

The Violence of Commodity Aesthetics

HAWKERS, DEMOLITION RAIDS, AND A NEW REGIME OF CONSUMPTION

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If the work of the culture industry for Adorno and Horkheimer was the production of a logic of commodification that inhibited critical awareness, Walter Benjamin understood culture rather as the aestheticization of politics so that participation in—not pacification through—the image was central to mass-mediated society. Here, we can think of the moment of market liberalization in India through Benjamin’s notion of the relationship between the cultural and the political, focusing also on the ways in which metaphors of the economy and spectacles of consumption underwrite the political work of images. In doing so, I will focus on the relationship between acts of consumption and scenes of destruction occurring under the sign of emerging markets.

Pheriwalas (literally, those who move around), or hawkers, roam the streets of Indian cities, bearing baskets on their heads or pushing a handcart and calling out their wares, offering customers goods and produce cheaper than in the stores. They are a part of the economy that spurs consumption, yet they function as quintessentially vagrant figures requiring discipline. The pheriwala is thus a figure bridging consumption and destruction. The pheriwala is a real figure, working in circuits seen as illegal in relation to the formal economy, but is also metaphorical, symbolizing a kind of disorder as a struggling but nevertheless illicit entrepreneur. The institutionalization of television (nationwide broadcasting began only as recently as the 1980s) has in fact worked to illuminate the illegitimacy of this figure while rendering the pheriwala vulnerable to absorption in a new visual economy, with political consequences deserving examination.

There are several examples I can offer of pheriwalas appearing in street scenes in news stories or feature films shown on television. However, I will begin by considering an example from advertising, since it is the genre making the closest connections between culture, the economy, and the new visual regime instanced in television.¹ We should note that given the limited purchasing power of most Indian consumers and advertisers’ own orientation to urban middle-class “people like us” (or PLUS), we cannot take for granted the existence on television of an aesthetic acceptable to popular audiences. It is only with the recent establishment of national television that it has become economically—and aesthetically—viable to address large publics. Until this time, it was assumed that “cre-

ative” input was required chiefly for the premium market, which is predominantly a minority Anglophone population. With market liberalization, the advertising industry in India has begun investing in the cultivation of more indigenous, regionally inflected tastes.² In the ad discussed below, conceived for a more “downmarket” product, we can glimpse the traces of the stratification and reorientation of sense perceptions and their enfolded into a new commodity aesthetics.

A Scene of Consumption: The Cup That Cheers

The ad is for Brooke Bond A-1 *kadak chaap* tea.³ *Kadak chaap* indicates that this is strong tea (literally, the stamp of strength; *kadak* means strong, vigorous), which in India is the kind of tea favored by working and rural classes. Tea stalls operating on city sidewalks would vend it. Staged in a melodramatic style, the ad shows a bulldozer, flanked by sinister-looking figures, demolishing undefined shanties on the street. The soundtrack is suggestive of a war zone, with helicopters and air-raided sirens loud in the background. A swarthy, bearded man wearing dark glasses sits in the shadowy interior of a white car, peering intermittently at a man in lawyer’s costume and his henchmen as they direct the demolition. Facing the bulldozer is a young woman in a white sari, drinking tea. Her attire suggests she is a social worker or an activist. The camera pauses a moment to focus on the glass of tea in the woman’s hand. (On the street, tea is drunk in glasses; at home, in cups.) A roadside tea stall is being demolished, and the woman has decided to resist it. Sitting in front of the bulldozer, the woman challenges the man at its wheel to run over her. A sharp exchange of words results in the bulldozer operator taking to his heels, while the crowd lies down all around the machine. Brooke Bond A-1 *kadak chaap* works its magic, and an unarmed woman triumphs over a gang of toughs.⁴

The ad stages a typical scene in Mumbai and other cities in India of the confrontation between the majority, who dwell and make their livelihood on the street, and the minority, who view the streets as but the circuitry of the formal economy in which they themselves work. The ad offers symbolic redemption for the sidewalk residents and vendors who invariably are vanquished in such confrontations but only through the image of a consumer brand and the rhetoric of a young female consumer.

Now, everyday scenes of demolition are accompanied by police squads and city workers as representatives of the only institution with usufruct in public space—the state. The ad boldly dramatizes the popular beliefs that the state is ruled by a class fraction partial to itself and that it is hand in glove with criminals. The conundrum of a state undertaking

illegal action is answered, appropriately enough, by a charismatic figure, a pretty heroine matching the goons' tough talk with her own fluent, idiomatic slang. Gendering the confrontation lowers the political threshold for its reception, we may note, adding as it does aspects other than the class contradiction central to this conflict. For the ad to feature real *pheriwalas* might perhaps distract from its aesthetic. Indeed, the life and work of *pheriwalas* themselves are nowhere to be seen here; their existence has to be inferred from the image of the bulldozer, the glass of tea, and Brooke Bond A-1 *kadak chaap*. Characteristically, the growing market for national and global consumer brands, which in part replaces the informal economy of roadside stalls, seeks to absorb the image of that which it replaces. But the audio track, shifting from a melodramatic announcement of the brand to the soundscape of a battlefield and the snappy repartee of street talk, invokes the rhythms and lexical repertoire of popular cinema. The arcs of the visual and audio narratives both culminate in a global brand gone local, but in the ways they traverse the lexicon of popular culture, their moral economies overlap but do not coincide.

The ad acknowledges the violence involved in efforts to control urban space and the spectacular forms through which it takes effect. The violence is not simply epiphenomenal to a project of political control: it is itself productive, linking its audience in a shared sense of fear and fascination in relation to the power enacted before them. If, in precapitalist society, sumptuary expenditure flowed to poorer classes, in contemporary capitalism, such expenditure is nested within the elaboration of an aesthetic whereby consumption styles are shaped and rendered normative. The demolitions are perhaps a sign of the devolution of sumptuary expenditure, and its rendition into a spectacle for general enjoyment.⁵ With economic liberalization, more concerted attempts to entice foreign investment, and the growth of a consuming middle class whose mode of asserting citizenship rights now typically occurs by refiguring its relationship to the poor, such forms of violence have gained prominence.

The Pheriwalla as a Contested Figure of Indian Modernity

The education of the senses occurs through the mass media and through localized struggles that disclose the particular historical changes being wrought in different city spaces. The media create systems of disembodied perception that not only alter sense-ratios, but also prise existing sensory combinations apart, to be put together in new ways. New technologies of perception both reflect and precipitate shifts and divisions in class-divided sensory vocabularies and selectively reinforce and transform

the authority they carry. The capacity for groups to influence the forms of their public representation is symptomatic of these and other qualitative and quantitative differences in power and status.⁶ Tracing the shifts occurring through the institution of a new economy of the visible can help indicate the ways in which new knowledges acquire value and are contested.

