also, the degradation of housing stock, let's not forget that.

SHEKHAR KRISHNAN: So, how does one write the history of this, because this is not just a recent phenomenon it goes much further back to...you know. This is only the beginning

RAJ CHANDRVARKAR: It goes back to the 40's-50's migration. One very curious thing about Bombay is that it was a very small town in 1941, even in 1951. A little over a million in 1941 and it grows very rapidly after that. But I suspect, I don't know but I suspect that if you tried to tell the story of Rent Control, it's Second World War Rent Control which begins to bite 15-20 years later.

GYAN PRAKASH: But in a certain sense the story of the underworld and crime, I mean isn't that always a part of the ... urban imaginary? I mean you always have the sense of the city as a place of Philip Marlowe, of the city as a place of dark deals and the task of an investigator is to constantly ferret it out, the truth that is kind of buried underneath somewhere. And so, you have the detective as who goes around and tries to figure out who pulled the trigger and where is the real. It seems like the city always had this kind of dense kind of... even sense that the reality is not what you see but it's in the (by-lanes, the labyrinth) somewhere.

JAIRUS BANAJI: Yeah...except that our governance is in itself sort of criminalized, not government but governance, the whole style of governance is being criminalized by the fact that you have these hoodlum parties in power, exercising their power. And when they are in power, they ransack the treasury, they loot the treasury, they line their pockets and no wonder there's a fiscal crisis when they leave.

RAHUL SRIVASTAVA: Just to respond to Gyan's observation that the urban turn, particularly in the context of India definitely seems to talk about the rural-urban as a very sort of alive creature, and keeping in mind the fact that a lot of urban sociologists often look at the industrial city really as the object of study more than perhaps the pre-industrial city which really covers a large part of human history. How do you respond to recent works for e.g. like David Harvey or even Mike Davis, who talk about the urban frontier as limited by a very powerful environmental violations and in fact even raise different kinds of questions about the future of the urban largely the context of use of natural resources. How would we bring in these concerned which are mainly scholars who are looking at the physical survival of urban spaces, particularly in the context of how they are often exploited in the context of the (interlab) even though one knows that these could be apocalyptic or alarmous visions. There is a lot of fairly sound support of this kind of visions also. Just how would one talk about the future of urban studies in the context of these questions? Would it be necessary to go back to pre industrial histories of urbanism where you could see rural urban even more alive than perhaps the industrial experience. Are we also seeing a crisis in the industrial city which has of course been the most vivid and important form of urbanization in the last few hundred years. How would we respond to these questions with context to the urban question?

JAIRUS BANAJI: It's a big question. I see it through an environmentalism of the poor, basically. I mean don't leave environmentalism just to be a governmental agenda. It has to be something which is perceived by the consumption of resources, it has an internal rationality and it's the poor who have to make those calculations of course. Because if the political authorities are constantly allowed to manage the environment on behalf of everyone else so to speak, we are never going to get an end to this crisis. So, I am just sort of referring here to a book which is coming out by which is precisely entitled i think to the environmentalism of the poor where he argues these strategies very persuasively, including examples from India.

GYAN PRAKASH: I agree with it completely because when we think of a great deal of environmental discourse particularly in relation to thinking about cities in the wake of dignification and you know creation of those kinds of...what Mike Davis calls (fortress la?'s), phoenix mills, cities as citadels and so on. A great deal of urban thinking and urban planning particularly by people who have a kind of environmentalist concern, has been to once again, go to some kind of expert discourse to how to resolve the environmental crisis in the urban areas. And once again you will get these schemes, which will masquerade as schemes that have no politics, when they are in fact deeply political. And then you will get all kind of schemes for heritage and restoration and so on and which will have none of this concern about the people who actually live in the city and how they should use the city.

