

Making Sense Of Weber

'Secularisation' and 'legitimacy' in Indian politics

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Introduction

Anthony Giddens points out in a recent book that in the social sciences knowledge is not cumulative like in the natural sciences. Our knowledge in sociology or political science - or even in the fuzzy field of development studies- is "spiraling in and out of the universe of social life, reconstructing both itself and that universe as an integral part of that process" (Giddens, 1990, p. 15-16). If we accept this idea, it is also true in a sense that each generation of social scientists must re-discover the social world, rather than inherit it from the previous generation. Since our object of knowledge transforms itself all the time the quarrel between academic generations often revolve around the extent to which one has to modify existing theories or even invent new explanatory models altogether. We may thus add to Giddens' observation, that our knowledge of society not only "moves in and out" of our object of knowledge, but also "in and out" of a body of texts and previous knowledge of earlier societal forms.

This is, I believe, the reason why the Oedipal conflicts - the symbolic killing of your father - are so pronounced and constitutive for intellectual identity in our academic field (as well as in the humanities): One has, in order to become somebody, to criticize and distance one self from ones intellectual father.

It is, however, slightly less complicated in the case of one' s grandfather or great-grandfather, where a more distanced respect-relation comes into play, as these figures have constituted the very field in which one moves. Thus the time-factor provides the "disembedding mechanism" (Giddens, 1990) - lifting Marx and Weber out of their context - which makes a re-embedding of concepts and heritage less complicated.

Although I subscribe to the view that knowledge is not cumulative as such in the social sciences, originality in the social sciences has still everything to do with re-interpretation and re-combination of previous constructed elements to which one then might add new nuances and fragments. To employ a well-known metaphor, one might say that research and theorizing today is about shaping a leaf on the huge old tree of social science. The

best and the brilliant might even shape a minor branch, but denying the relevance of the very trunk, where Marx, Weber and others reside, is normally out of question.

In my own research I am scrutinizing the current wave of Hindu nationalism in India. Why, when and how this wave of crude jingoist and communal discourses makes sense to different kinds of people. In so doing, I move in the field of political sociology and my interests gravitate around problems of formation of political and cultural identities, the dynamics of political mobilization inside and outside organizations and parties, the creation of leadership etc. etc.

In a very general way I subscribe to Marx's point that the ways in which one obtains knowledge is dictated by the object itself. This is not to say that I believe my object constitutes an objective reality whose "Wesen" is to be discovered. Rather, that the object, by virtue of its very conception as a scientific problem, inevitably is located within a field of knowledge which pre-exists, and thus makes it possible to "think" the object. This field, or branch of social science, is structured by paradigms and concepts developed at an earlier stage, in casu mainly by the Anglo-Weberian tradition of political sociology. This field not only renders my research-problematic "thinkable" - it also represents a set of questions, hypotheses and axioms which one as a scholar will have to address - either by rejection, partial implementation or renewal.

Moving in the field of political sociology one has, therefore, to discuss with Weber and to make sense of Weber because it is in Weber one finds the preoccupation with *agency*, with authority, legitimacy and with an open-ended interpreting approach in order to understand how people make sense of their own world. As I chose my object of knowledge, it chose Weber for me.

One has also to direct and fight out ones Oedipal battle. In my own case this is of two kinds: Since my academic upbringing has been dominated by various Marxist approaches, it is logical that the fiercest battle is the one with Marxism. Here I have found the radical poststructuralist positions of Laclau and to some extent Foucault appealing and meaningful especially in understanding the power and functions of ideological discourses and of the nature of "the political" as a prime mover in societal transformations.

I will not go into the way I indirectly draw on Marx, since it is more limited than my indebtedness to Weber. I will just limit myself to two points: (1) Firstly, at the level of ontology I find it

difficult to accept the notion of a society as a prestructured objective totality ordered by a hierarchy of determinants and laws of motion. I find Ernesto Laclau's idea of totality as a societal strategy far more appealing - that is society as an effect of a never fully successful attempt to construct it. This, I believe, is closer to a Weberian notion of unintended consequences than the classical Marx-position.

(2) Secondly, I have found Marx of limited use in dealing with the dynamics of political mobilization, which is at the core of my work. Formation of interests and class-dynamics can in many cases form important structural preconditions for political behaviour, but hardly more than that. If one wishes to understand how a movement works and thinks and to understand its itinerary, the social determinism of Marxian approaches might give an idea about the social composition of a movement and the potential conflicts of interests this composition might entail. But this approach is singularly unhelpful in understanding what movements often are all about, that is, why they move at all and what constitutes them as movements: Their ability to overcome inner differences in favour of a common goal, by virtue of ideological cohesion, leadership or organizational flexibility and tactical ingenuity.

But in this case as in the case of the notion of totality, Marx has provided a starting point (movements as interest-articulation) from where I have moved on *and away*. In that sense I guess one could call me a Post-Marxist.