Recent debates in Mumbai over the pheriwala help illuminate these shifts. Pheriwalas are entrepreneurs, not wage slaves, but the condition of their survival is that they remain marginal, exposing their bodies to the elements while underselling those not obliged to do so. That an economy seeking to advance itself should retain ancient means of circulating goods suggests many things about it, but interestingly, what becomes controversial is not the inhuman treatment of pheriwalas or the grotesque form of modernization this represents. Typically street vendors are seen as offensive, inconvenient, and illegitimate. Attempts to impose order on city spaces are also about the value of the real estate involved; order and value are recurring themes in the aesthetic, economic, and political arguments waged here. Given the ability of the pheriwalas to weave through the heterogeneous zones of the city without necessarily having the right to reside in them, it is perhaps not surprising that in a time of unchecked urban growth, they become a symbol of metropolitan space gone out of control. As such, they become the exemplary image of an unattainable disciplinary project. A climate of terror is instilled through demolition and destruction, illuminating the despotic character of state power under market liberalization.⁷ The furor over pheriwalas is a symptom of larger shifts in the relationship between politics and culture, which this article will attempt to clarify.

In his meditations on the shopping arcades of nineteenth-century Paris, Walter Benjamin chose a figure who seemed the best example of commodification rendered spectacular: the sandwich (board) man. The sandwichman, as a person reduced to making his living as a walking advertisement, was, for Benjamin, suggestive of the paradoxes of commodified social relations. A marginal figure, the sandwichman was destined to be overtaken by superior methods of disseminating commodities, indicating the relegation of his function to society as a whole rather than the rendering of it as obsolete. The eclipse of the sandwichman thus indicated the diffusion throughout society of commodity relations, the presence of which was until then only partial.⁸

In India, the radical shifts under way in the restructuring of the economy might be symbolized in the somewhat analogous figure of the pheriwala, against whom a furious campaign is currently being waged in the press and by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (formerly the Bombay Municipal Corporation). Those who object to pheriwalas tend to

regard them as perpetrators of an injustice to the public rather than as victims. Such debates signal, perhaps, the obstinately incomplete character of modernity in a country like India (reflected in news stories with such titles as “Can Mumbai Ever Become a Global City?”⁹).

The pheriwala belongs to the informal economy, and indeed provoked the concept itself.¹⁰ In India at least, the distinction is an invidious one, since the economy would collapse without its innumerable “informal” components; “informality” refers mainly to the lack of protection against exploitative conditions of work and indexes a different rhetoric of state power. Unlike the sandwichman, pheriwalas are not about to disappear, quite the contrary. As a whole, the formal economy excludes the majority of the population. This highlights the inseparability of political from economic relations in Indian capitalism; the law must sanction violence in order to protect the salaried classes’ privileges and deny the rest their rights. What then brings the otherwise unremarkable exercise of violence into the news? A brief discussion of the background may help.

With the exploding population, pheriwalas in Mumbai have found it convenient to remain stationary rather than mobile. Their right to occupy public space is hence increasingly under dispute. But over half the population in Mumbai is squatters, occupying less than two percent of the city’s land; as such, if encroachment is a problem that diminishes public space, it is also a solution to a larger problem of maldistributed resources. But the juristic climate today is less sympathetic to the poor; the new generation of judges in court view older, more inclusive ideals of Nehruvian development as partly responsible for the country’s failure to become a world power. If during an earlier wave of public interest litigation, the right to life included the right to earn a livelihood,¹¹ today it is a right to “unrestricted” public space that is understood to be threatened by pheriwalas. Campaigns for pheriwala rights partake of the general increase in public assertiveness but are more than matched by a wave of middle class activism championing varieties of NIMBYism, that is, “not in my backyard.”

If *flânerie* was the model of urban pleasure in an earlier time, the concern of planners in the West today is in producing spaces that are “clean”—that is, easily surveillable—“bum proof,” and hospitable above all to the rapid movement of people and things.¹² The meshing of finely honed information systems with sophisticated assemblages of policing and control renders the city more of a controlled environment where the derelict, ill, and unhoused are made invisible.¹³ As a result, the increasing social polarization of the city occurs relatively imperturbably, out of reach of the political radar.

The disappointment of managers and planners is undoubtedly great that they are unable to reproduce Western conditions in Mumbai. The chaos and violence of their efforts to achieve it suggest that in Mumbai, as elsewhere, the promise of globalization is fulfilled in distinct ways. For one thing, the numbers are too great; pheriwalas in Mumbai number half a million or higher, a significant fraction of the population. The costs of controlling them are unaffordable for a city whose police are so underpaid that many of them moonlight for the ganglords they are supposed to restrain.¹⁴ The will to curb them is weakened by the enormous fines and bribes collected by the city corporation and the police (totaling between 1.2 and 3 billion rupees a year).¹⁵ Pheriwalas fight back, in court and on the streets, determined not to let their right to survive be taken away from them.¹⁶

The informal sector was supposed to provide the reserve labor force that fed the formal economy as it expanded. Precisely the opposite has happened, interestingly. In 1961, 65 percent of Mumbai's workforce was employed in the organized sector and the remainder in the unorganized sector; thirty years later, the proportion was reversed: By 1991, 65 percent of employment was in the unorganized sector.¹⁷ Although those in the middle classes are fond of claiming that pheriwalas are well-to-do freeloaders (see below), most vendors are poor and marginal.¹⁸ Nevertheless, these figures suggest that the dynamics of this segment of the economy might illuminate the changing forms of state regulation with liberalization and the differentiated political capacities made available to citizens.

The pheriwala is not a figure unable to shed the past; he or she may even be seen as a harbinger of the new Indian economy, in which the middle classes need reassurance that they can move ahead and still retain the privileges of human servitude. The following somewhat awkwardly written extract from a marketing column in the *Economic Times*, subtitled "Hardsell: Inside Indian Marketing," is revealing:

The pheriwallah, for the uninitiated, has been an enduring Indian symbol of business at your doorstep. What does he sell? Well, he can be selling anything from fruits to fragrances or even readymade eatables to green vegetables. What does he signify? He is a man on the move for your sake thereby eking out a living for himself and baking his cake! In marketing lingo, he is the convenience man reaching out to his customers far and wide.

For a moment let's go down our respective memory lanes. Can we relive those lazy summer afternoons when, after being back from morning schools we used to wait for someone. It was siesta time for most households when suddenly piercing the tranquility "clang" rang the bell. The ice-candy man cometh! . . . These guys rang the bell along with their customary yell. The accompanying yell underlined the product sold. . . . Don't we mar-

keters spot here a zillion possibilities to sell something or other to a large spread of audience ranging from the young to the young at heart?