Q: this is just a thought...when you talk about the informal labour which is more or less two thirds of Bombay's work force, why is it that we consider it as an admonishing thing? I am kind of doing research on this and I didn't really realise how the informal setup functions. I think it functions more formally than what the formal setup does. So, what I am trying to understand is that why is it becoming such a big threat when it is functioning in a much better sense than what the formal industry is functioning as. Or if it is which we all can understand it as, then why isn't the formal industry taking some kind of understanding from that and trying to rework on it.

SUJATA PATEL: Do you want me to reply? I don't know what you mean by informal sector working formally. When I have used it or generally when people use it, it is because there is no continuous employment. There is most of the time, not necessarily true, that most of informal sector workers are unorganized and therefore, they don't have bargaining power to get better wages. In case the informal sector is in the service industry, which is retailing of

any kind, they have very little profit margins to be able to manage. They generally have to use their own home as a workplace and they have to invest in electricity, housing, sanitation, water, which if you're a permanent worker, you have access to separately from your wage. Another major thing is not being a part of the whole group of people who are workers and therefore have a sense of identity of being a worker and that giving way to negotiate with those who are your employers. And that is why unions who organize people who are in the informal sector have insisted from the state that they are given status as a trade union. Because only then they will be able to bargain for better wages or better facilities even if it's a co-operative union or whatever. That is why it's a historic case of SEWA [Self-Employed Women's Association] arguing and getting the status of a trade union, even though it's working as the union of non-formal unorganized workers.

SHEKHAR: there's one question at the back I think

Q: INAUDIBLE ...the blurring of the formal and the informal in terms of security of the jobs, then how does one wrest back this power on behalf of the labour? ...is that the paradigm of the imagination or are there other alternatives?

JAIRUS BANAJI: Yeah, I think it's basically the responsibility of the state to ensure that the markets are properly regulated. The one exception to this is the labour market because lack of regulation in the labour market is an enormous source of corporate flexibility, flexibility for the employers etc. There is no reason (aternately) why this should be the case, why this (extention) should survive. I don't think that this can be disconnected from larger political issues in the kind of state that we have, we have never had functioning social democracy in the country. We had a vision of social democracy to some degree in Nehru, in a certain kind of Congress, in the political imagination of the Congress under Nehru in the 50's. Even then the congress was a party riddled with a kind of ideologies but none the less there was a kind of vision, a Fabian vision of sorts, but never a reality. We have never had a functioning social democracy in this country. It seems to me given the options available today, given the strengths of different social groups in our society and so on, this seems like the best bet for us. That we should be launching campaigns to bring about in reality so to speak a living political social democracy, a social democracy as a political system and obviously here I don't mean just reviving the rhetoric of social democracy, I mean using our imagination, addressing issues that are real issues and confronting them in every theatre of resistance, in every theatre of struggle, applying these kind of principles. These are important principles, equality is an important principle, no democracy can function without equality. Justice is an important principle, the rule of law is an important principle, the rational use of resources is an important principle, all these need to be synthesized in a totalising vision which is powerful enough in emotional terms to appeal to people. There is a huge crisis of political imagination in this country, hence cynicism, hence fascicism, you know, as a result of this, as a bankruptcy of our imagination, that we cant imagine a future for ourselves. Issues of accountability, issues of governance affect the quality of our lives, they affect the degree to which I can exercise and pursue my rights as an individual etc etc. They affect the quality of relationships in society. So all of this has to be on the agenda. It has to be there in a connected way, in a coherent way which makes sense to people, which appeals to people emotionally, so that we can communicate this vision to people. So, where are the groups that are trying to do this?

SHEKHAR KRISHNAN: But are the unions going to be the bearers of these principles?

JAIRUS BANAJI: Not the unions in their present form.