Secondly, I have had a battle going with functionalist and Parsonian sociology which produced the positivist and functionalist "Anglo Weber". I believe that the real originality of Weber lies in his "German" or "Continental" interpretation, which emphasizes interpretation, comparison, and path-dependence, rather than the universalist and functionalist pretensions ascribed to Weber by Parsons and others.

I have thus found myself located in the broad category of neo-Weberians, which according to Vandergeest and Buttel (1988) is a broad and heterogeneous category ranging from Giddens, over Bourdieu, James Scott to Barrington Moore and E.P. Thompson. That is a company in which most scholars would feel comfortable, I believe.

So I am a neo-Weberian in what sense? Being a neo- something implies, on the one hand, an endorsement of some basic tenets of

the original work, and on the other hand, a critique and renewal of some aspects of the original positions.

Basic Elements Of Weberian Sociology

As to the relevance for my own study of political mobilization I found two aspects of Weber's fundamental position very appealing: "Verstehen" and "Idealtypen".

If one wants to escape functionalism, which I do, and at the same time find it interesting and important to listen to how my objects make sense of themselves, then "verstehen" is the only obvious epistemological position. Or to put it differently: The reason why I found this approach appealing is that it is available on the market. It made it possible for me to "think my approach" and made it possible for me to try and answer a part of the "mortgage of unanswered questions left from the previous epoch" (Blumenberg, 1966) - in casu the social determinism of neo-Marxist sociology.

The current intellectual fashion of sociological interpretation, of understanding collective agency and of unraveling the structures of meaning which people do produce and act on in their lives - of which I myself am a part - all draw on this side of Weber.

"Verstehen" however, does not only apply to the type of fieldwork where the researcher is a participant observer or employ qualitative interviews of various kinds as a main tool of data-generation.¹ It also applies to historical studies and comparative sociology. Verstehen is an epistemological position, whose ontological presupposition is a claim of society to be an effect of a multitude of conditionally constrained decisions and strategies adopted by actors endowed with a given historical horizon and configuration of interests.

¹ I purposefully employ the term "data-generation" as qualitative data are never collected in the direct sense of the term - they are always generated because of the intervention of the researcher. This reservation, which constitutes a fundamental predicament for any empirical research-endeavour, applies to any survey-method as well. Only old-style hard-nosed positivists will claim that this invalidates the usefulness of the generated data. With Weber we might say that any body of data is the result of the interaction between a multifarious reality and a set a value-premises crystallized in the particular method applied.

In some celebrated essays Reinhard Bendix, one of the few reputed sociologists who in the 1950's and 1960's defended the "German" Weber, strongly opposes the notion of "historical inevitability" and what he calls the "retrospective determinism", which neatly outlines why past events logically fit into a pattern in turn proving that everything did have to develop exactly the way it did. Instead of this functionalist and causal determinism Bendix "Want to give back to men of the past the unpredictability of future and the dignity of acting in the face of uncertainty" (Bendix,1983,p.48). The following quotation contains Bendix's scientific credo in concentrated form:

Men make their own history; but they make it under given conditions, and they become entangled thereby in a fate which is in a part the result of other men having made their own history earlier. This sentence encompasses three aspects of our historical experience: Given circumstances, action that is historically relevant and the consequences of this action, which begin as the intended result of what we do but turn unwittingly into seemingly unalterable conditions of our lives. (Bendix, 1983,p.49)

Bendix obviously leans towards the Weberian notion of "Verstehen". He is outlining the historical conditions pertaining to the distribution of power, economic assets, ideas, geo-political structures etc. at a given juncture. But instead of explaining why things inevitably had to happen in the way they did, he tries to outline and understand the various options open to the historical actors (given their assets and cosmologies) and the motivations and reasons behind their actual choices.² Far from being a pure

² The most famous example of this method applied by Weber is his analysis of the role and importance of Reformation and the rise of "ascetic Protestantism" in the general development of Western capitalism and rationalism in "Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus", Tübingen, 1920. In the Introduction Weber explicitly states, that the study should not be regarded as a full-scale explanation of the rise of capitalism contending with for example the historical-materialist historical interpretation. The intention was rather to trace the formation of the whole body of moral and ideology compatible with rationalism and capitalism and enabling social actors of the 17. and 18. century to regard the accumulation of capital and hard work as culturally meaningful and hence worth of pursuit. As pointed out by Schluchter (1979, p.6-12, 156-71) Weber saw the historical causes of western rationalism and capitalism as multiple and dealt with them separately in a number of essays: The Hellenic scientific heritage, the

actor-oriented strategy, the concept of "Verstehen" directs the research interest away from functionalism and towards a study of the structurally conditioned and constrained choices made by individual and collective actors.

The strong emphasis on the contemporary, "situational" and subjective character of knowledge and interpretation, and hence the abandonment of the notion of cumulative, transcendent and objective knowledge within the social sciences, is characteristic of the entire hermeneutical tradition started by philosophers like Dilthey (who, as a contemporary to Weber strongly influenced the concept of Verstehen and Weber's outline of his "Kulturwissenschaft"), (Schluchter, 1979,p. 13-25) and later Heidegger and Gadamer.