The pheriwallah denotes three virtues and a singular vice. He provides us with convenience shopping at our doorstep, value deals and recurrent service but he is low on the quality front. The reason can be that he is mostly selling unbranded goods or cheap commodities. If a deliberate transition can be made here from the unbranded to the branded platform, this lowly pheriwallah can become an invincible brand icon. . . . Companies looking for avenues in morph marketing may find an ideal bundle of services here to augment their product with. Can't we have Coke pheriwallahs in red T-shirts serving us chilled bottles of the real thing right at our doorstep? Even FMCG [fast moving consumer goods] major, Hindustan Lever has plans to go this way. . . . Such branded service can be very convenient to working couples and others whose leisure time is always at a premium. They would not mind paying a bit more for this premium service.¹⁹

In this strange, cliché-ridden account, pheriwalas are relegated to the past, although they could provide one index of the economy of the future in view of their exploding numbers. For pheriwalas to be entrepreneurs is anachronistic, it emerges. Properly uniformed and positioned, they can be folded into the premium service trade. Memories of an idyllic past, appearing as sounds that disrupt/invoke the calm of bygone siestas, are reenacted as red T-shirted "Coke pheriwallahs." The shift from an auditory to a visual register is accompanied by the changing character of products sold, from a petty commodity basis to one of global brand icons. The intimate pleasures of a middle-class child in being waited upon can be recollected and transmuted in the more sophisticated upmarket consumption of adults. Branding the persons and products of workers in the informal economy emerges as a way of overcoming underdevelopment and keeping it too.

When Marx defines the work of capital, he invokes the emergence of a single unqualified and global subjectivity reflecting the extension of capital across the world: "all activities without distinction"; "productive activity in general"; "the sole subjective essence of wealth." Together with the abstract universality of practices generating wealth arises the universality of what is understood as wealth: "the product in general, or labor in general, but as past, materialized labor."²⁰ When developments ascend to this level of generality, labor is no longer perceived as this or that particular form, such as slavery or serfdom, but as naked labor, and wealth is no longer seen as trader's wealth or as usury but instead as homogeneous, independent capital. In such a context, labor and capital become categories firmly rooted in popular prejudice, and the state, which ensures the

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conditions for capital extraction, would be superfluous. Political domination, which exists to enable accumulation, becomes unnecessary, as economic appropriation is self-sustaining.²¹

In fact, of course, this never happens. Capital and labor both appear obstinately heterogeneous, unable to discipline themselves within any given boundaries, constantly spilling over and violating their terms of existence—in other words, posing the banal truths of accumulation and exploitation as against their pure image.

At the level of the image, however, it becomes possible for diverse and contradictory forms to abut each other in apparent harmony. Vision in capitalist modernity is the least intimate sensory datum; thus, fleeting glances between strangers are preferred forms of interaction in an urban setting.²² By the same token, vision becomes more important as a medium facilitating the institution of a more generalized system of exchange, alongside the economy and in interaction with it. Detached and isolated from the other senses, vision masks the multiple forms of perceptual experience and helps in the propagation of abstracted and objectified systems of knowledge.²³ Auditory information requires, in comparison, more situated semantic knowledge, inflected as it is through the multiple registers of accent, cadence, pitch, and tone.

The aesthetics of a pheriwala's display facilitate more direct sensory interaction with the producer/seller of the goods and offer the consumer more access to a fuller experience of the product or service being offered. The emphasis is usually on the pheriwala, who is the focal point of the stall, and as well on a small range of products and services: for example, a public telephone and coconut milk, cigarettes and chewing tobacco. The arrangements are usually minimal—a sackcloth on a wooden platform, a matchbox-like structure with shelves, a handcart with a wooden or aluminum top. Decorations are functional where they exist, perhaps consisting of gaily colored sachet strips of betel nut, chewing tobacco, or shampoo suspended from a string running horizontally across a shelf, or of plates of artfully cut fruit. If food is being made, the smell of the oil, the condition of the utensils, the quality of the foodstuffs, and the personal hygiene of the cook are all on display. As a former pheriwala pointed out to me, in no restaurant can one follow so minutely every phase of the process of preparing a dish. Conditions in restaurants are typically worse, he observed, because the owners feel sure that few will venture within.²⁴

Transactions with pheriwalas, in all their openness, enact the most elemental form of market exchange. The market, Fernand Braudel reminds us, brings the arenas of production and consumption into contact with each other. It thus acts as the interface with the outside world for each of these realms, with the unknown and unpredictable. The market,

he writes, is like coming up for air, bringing one face to face with the other.²⁵ Here we have the unruly energy of the bazaars, the assault of different sensations, varieties of costume and countenance. Commodities lie available for inspection and comparison across competing stalls, mediated only by the typically fluid, dialogical encounter over pricing and payment. It is here more than in any other market environment, we may remind ourselves, that the customer is truly king.

This is of course worlds away from the manicured precincts of the modern department store, whose efficiency in sourcing, pricing, and selling are known. As the power of sellers increases, it becomes important to control the point of purchase, to render it static and predictable rather than allow unforeseeable elements to proliferate.²⁶ And here enters all the wizardry of consumer seduction—of imagery, illumination, and design, whether of packaging, shopfloor arrangement, or storefront display. No one can deny the power such displays can attain. A strictly economic calculation of return on investment is not adequate to explain the form of display. There is a distinct aesthetic at work, fashioned so that on seeing it, investors may be satisfied their money is well spent.²⁷ The aesthetic works to build layers of meaning around the commodity, mediating the act of consumption to buyers. In comparison, the pheriwala provides only him- or herself as a mediating body, and this is precisely the problem. For a new visual regime to be instituted in the process of metamorphosing a pheriwala economy into a store- and mall-based one is no simple matter, however, especially if the wish to transcend pheriwalas is destined to be in vain. Violence is inseparable from this shift, and in the imagination of the process, television is an accomplice. Theorizing television, in terms of the social relations it seeks to interweave with, is helpful in understanding this process.