SHEKHAR KRISHNAN: Right...but then what is it now about today's situation with the unions in the kind of disarray that they are...for instance that a certain style of trade union

would specifically address the state with precisely the principles that you're talking about... equality, fair wages, justice, employment, all of these things. Now if the object of address, the state, is no longer interested in hearing, or capital is reorganized in such a way that it is no longer viable to address the state, and you can't perhaps address the larger forces that are creating the kind of structural changes that are, you know, causing the unions to fall apart. Which groups are going to be the bearers of these principles, and if its not the unions, then which forces will emerge in the city? I am saying because it's the crisis of the city's politics that everyone has sort of alluded to has been precisely the collapse of this space, along with the collapse of organized industry, factories, mills, etc.

JAIRUS BANAJI: Well the unions will be an important part of that struggle, of that movement. But in their current form, more simply because they have got their backs up against the wall, we have got a handful of unions struggling for survival. Independent unions are being rooted out in Bombay, literally. So, you've got just a handful of unions, struggling desperately through the courts in order to survive. Once those units are shut down it is unlikely that they will survive. But obviously, if we are talking about the revitalization of democracy as part of a vision or agenda for urban renewal, obviously the trade unions have to be there, but it is a reinvigorated labour movement, a labour movement with job security, a labour movement with collective bargaining rights. I find that if we talk about the unorganized and the organized, you see the state of the problem. 93% of the labour force is unorganized. That means it is deprived of rights which exist on paper. It simply cannot organize. That's the extent of the crisis. 93% is unorganized. But even that 7% which is organized, is subject to erosion today, is subject to attack today. So, employers are clearly in no mood to tolerate any degree of challenge to the kind of cooperate prerogatives and so on that they want. As for which other groups and so on...I think young people, the youth, I think students, I think sections of the inteligencia, I think the middle class and a vast vast section of the labouring poor in this country who have been the basis of democracy in this country and who are now increasingly being drawn into a malestrom of nationalism.

Q: The Shiv-Sena... corporate sector... From about four or five years ago I remember a member of a very leading corporate house went to Bal Thackeray and told him that he should become a dictator of this country. I mean nobody is exploring this issue.

JAIRUS BANAJI: Yeah, you're absolutely right. I mean the Sena was anti strike, its always been anti strike but its gone slow on that rhetoric whenever it feels that it needs working class support, it abandons all that. It was encouraged to come into Bombay industries mainly by medium scale companies, little sized managements broke them in the suburbs in Bombay. And they did use the Sena effectively to try and break any etc. But of course you are absolutely right about the corporate contribution. I mean I personally witnessed during the communal slaughter of 1984, I witnessed the Mahindra premises off the western express highway being used very actively by Shiv-Sena (cardour) jeeps which had been freshly manufactured in the factories which didn't have number plates on them were being driven out from that gate which debouches on to the western express highway. I was waiting for a bus and the bus didn't land up for 40 minutes, so I saw these jeeps coming out, full of Shiv-Sena (cardour) who were ferrying their people to and fro to party headquarters because a great deal of organization had to be done during the slaughter. You know, the logistics of the killing, the logistics of the slaughter were being planned with the active connivance of (mount) management. Now I am not pointing a finger at that Mahindra doc but clearly someone was turning a blind eye. You can't drive commodities out you know, without number plates and do this kind of thing and this was happening...these are manufactured products, they didn't even have number plates. So, it was a stark image for me of the extent to which big business in this city is actually complicit in communal violence.

Q: We're talking about how the informal sector is efficient and that is one of the logics on which the Supreme Court is reversing all the cases on trade unions which are taken about the informal sector as such, and they are linking informal sector with efficiency, and the whole assumption that informal sector is not good for the poor, I would rather believe that it brings forward this competitiveness, and that is why this city survives or thrives maybe. Because there is the informal sector which brings about greater efficiency, so there's greater competition people keep coming in, the level of production or quality keeps going.

JAIRUS BANAJI: Let's just take this at a very simple level. If you have an energy balanced model of efficiency, energy consumed and energy produced or generated, in what possible sense could this sector be efficient, okay? If you're discounting wages entirely and the long kind of hours at work which are being put in and under consumption...that means over work and under consumption which is what the informal sector is, face it. The informal sector equals over-work plus under-consumption. It has existed in the countryside for millennia. Every peasant household knows what the informal sector is, alright? If that is the concept of efficiency, then the courts have a very peculiar idea of it. Then maybe the judges ought to be over-worked and under-paid.