Television and the Politicization of Aesthetics

It is widely recognized that nationwide television broadcasting, introduced in 1982, has been central to the promotion and expansion of consumer markets accompanying the economic liberalization policies of the Indian government, beginning in the mid-1980s and increasing after 1991 with deregulation, on the one hand, and the onset of satellite television and the proliferation of private TV channels, on the other. We can think of the introduction of national television as instituting a new visual regime across the country and thereby as making available a new kind of circulatory and disciplinary logic. For the first time, one arena of representation existed that was to some degree intelligible regardless of divisions of language and

literacy and that was simultaneously present nationwide (rather than, for instance, present as a discrete series of circuits in the metropolises and afterward, intermittently, in towns and villages). How does this form a new circulatory and disciplinary logic? By television's selection and reiteration of specific images, which by virtue of their circulation and reach acquire iconic status as national representations, whether in spatial or in normative terms. Thus television creates a new field of representation that mimics and furthers the work of the economy while at the same time complicating it. It straddles numerous local and regional markets and opens them to engagement with national and global ones, bringing them in closer synchrony with each other.

Critical arguments about television tend to point to the ways in which it replicates the logic of commodification by extending it to communication and thus intensifies processes of capitalist alienation and expropriation. In this account, socially produced meanings are privately appropriated through television's generation and distribution of cultural products and returned to audiences in alienated forms. The circulation of images both enables the circulation of capital and takes it to another level, deepening the reach of the production of value by embracing more spheres of life within the joint work of media and markets. But a strictly utilitarian calculus does not adequately capture the power of images here—there is an excess that they represent over and beyond facilitating economic exchange that is disciplinary, in subjecting the visible world to a visual regime, structuring the mode of its admissibility onto the stage of representation and thus introducing a new principle for the self-representation of people and things.

We can think about the production of images as a kind of naming whose quintessence is represented through the brand and the logo; this presupposes the power of conferring singularity and points to the violence implied in this imposition. But this is far from a one-sided process since by the same token, television creates a new field for the imagination where, in the private space of commodity consumption, individuals can conceive of dialogical social communication independent of their place in society. The private space of reception enables the imagining of a “free” engagement with media messages, and the latter thus become open to imaginative reconstruction. Audiences can thus imagine new communities of sentiment in fantasies of complete acceptance where none of the usual costs of social membership are entailed. At the same time, this newly crafted autonomy provides the critical distance necessary to reflect on society itself as an external object of thought, independent of their own place in it. If television participates in elevating the stakes of representation and in instituting symbolic violence, it more generally indexes not only the

aestheticization of politics but also the politicization of aesthetics, enlarging as it does the field of politics and lowering the cost of admission at the same time, in some sense.²⁸

Demolitions: A Glimpse of “Field Action”

At the helm of the demolitions in Mumbai in 2000–2001 was G. R. Khairnar, former deputy municipal commissioner and for a period officer on special duty in charge of demolitions. He became famous for his fearless targeting of affluent builders violating zoning rules and for his public accusations that the chief minister was associated with criminals, a charge he continues to make against successive governments. He is considered both incorruptible and ruthless.

Khairnar is a man with a soft voice and a hard stare. He is slim and unassuming in appearance and steadfast in his purpose. He has been attacked “more than 100 times,” he says, by builders intent on stopping his demolitions, on one occasion being shot in the leg and on another wounded in the head with a sword. (While in his post, he had an armed escort at all times.) Through all of it he has been unflinching in his demolition of illegal constructions, which in Mumbai luxuriate like weeds. This has meant going after high-rise apartments in elite localities like Malabar Hill as well as bulldozing slums and roadside stalls.

The political parties are gangs, he says, and the politicians gangsters. He corrects himself. Politicians are devoid of that spark of humanity that even *dacoits* (roving gangs of thieves and killers) might have, he says. The political parties care nothing for people. A nexus between bureaucrats, the political mafia, and business has replaced the rule of law. Ordinary people do anything they can to survive, compounding the lawlessness, he claims. Instead of cultivating a scientific temper, emotion, religion, and caste issues are used to get people’s votes, and this deepens the problem, Khairnar argues. His own duty is to uphold the law. Hawkers, and many others, ignore or defy the law, and Khairnar’s contribution is to teach them the value of discipline, as he sees it. “My job is to convert shops [that encroach on public space back] into hawkers,” he said. “I try to warn them, tell them to enforce discipline on their own. If my warnings are not heeded then I will demolish.”²⁹

He invited me to accompany him on “field action” and see for myself. He smiled as he invited me. Without his saying anything further, I felt a certain exhilaration at the prospect.

On the appointed day, I boarded a Maruti van with Khairnar and a French documentary team doing a TV series on global cities. In Mumbai,

Khairnar was their first stop, interestingly. The convoy that accompanied us was an impressive one: a bulldozer, two jeeps with policemen, two trucks to carry away confiscated goods, and Khairnar's van. As we arrived at an open-air vegetable market, the halt of the convoy had an impressive effect. Baskets of vegetables began to be hoisted on the heads of their anxious owners as they fled the scene. Those vendors who had invested most in their produce were in for the greatest loss, as it was not possible to remove everything from the advancing crew in time. Brilliant red tomatoes rolled in every direction. In seconds, the whole street was suddenly crowded, as scores of people gathered all around to watch. Khairnar strode in briskly, pointing here and there, and the bulldozer went into action, clawing off here a gunny awning with its slender bamboo supports and there crumpling up patchwork roofs. The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) staff darted around to grab produce to deposit in their goods trucks. The spectacle of destruction is riveting: the abrupt obliteration of carefully gathered and nurtured matter, of accumulated time and energy. That such devastation can be wrought without reprisal deepens this fascination, since it confirms the sense of the extent of the power at work.

What must it feel like to have demolition victims at your mercy? One woman whose roadside shack was being torn down was weeping and begging Khairnar with folded hands to save her home. Her child was crying, too. Addressing the girl, Khairnar asked, "Who taught you to weep like that?" His sympathies had hardened over time. But the child's tears were genuine; the roadside shack, miserable as it was, ought not to have been demolished, although the task was already half finished. The crew departed, assuring the poor woman that she should come to "Sir's office" for compensation.

When I described the events I'd seen to friends who lived in Mumbai, I expected to hear sympathetic cries of indignation. Although each of them was left of center, in each case I was given a talking-to. Hawkers were taking over the city, setting up shop wherever they liked, and interfering with the rights of long-standing residents, one said. The owner of one of the stalls came to work in a car every morning, another friend said. These people might work by the roadside, but they were making loads of money while paying no taxes or rent. A third friend gave me the example of the Harbour train line in the city, on which trains ran at a fraction of their former speed because of encroachments on either side. Half a million people were ferried on that line every day and spent at least thirty minutes more than necessary; huge losses in man-hours resulted from misguided compassion like mine, it seemed.