SUJATA PATEL: That's an ideology, isn't it? I mean, if you go to Dharavi and... people sleeping and staying there...it is cheapened labour, extremely cheap labour, no family life, pollution, health problems. We are not counting any of that in our efficiency, are we? The cost benefit analysis never looks at health, pollution, environment, any of these. And if you look at today's medical records of working class women in Bombay, you will see the amount of T.B. that they have. And that's all because of pollution and compared to all other cities, and compared even to rural areas, women in Bombay have more health problems than anywhere else. There are of course working conditions which determine this but there is much more than that. There is health and security that propagates... Also, there is one study which says that the old use 'chula', not smokeless 'chula' and that also is very interesting. This is so because that means that they are getting fuel from somewhere and because that's more cost effective for them than anything else.

Q: I want to (push) this concept to the imagination because I don't want it to generate but I wonder when you referred to David Harvey's work what is meant by... Personally I feel it sounds nice but imagination is often overrated as opposed to government organization. I think like for example, if something works, it's better that it works than its imaginability of and maybe the terms innovation or eclectic innovations somehow more appropriate. I just wondered what you meant by the terms that you introduced right in the beginning...

SHILPA PHADKE: Can I add something to that? I was also going to ask an interconnected question about the imagining alternatives in the groups that you were suggesting. But before these groups can come together, how do we confront the politics of identity? Because the kinds of caste politics, gender politics, class politics, which are now very much a part of all these groups. They are a part of student groups, they are part of the middle-class...so before these kind of alternatives can be imagined, we'll all have to confront the ways in which...

JAIRUS BANAJI: I don't think that it's a kind of two stage thing, before and after. These identities are anyway very complex kinds of entities, if you think about them, you know. They operate in certain contexts and not necessarily in others, with the same individuals, alright, and they are stronger at certain times than others. Some terrible catastrophe occurs, then these identities seem to flare up and they are sort of submerged and (drawn) for long periods of time. So, I don't think that you can struggle against these what I call repressive identities or repressive notions of community without offering people positive visions of community. I don't like the language of community and communitarianism because it contains all sorts of

patriarchal connotations which is wrong but I presume that's what Harvey is driving at that we have to have the ability to totalize because our experience is fragmented and the world as we experience it is fragmented and we have to have the ability to actually connect things together into a charter of some sort which represents a vision of what we want and we must in some sense be alive to our own desires and not let them be crushed and killed off completely with the sort of pessimism... For Harvey the great thing is optimism of the intellect is what matters. However pessimistic you might feel about the world, you mustn't allow your intellect to be abandoned to pessimism. So, optimism of the intellect, that's Gramsci's great motto written in Mussolini's jail, and so on and so forth. You know, our ability and it hasn't been there on the left for example for the last 35-40 years. We have just lost that optimism (beat)... That's how I see imagination, as the struggle, it's the intellectual struggle to achieve a vision of the polity of society of the future which can actually contribute to the salvation of mankind in some way. Effectively we are all driving towards a massive mega-city disaster world wide.

GYAN PRAKASH: But Jairus, this optimism of the intellect, I mean going back to...I mean, explain part...left staple that every time there's a kind of a crisis, and David Harvey's example of it, you get a kind of a manifesto or you get a kind of a programme, (a call) to re-imagine the future, to provide an alternative and one always gets this kind of sense of nostalgia in it, in the sense that on one hand, you have this picture of fragmentation and actually, however you might define it: (bourgeois, right wing, it is actually able to thrive on fragmentation. Its able to live in the here and now and imagine all kinds of futures and imaganaries. And the left constantly refers back to 'we must' we must re-imagine a future'. And it always remains that way. I mean I find myself on the one side...I mean it's a very attractive vision and it has a wonderful pedigree and so on, but it remains always a kind of ()...