Some friends described it candidly as an attempt to wreak such losses

on the hawkers that it would become uneconomical for them to do business. Others saw it as an attempt to clean up public space, to restore to pedestrians their long-denied rights. Everyone formulated it in terms of an attempt to restore rationality, to overcome illegality, and to assert the law. This was itself interesting. In fact, vendors and newspapers both report that bulldozers are regularly sent to destroy them without warning.³⁰ Although Khairnar claims always to issue a preliminary signal, the president of the Hawkers' Union, Sharad Rao, accused politicians of turning a blind eye to the "rampage" being carried on in Khairnar's name. "For the past two months, the indiscriminate eviction of hawkers and destruction of their goods has been going on, but not a single MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] or MLC [Member of the Legislative Council] has spoken against it," he said.³¹ K. Pocker, general secretary of the Bombay Hawkers Association, was careful to specify his objection: "We are not challenging the demolition action, but destruction of goods is not permitted by law."³²

But the issue of encroachment, whether by hawkers or slum dwellers, could not even arise if it were not sanctioned by local political bosses and ward officers, who operate to deliver votes to members of the Legislative Assembly or of the Legislative Council and who receive favors from the organized building trades that erect shanties. Builders violate zoning and other laws with impunity, encroaching on public space, protected by politicians who draw on their votes at election time and, in some cases, provide free utility services to the residents in return. Many problems arise and persist because of the inadequacies of urban planning and the connivance of politicians and bureaucrats—but recently, pheriwalas have become the scapegoats for a range of these problems, simply because they are the most visible links in the chain and the least protected.

Violence, Geography, and the Figure of the Pheriwala

The Urban Design and Research Institute, which seeks to help restore the heritage value of Mumbai's architecture, recently observed, in one of the more liberal statements made nowadays on the subject of hawkers:

In recent years a phenomenon that has been on the rise and has acquired alarming proportions has been that of street hawkers and unauthorised hawking activity. . . . There is no doubt that while the hawkers are a hindrance to the movement of pedestrians, they serve the contemporary need. Moving them to some out of the way location is an impractical solution. The majority of office-workers need these very hawkers for their everyday needs. It could be proposed to formulate a series of *otlas* [platforms], each of

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which could accommodate four hawkers with a clearly demarcated space. The license number of the hawker is laid *in-situ* into the *otla*, so that any unauthorised occupant can be immediately spotted and apprehended.³³

The chaos of *pheriwala* activity is thus sought to be regulated by arranging them for optimal surveillability. Another scheme offered by an urban planner recommended dress codes “to help the public identify registered hawkers.”³⁴ A more characteristic account, however, is the one that follows:

Mumbai’s most tenacious resident apart from the slum-dweller—the hawker—has had the civic authorities searching their collective imagination for over four years to find a solution to the ubiquitous problem they pose. . . . The legal stop-signs at every turn almost mock at the authorities, who for decades have allowed the street vendors to proliferate any which way. . . . And experience has shown that once they set up shop there is no wishing them away, even for a few hours. . . . Then there is a more linear though equally baffling impediment—the vendors’ sheer numbers. For one, there is no official estimate of how many hawkers use Mumbai’s network of roads as a giant establishment. . . . Still, one thing’s for sure, their numbers . . . are multiplying with every passing day.³⁵

Hawkers are like vermin in this and other accounts: all too visible yet making no new knowledge available about themselves (save their capacity to offend and pollute). Their predominant tendency is to proliferate, and by definition, that is a problem. “One hawker will lead to many more, which in turn will create an unhygienic, unsavoury environment,” in the view of Yusuf Malani, an advocate of the Save Versova Beach Association.³⁶

The BMC (now Brihanmumbal, formerly Bombay Municipal Corporation) proposed, in 1998, to create hawking zones outside which vending would be prohibited. As soon as the location of the zones began to be marked out, residents of neighborhoods erupted in protest, filing suit against the corporation. With its right to sanction hawkers’ ensconcement in particular neighborhoods challenged in court, the BMC proposed creating nonhawking zones instead.³⁷ This of course hardly resolved the problem, as the rest of the city was implied to be fair game for the hawkers. With every part of the city reserved for one purpose or other—as public thoroughfares, parks, gardens—legislative amendments are required to de-reserve them before reserving them anew for hawking (or not). But the informality of the situation is convenient for those in power who depend on the hawkers’ insecurity to ensure a flow of votes and money. In busy city areas hawkers may be threatened three to four times a day by city workers, paying up to 4,500 rupees a month to keep them at

bay.³⁸ With billions of rupees being collected annually in the form of *haftas* [weekly bribes], many “stakeholders” have emerged to successfully challenge any attempts to reduce their hold or impose rules. The irony is that much of the restoration work is led by older inhabitants of the city who live in apartments against their landlords’ pleas to vacate and whose rents remain at 1950 levels. This is thanks to pro-tenant court rulings that work against new in-migrants by raising prices of available properties and restricting the supply of new housing.

The national emergency imposed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi between 1975 and 1977 resulted in the imposition of many draconian policies, among them so-called urban beautification programs that violently displaced thousands of squatters and slum dwellers far away from their erstwhile homes. With the reinstatement of the Congress government at the center in 1980, state use of violence to open up city spaces began again, starting with A. R. Antulay’s government in Maharashtra, of which Bombay (now Mumbai) is the capital. Public interest litigations, which were filed in the early 1980s as a response to the emergency, broadened the avenues for disadvantaged persons to approach the courts. The landmark case in pheriwala rights was a judgment by the Supreme Court in 1985 stipulating that as long as they did not erect permanent structures in public spaces, hawkers had a constitutionally protected right to seek a living.³⁹ There exist only 15,000 licensed hawkers in the city (licenses for hawkers were discontinued in 1978),⁴⁰ and current estimates of their total population range from 130,000 to 500,000. The closure of textile mills in Mumbai over the last several years and the sale of mill lands in violation of land-use restrictions forced tens of thousands of workers into the informal economy, burgeoning the numbers of hawkers.

The recent wave of attacks on encroachment began, auspiciously enough for the well to do in India, with Operation Sunshine in December 1996, a drive launched by the Left Front–ruled West Bengal government. In it, nearly 100,000 pheriwalas from Calcutta’s streets were uprooted. The drive was allegedly launched to make the city look attractive for foreign investment on the eve of the visit of the then British Prime Minister John Major. A few weeks later, the West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed a bill making hawking a cognizable and nonbailable offense punishable by imprisonment of up to three months, a fine of 250 rupees, or both.⁴¹ The general secretary of the Communist Party (Marxist)–affiliated Calcutta Street Hawkers Union, Mohammed Nizammeddin, demanded of a reporter, “What is going on? Are hawkers our new class enemy?”⁴²

In Mumbai, however, the discourse focused on issues of appearance and hygiene, although it was dismissive rather than hortatory. Here, for instance, is an account of a roadside food stall:

After the lunch hour, the vendors pull out plastic tubs filled with used steel plates and soak them in dirty water. The plates are dried with a soiled rag and reused. Water meant for cooking is stored in rusted tins to be used later. For these and other reasons, those who eat in roadside stalls are exposing themselves daily to gastroenteritis, jaundice, typhoid and a host of other diseases.⁴³

Whether it is the eye of this reporter that is jaundiced or the bodies of consumers, it often appeared that the problems of urban space devolved entirely onto street vendors.⁴⁴ Thus: “The plight of pedestrians in Mumbai is pitiable. Most roads in Mumbai (including newly laid Development Plan roads) do not have footpaths. And footpaths, wherever they exist, are encroached upon by hawkers.”⁴⁵ “[W]here they are reinstalled is not our problem,” said M. S. Vaidya, president of Sion (East) Residents’ Forum, one of several associations against the drive to create hawking zones in their neighborhood.⁴⁶ “Clearly, we are not interested in throwing hawkers into the Arabian Sea,” a member of one citizens’ group assured a reporter.⁴⁷ A residents’ association in Churchgate complained to the ward authorities that hawkers “had left practically no space for pedestrians and customers and made it convenient for small-time thieves and shop-lifters to indulge in pickpocketing, misbehaviour with ladies, etc.”⁴⁸

Many shopkeepers, for their part, claimed that hawkers diverted business from their stores. For example, shopkeepers around Flora Fountain who deal in books and cassettes claimed to suffer as a result of hawkers “who sell pirated cassettes and duplicate books at about half the price.” “Legitimate business of shops is being robbed specially on the D.N. Road area where several hawkers sell smuggled luxury goods,” according to Gerson Da Cunha, convener of the solid waste management committee of Bombay First. A convener of the Citizens’ Forum for Protection of Public Spaces, a voluntary movement formed to deal with “the hawking woes” [*sic*] declared: “By patronising such hawkers we are giving rise to a cancer in the society and abetting crime.” The hotel industry claims it loses at least 5 million rupees daily due to hawkers. “They are snatching away business from right under our nose,” according to Association of Hotels and Restaurants vice president Ravi Gandhi. “On days when hawkers are on strike, our business goes up by 30 to 40 percent.”⁴⁹ Hawkers are thus described as both illegitimate competition and a drain on the legitimate economy.

The Power of Hawkers

In fact, hawkers provide services to the majority outside the formal economy. Drivers, masons, carpenters, building security staff, and other workers are regular customers of the food and tea stalls.⁵⁰ “For the same *pulav* in a restaurant, I will have to pay Rs. 200 rupees, while here it costs me Rs. 10, and there is no difference in quality,” one customer at Nariman Point observed.⁵¹ The Bombay Hawkers’ Association president, K. Pocker, explained: “Our clientele is completely different from theirs [that is, regular stores]. We do not sell branded products and offer cheaper products. We cater to the poor and weaker sections.”⁵²

The heterogeneity of the hawkers’ activity emerges against an unspoken sense that the formal or organized sector’s work is none of these things. “We work honestly in order to eat, and yet we are attacked for doing so,” remarked Ram Singh, a pheriwala at a hawkers’ organizing meeting. “What are we supposed to do?”⁵³

“Pheriwalas will always be with us,” said Munna Seth, who controls the handcart business in Ghatkopar (West) in Mumbai.

If the BMC tear down our stalls, we will use handcarts. If they confiscate the handcarts, then we will spread our goods on the footpaths. If they push us off the footpaths, then we will be walking the streets with headloads. If they send us off to Bhayander or Dahisar, we will still board the train and come back into town every day. We will keep coming back. Nothing will stop us, because our survival is at stake.⁵⁴

Sobha Singh, who runs the handcart business with his brother Munna Seth, explained:

The pheriwala is the cause of trouble. The pheriwala is a very poor and small person. A poor man has to learn to behave himself. If the public says that the cart is in the way, he should say yes and move his cart. But today’s pheriwala says *Gandu tum bolne wala kaon hai* [expletive meaning who are you to tell me?]. The road is of the public and he has the right to say that. But he does not respect the public.

Despite being marginal, Mumbai hawkers are energetic residents of India’s most enterprising city, and they find many sophisticated means of fighting back, if necessary using the very levers the city mobilizes against them. To take one example, city officials levy *paotis*, or refuse collection charges, and issue receipts against payment. *Paotis* have become, in the absence of other official acknowledgment of their existence, the vehicle for street vendors to move courts and win injunctions in their favor against civic authorities.⁵⁵

Hawkers have also learned to use the courts instrumentally. Some hawkers were thus appealing for injunctions against demolitions or eviction in different courts under different names. When a hawker lost a case in the city civil court, he or she would move the high court without revealing the details of the earlier case. Sometimes, a wife or a brother would move another court over the same hawking spot. The hearings and adjournments translated into valuable business time for the hawker.⁵⁶ Construction magnates, of course, routinely use such strategies to evade challenges to their violations of zoning and construction requirements; what made news, however, was that the lowly hawkers were now doing so, too.

Hawkers too are committed to serve society, wrote M. K. Ramesh in the *Afternoon Despatch and Courier*. Ramesh, himself a hawker, was writing a letter in response to a news article that described hawkers as “merciless.” They could not survive unless they pleased their customers, Ramesh pointed out, expressing a view that seldom made it into the regular news columns.⁵⁷

Hawkers have not been slow to engage in speculative activity, either, and to construct the kind of virtual economies usually associated with more high-profile businesses. For instance, the ward officer for Churchgate, R. K. Vale observed, “There is a racket to create non-existent and ghost hawking sites or hawking spaces in non-existent and fictitious names with a view to secure hawking spaces for [the] future.”⁵⁸

Concluding Thoughts

In its rudimentary form, the market will always be with us because, as Braudel writes, “in its robust simplicity it is unbeatable . . . the primitive market is the most direct and transparent form of exchange, the most closely supervised and the least open to deception.”⁵⁹ Even if air-conditioned stores are seen as the destiny of Indian markets and the pheriwala is thought to be either a relic from the past or a symptom of corruption and regulatory laxity, “There is no simple linear history of the development of markets. In this area, the traditional, the archaic and the modern or ultra-modern exist side by side, even today.”⁶⁰ Where cultural or political difference is encountered, it cannot be easily absorbed within a perceptual apparatus whose chief value is precisely the blurring of differences in favor of a homogenized apprehension of a loosely understood whole.