JAIKUS BANAJI: Okay, I mean that's the point. Spaces at (home/hope) is precisely demarcating itself from that kind of utopianism. What its saying is that every utopia needs a closure. In other words, you've got to come down to earth at some stage. That means you have to negotiate your way through reality however messy it is, okay? I mean we are facing fascism in this country today, that's the political agenda which is at work. They are going to destroy our democratic system entirely. As it is democracy has by and large been debased by this routine of elections every few years and everything else that democracy meant for human beings and so on seems to have been vacated from the concept. But none the less, even that semblance of electoral machinery will be done away with. We are facing fascism and in the face of that kind of reality, frightening reality, catastrophe, we have to have the courage, the will, the determination and the imagination to come up with the politics that communicates with people, which gives them hope, which inspires hope in people and which allows them to experience themselves with a sense of confidence, because despair is what these people feed on. And that sense of despair comes from a utter feeling of confusion about the world, total confusion about the world. You know your whole identity disintegrates when you lose your job. A job loss is not just a job loss, it's a disintegration of your entire world. And we are not be to offer people any kind of alternative to the politics of violence which is currently filling that space. And we have to be able to do it.

GYAN PRAKASH: No, I don't disagree with that. I am just saying that in Harvey, there is a kind of a lament, of a kind of a loss of the village due to envision of a kind of a total future. And that has something to do with the crisis of Marxism war, the kind of change that Marxism has also experienced. When I think of for example the current politics, one of the things that the Shiv-Sena did so... I shouldn't say so wonderfully, so effectively is that it was able to use politics as a kind of an autonomous fear and provide a kind of an alternative,

provide a political imaginary which was very effective and it was able to do in a kind of fragmented social landscape that Sujata was talking about.

SUJATA PATEL: No, I didn't imply this... anyway...No, because you know, it fed on to a fragmented social existence.

GYAN PRAKASH: See, this is why... I think the idea that when you have a fragmented social landscape and that then produces a particular kind of political imaginery, is to in fact give less credit to the creative work that the political imaginery does in creating a certain kind of a frame work for people. Otherwise if you give that kind of agency to political fragmentation and say that political fragmentation creates Shiv-Sena, okay, then where does the alternative come from? If fragmentation is what produces that, then where does the alternative come from?

SUJATA PATEL: In the early 1920's or so, if you look at Raj's book, you see the fragmentation of the working class. In many many areas, they are excluded in many ways. And yet a movement emerged which gave...you know what we would like to call as against , universal (distinct) position or what was (critically imagined) and organized through the () and organize the working class mainly in the textile mills. But they did give that imagination. The same situation but in different dimensions has occurred in the 70's and 80's in the city. Do we have (to move in) to give that kind of imagination? That's the question. What the Shiv-Sena did was not to give that universalistic position. I would agree with you today given the health problems the only ambulance that comes if somebody collapses on the street is that of the Shiv-Sena

CAMERA SWITCHED OFF AND ON

SUJATA PATEL: both have created political imagination but what is the value of the work?

GYAN PRAKASH:I am not disputing that. I am saying that how much of (interpreted) weight do you put on fragmentation itself in explaining the Shiv-Sena and I am suggesting that the Shiv-Sena is not only a kind of a response to social fragmentation and that the Shiv-Sena is also a kind of a political (). However in order to come up with a counter political imaginary and I was saying that with people like (Harvey?) I always get a kind of ring of nostalgia in it and it's nostalgia for a certain kind of Marxism.