Partha Chatterjee has argued that the Indian state, on account of its limited resources, is confronted by a population of which the majority is de facto denied the full privileges of citizenship. In such a situation, the state necessarily has to address itself serially to informal representations by

excluded groups on terms that are particularistic, since to apply them to everybody would be unaffordable. Community, Chatterjee argues, survives as the mode through which the state negotiates with groups who find themselves outside the ambit of formal citizenship rights. That is, it is not by arguing for the liberal rights of individuals that these groups manage to be heard by the state. Rather, they make demands based on group right and community identity, transcending their limitations as disempowered individuals. Nowhere in received understandings of the liberal state can we find models to assess such nonrational and nonformal negotiations, Chatterjee points out. There is an entire realm of politics not captured by the ideas of liberal politics—where, in fact, a different and more fluid set of norms operates, partly for historical reasons and partly for reasons of resource constraints (themselves historical, of course).

It can be argued that the pheriwala is one such extraordinary class of citizen-subjects that the developmentalist (and now liberalizing) state in India produces as a vulnerable category of persons. The protection of pheriwalas as workers engaged in the informal economy (with the *Olga Tellis v. BMC* case in 1985) was also precisely the moment when their legal classification as “hawkers” rendered them subject to all manner of regulation.⁶¹ The renewed interest in controlling city space as a corollary to new regimes of accumulation and the enforcement of a new commodity aesthetics must be located against this historical process.

Where Chatterjee’s argument encounters difficulties is in its assumption that the informal realm of state negotiation retains its populace within an ethical discourse, even if legal rights are denied to them. A certain arbitrariness attends the state’s interactions with those outside the law, exemplified in violence such as that against pheriwalas. And when the law seeks to pronounce on their condition, a neoliberal climate dispels the informal guarantees that safeguarded hawkers’ lives under an earlier dispensation.

Thus a Bombay High Court judgment on 5 July 2000 ruled that only licensed hawkers (of whom there are 15,000) could operate in the city; allowance would be made for an additional 23,000.⁶² But the city has not issued licenses since 1978, and, as the president of the Hawkers’ Union pointed out, the larger issue was the accommodation of the several hundred thousand unlicensed hawkers.⁶³ Hawking was to be carried out only in specified zones and banned entirely in the city’s C ward, which contains prime locations, such as Victoria Terminus and Flora Fountain. Solid or cooked food was to be banned for “health reasons,” but fruit juices were allowed.⁶⁴ The order was plainly absurd, but it put a question mark over earlier victories such as the *Olga Tellis* judgment, which guaranteed the constitutional right to seek a livelihood in public spaces. Citizens’ Forum for the Protection of Public Spaces, the petitioner in the case, was

“slightly dazed by the extent of its victory” with this sweeping court verdict; “pavements,” one columnist wrote, “are for pedestrians, at last.”⁶⁵ The only way to enact the apparent civility of this statement, and to fructify the homogeneity of vision it represents, is unfortunately through violence against the majority population excluded from its sight.

Notes

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1. I draw from Claude Lefort the idea that one society can be distinguished from another in terms of its *regime*, that is, the manner of shaping human coexistence. The institution of a new visual regime thus involves a process of the reconfiguration of politics and the reshaping of the public; it simultaneously presents a technology for the perception of social relations and for staging them before society at large. Claude Lefort, “The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?” in *Democracy and Political Theory*, trans. David Macey (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 217.

2. For a more detailed argument, see Arvind Rajagopal, “Advertising, Politics, and the Sentimental Education of the Indian Consumer,” *Visual Anthropological Review* 14, no. 2 (1999): 14–31.

3. The ad was scripted by Piyush Pandey and was made by Ogilvy & Mather. My thanks to Ashok Sarath for this information.

4. I thank Santosh Desai of McCann-Erickson for making a copy of the ad available to me.

5. Georges Bataille has argued that a society is determined not so much by its mode of production as by the mode of expenditure of its surplus. See *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1, *Consumption*, trans. H. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1988), 167–81. In this formulation, consumption and destruction can be equally accommodated.

6. I draw this argument on the political anthropology of the senses from Allen Feldman, “On Cultural Anesthesia: From Desert Storm to Rodney King,” *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 2 (1994): 404–18.

7. Since the 1980s, state-led economic development formulated under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru is being abandoned in favor of market liberalization. Although the state retains enormous power, its class biases are sharper, and the forms of its legitimation reflect this shift in interesting ways. See my *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

8. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 827–91; Susan

Buck-Morss, "The Flaneur, the Sandwichman, and the Whore: The Politics of Loitering," *New German Critique* (1984): 99–140; Feldman, "On Cultural Anesthesia."

9. *Bombay Times, Times of India*, 15 July 2000.

10. Keith Hart, "Informal Income Opportunities and Urban Employment in Ghana," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 11 (1973): 61–89. See in this context the special issue of *Seminar* (New Delhi) on street vendors in India, July 2000.

11. The landmark judgment in this respect is *Olga Tellis and Ors. v. Bombay Municipal Corporation and Others* (1985), 2 Bom CR 434 1985 (3) SCC 545. AIR 1986, 180.

12. See Mitchell Duneier, *Sidewalk* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999); Mike Davis, *City of Quartz* (London: Verso, 1992).

13. See Allen Feldman's essay in this issue.

14. Y. C. Pawar, additional commissioner of police, Mumbai; personal interview by author, 20 July 2000.

15. Lina Choudhury, "Mumbai Turns Streetsmart as BMC Does a Clean-Up Job," *Times of India*, 9 July 1998. See also Ranjit Khomne, "Poor Hawkers Complain of Extortion by Police," *Times of India*, 23 November 1998.

16. What is interesting here is the way in which state apparatuses devolve onto and work out through the middle classes and the English-language press—through much more decentralized and therefore chaotic mechanisms. Thus for instance the clippings files of citizens' organizations lobbying for and against hawkers *both* feature news largely from English-language papers.

17. Bombay Metropolitan Development Authority, *Draft Plan for 1995–2005* (Mumbai, 1997). Cited in Sharit Bhowmik, "A Raw Deal?" *Seminar*, July 2000, 21.

18. One study of hawkers determined that one-fourth of them could not read or write and that the cost of their wares ranged from 500 to 2,000 rupees. The most common reason given for hawking was that it provided a more respectable living than did most of the other available jobs in the unorganized sector. These findings are from Sharit Bhowmik, "Hawkers' Study: Some Preliminary Findings," an unpublished report that presents the preliminary results of studies of hawkers in eight cities: Mumbai, Calcutta, Ahmedabad, Patna, Bangalore, Indore, Bhubaneswar, and Imphal. Data for the study were collected by the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI). For discussions of conditions of work and life among the informally housed and the informally employed in Mumbai, see also Brahm Prakash, *The Urban Dead-End? Pattern of Employment among Slum-Dwellers* (Bombay: Somaiya Publications, 1983), chap. 5; and Heather Joshi and Vijay Joshi, *Surplus Labour and the City: A Study of Bombay* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1976), chap. 3. For more general discussions, see Jan Breman, *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Hernando de Soto, *The Other Path* (New York: Harper and Row, 1990).