Q: I don't think that's its so much nostalgia but its also a question of strategy. I mean the imaginary, the important vector in the imaginary of the Shiv-Sena is in the totality. Its precisely the Hindu (rashtra/raj) or Maharashtra as a whole. Thinking politically entails thinking in totality. You cannot divorce political thinking. Yes, so precisely its able to operate on a fragmentary terrain, nevertheless, it's imaginary and its still that over totality. And so any oppositional politics, however couched or bracketed or whatever, one wants to make ones totality, one necessarily has to (posit) that in order to mobilize. And my question really was about not so much an alternative imagenary but also organization. You have to have an organization, a principle of organization with the collapse of formal structures and employment, principes of organization breakdown. And the search for new imagery is in some sense a search for new principles lines of organization and it is precisely that of totality that the Shiv-Sena uses on the imaginary level but also as we know, very strongly on the organizational level. So,that imaginary totality....

Q: Would you not say that the Shiv-Sena offers a world view to that fragmented alienated public? And if you ask where will the (authority/alternative) come, from that same

fragmentation by giving a different explanation and different word view of that same fragmentation, rooted in that reality. I agree some nostalgia some previous reality that goes on...

GYAN PRAKASH: But I also think that you cannot mimic, I mean the alternative cannot mimic in the same kind of totalizing vision because...in fact I think it would be wrong to think...lets say that if you are talking about the city, that the city has the kind of closed lines that are inherited in the Shiv-Sena kind of an imagination of society. I think of naturally, urban reality as much more porous, its crossing all kind of boundaries and that is partly the kind of challenge to imagine this urban society. Now to think that because the Shiv-Sena kind of offers an alternative with neat maharashtra, with maharashtran language and tigers with spots, we should also have our own tigers with spots...I don't think that that's the way to go.

Q: sorry I cant be very loud. Very pessimistic developments in Bombay in the last 30 years and its not only Bombay but quite a few other cities...one gets even more pessimistic when you see figures showing how India is losing out , especially China. In a whole range of commodities, I have been doing case studies in joint ventures. I mean India at the moment is producing say one surgical latex glove for 10 U.S. cents and that was fine, exporting it to latin America for the last 5 years. For the past 12 months, India has been wiped out of the latin American market by china

CAMERA SWITCHED OFF AND ON

JAIRUS BANAJI: The working people of these countries have to be able to determine that agenda. Globalization does reflect the workings of capitalism and to the extent that it reflects the workings of advanced capitalism, it's not something that we can avoid. Its not something that we can turn our backs to and say that no, we'll rather go back to the 70's or the 1930's or the 19th century. Its ridiculous. So to that extent, there's an () logic at work, but it's a logic which is exclusionary at the moment. It intensifies competition precisely between Chinese and Indian workers. Those workers need to get together, they need to talk to each other, they need to work out common strategies for avoiding the race to the bottom. I know much of this sounds utopian given the conditions we are working under and operating under but its only under those conditions that we can have something like a globalization from below, the kind of thing that Jeremy Brent was talking about, you know, globalization from below. Basically to a large extent, those agendas have still to be defined and determined. I mean they are being determined in ways that will lead Indian workers to cause job losses to maybe workers in the states and then Bangladeshi workers will cause job losses to workers in India and then there will be someone else down the queue and so on and so forth. That logic of the race to the bottom is what has to be halted. Perhaps one way of doing it is through the WTO, through a social clause, through a workers clause of some sort, you know. Put an end to this kind of competition, to this degradation of labour that is taking place, also to social dumping, to environmental dumping, all of which are a part of this global logic. We have got to stop all that and we have got to be able to develop our own market sufficiently, there are enormous unsatisfied social needs in this market, massive and you know...

CAMERA SWITCHED ON AND OFF

JAIRUS BANAJI: I believe that the ruling groups in this country are deeply committed which is why they do nothing about urban degradation. They are waiting for the great pandemic to come along and wipe off half the population. They're waiting for it.

CAMERA SWITCHED ON AND OFF

SHEKHAR KRISHNAN: ...other interesting questions about` different utopias and imaginations... we'll probably take this up afterwards. It's 8:20 now...(camera is switched off)...we have to rush.