19. Samrat Sinha, "Pheriwallah Marketing," *Economic Times*, 5 August 2000, 7.

20. Karl Marx, "Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy," in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. N. I. Stone (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1904), 298. (I have modified Stone's translation.) Cited in Gilles Deleuze, "Capitalism," in *The Deleuze Reader*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 236.

21. Deleuze, "Capitalism," 236.

22. Christophe Asendorf, *Batteries of Life: On the History of Things and Their Perception in Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
23. C. Nadia Seremetakis, *The Senses Still: Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994).
24. Sandeep Yeole, secretary, Ghatkopar (West) Pheriwalla Vikas Mahasangh; personal interview by author, Mumbai, 12 July 2000.
25. Fernand Braudel, *The Wheels of Commerce: Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, vol. 2, trans. Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), 26.
26. Vikram Kaushik, general manager, Colgate-Palmolive; personal interview by author, Mumbai, June 2000.
27. Jean Renoir has made this point about commercial cinema. Jean Renoir and Roberto Rossellini, interview by André Bazin, in Roberto Rossellini, *My Method: Writings and Interviews*, trans. Annapaola Cancogni (New York: Marsilio, 1995), 96.
28. For a more elaborated argument, see Arvind Rajagopal, *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), introduction.
29. G. R. Khairnar, personal interview by author, Mumbai, 15 August 2000. A few details about the practicalities of demolition: The cost of demolition was estimated at 15,000 rupees per day for demolishing nearly 500 structures in the twelve to fourteen hours of duty. This included the cost of eight vehicles, staff, and constables. This cut into the BMC budget—the corporation received a mere 20,000 rupees when the goods were auctioned a month after their seizure. To release a loaded handcart, the cost is 5,000 rupees; for a stall, 3,000 rupees. Demurrage charges ranged from 100 to 500 rupees per day per item. It is, then, cheaper to buy the goods back from whoever purchases them at the auction, usually at a much smaller price. Rajshri Mehta, “BMC Gets Order for Bonfire of Demolition Debris,” *Asian Age*, 15 June 2000.
30. Suresh Kapile, general secretary, Mumbai Hawkers’ Union, quoted in “Sold Out: Hawkers at Nariman Point,” *Bombay Times, Times of India*, 8 March 2000.
31. “Hawkers Threaten to Demonstrate outside Legislators’ Homes,” *Times of India*, 22 June 2000.
32. “Hawkers Threaten to Demonstrate.”
33. Horniman Circle Association, *Restoring a Banking District* (Bombay: Urban Design and Research Institute, 1999), 19.
34. Jagdeep Desai, “Theirs or Ours?” *Indian Express*, 13 March 2000.
35. Prasanna Khapre-Upadhyay, “Trouble in the Twilight Zone,” *Express Newslines*, 24 April 1999.
36. Quoted in Namita Devidayal, “Impasse over Hawking Zones Continues,” *Times of India*, 15 September 1998.
37. The proposal for nonhawking zones was made by Vishnu Kamat, a retired BMC officer. See “Mumbaiites Oppose Hawking Zones Plan Tooth and Nail,” *Times of India*, 3 February 1999.
38. At the time of this writing, 1 U.S. dollar equaled approximately 45 rupees.
39. *Olga Tellis and Ors*. See note 10.
40. Sobha Singh, handcart rental operator; personal interview by author, Mumbai, 13 August 2000.

41. Vidyadhar Date, "Hawkers Come Together to Form National Union," *Times of India*, 17 September 1999.
42. Quoted in Sujan Dutta, "City Lights," *Telegraph*, 1 December 1996.
43. Himanshi Dhawan, "Roadside Stalls 'Offer' More than a Meal," *Times of India*, 1 August 1999.
44. However, one study in Pune showed that the cheapest street food was equally or less bacteria-laden than restaurant food. Irene Tinker, *Street Foods: Urban Food and Employment in Developing Countries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 192; cited in Geetam Tiwari, "Encroachers or Service Providers?" *Seminar*, July 2000, 31.
45. Raju Z. Moray, "Trampling over Footpaths," *Indian Express*, 19 September 1998.
46. Quoted in Namita Devidayal, "Impasse over Hawking Zones Continues," *Times of India*, 15 September 1998.
47. Quoted in Namita Devidayal, "As Frustration Levels Increase, a Citizens' Movement Takes Shape," *Times of India*, 8 March 1999.
48. "Hawker's Paradise," *Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, 5 May 1999.
49. Quotes from Tina Chopra, "Vested Interests Hold-Up Solution to Hawkers Impasse," *Times of India*, 8 February 1999.
50. "Nepean Sea Residents Try to Curb Hawker Menace," *Times of India*, 11 October 1999.
51. Mohan Chauhan, quoted in "Sold Out: Hawkers at Nariman Point," *Bombay Times*, *Times of India*, 8 March 2000.
52. Quotes from Chopra, "Vested Interests."
53. Field notes, Ghatkopar (West) Pheriwala Samiti meeting, August 2000.
54. Munna Seth, handcart supplier, Ghatkopar (West), Mumbai; personal interview by author, August 2000, Mumbai.
55. In a sign of the escalating war against hawkers, even *paotis* are no longer officially issued. This merely means, however, that revenue is diverted from the BMC to private hands, often those of public servants. Express News Service, "Scrap Paoti System, HC Orders BMC," *Indian Express*, 21 April 1999.
56. Namita Devidayal, "How Stay Orders Become the Order of the Day," *Times of India*, 22 April 1999.
57. M. K. Ramesh, "Hawkers Too Are Committed to Serve Society!" Letter to Editor, *Afternoon Despatch and Courier*, 19 April 1999.
58. Quoted in Devidayal, "Stay Orders."
59. Braudel, *Wheels of Commerce*, 29.
60. Braudel, *Wheels of Commerce*, 26.
61. *Olga Tellis and Ors*. See note 10.
62. "HC Judgement Allows BMC to Set Up Separate Hawking Centres in City," *Times of India*, 6 July 2000.
63. "Hawkers' Union to Challenge High Court Order," *Times of India*, 7 July 2000.
64. "HC Judgement."
65. Gerson da Cunha, "Victory Crowns Citizen Efforts," *Bombay Times*, *Times of India*, 8 July 2000.