Verstehen, in the "early" Weberian sense, entails ontologically that reality is external and independent of the observer, and belongs thus to the same Realist position as Marxism. But, as it epistemologically claims that the only way one can get access to this reality is through an understanding of how its actors make sense of it themselves, its ontology also departs sharply from Marxism. There is no distinction between "Erscheinungsform" and "Wesen" - reality is only existent at one level - the empirical and observable, *but*, and this is important, not as an unmediated reality, but a reality, which only is real insofar it is conceived, believed in, acted upon and worked upon by human beings.

Methodologically, the corollary of Verstehen entails a reconstruction and interpretation of the motives, interests, drives, and constraints which forms the basis and rationale in individual as well as collective strategies and decisions.³

remnants of Roman Law, the particular trade-structure between medieval,inland cities in Europe, the agricultural structures of antiquity and medieval Europe, the emergence of the "Ständesstadt" etc.

³ It is important, however, to note that Verstehen in Weber's own work was employed in historical studies and comparative sociology, combined with studies of the compulsions of political and economic structures on the societies under scrutiny. Verstehen as it has evolved within hermeneutics and has been applied in anthropology, sociology and cultural studies, has come to mean almost exclusively the *interpretation of doxa*, that is studies of everyday perceptions of the world - preferably "from below". Further, this method has in hermeneutics sometimes been elevated to a privileged method of gaining access to an allegedly more comprehensive or authentic

And it is in this light, I think, one must understand the tentative and cautious formulation of "Idealtypen" as an analytical tool capable of avoiding some of the perils of teleological and functionalist theories of societal development.

The concept of Ideal-type developed by Weber is in fact a necessary tool for any research-endeavour whether employed explicitly or implicitly. To construct an ideal-type is simply to take out some features from historical reality, to concentrate and condense them into an *exaggerated and simplified construction*.. This construction can then be employed as a sort of artificial measuring-stick, enabling the researcher to analyze and compare cases by measuring deviations from the Ideal-construct. These are exactly artificial and should not be employed as a checklist of reality by which societies or situations, in their entirety, can be classified as higher/lower. They can only serve as a measuring stick for the parameters defined by the researcher. One may say that the real illuminating insights one can gain by employing ideal-types, *is to observe the distance between the ideal-type and the actually observed*.. At this stage of theorizing and generalizing, the perils of conflating reality and models appear. Weber wrote about this:

The series of types which results from the selected conceptual criteria appears then as an historical sequence unrolling with the necessity of a law. The logical classification of analytical concepts on the one hand and the empirical arrangements of the events thus conceptualized in space, time and causal relationship, on the other, appear to be so bound up together that there is an almost irresistible temptation to do violence to reality in order to prove the real validity of the construct. (Weber, 1949, p.101)

The concepts of "tradition" and "modernity" are excellent examples of the conflict between ideal-type constructs and generalization. While a "traditional society" is an ideal-typical construct characterized by being localized, kin-based, patrimonially ruled, economically undifferentiated/self-sustained and culturally coherent and **particularist**; a "modern society" is characterized by the exact opposite features: Expansive and

"everyday" truth. Besides the preoccupation with *doxa* has, in many hermeneutical studies, obliterated the structuring impact of larger societal dynamics on the field under scrutiny,

extensively communicating, merit-based, ruled through legal-rational bureaucracy, economically interdependent and differentiated and **Universalist** in cultural orientations.

The symmetrical opposition between the types is the analytical point in the construction: To emphasize the **differences** between types and to shed light on the nature of the process of modernization by artificially(analytically) "fixing" the point of departure (tradition) and the point of arrival (modernity). The problem then arise when research-strategies set out to identify the ideal-types in reality and thus hypothetically deduce their empirical existence from reality and likewise presuppose the ideal-typical sequence of change as actual reality rather than identify the complexity and richness of the historical societies in question.

Critique And Revision:

"Secularisation" and "Legitimacy/Authority"

Both Marx and Weber attempted to explain the huge and dramatic changes taking place in Europe in the 19th century. One might crudely say, that what the laws of motion of capitalism were to Marx in explanatory terms, the evolvement of Rationality, not just as philosophical Reason, but also as modes of practical organization, production and thought, were to Weber. Both sought in a way to explain why the West developed so fast, so sudden. To Weber the "invention" of rationality was the key explanation, having consequences for the administrative efficiency, economic organization and cultural change on all levels in the Western societies.

As Wolfgang Schluchter has pointed out, Weber attempted to explain this rise of rationalism in a multitude of ways, of which his treatises on agrarian relations and methods of production (practical rationality), the rise of the inland medieval city in Europe (the "Burger", and artisans as sources of practical and economic rationality) on Roman Law and jurisprudence (on the legal presuppositions of the concept of the individual citizen, and on legal rationality) are less known, than his treatise on the Protestant ethics which tried to explore the structure of religious thought which made capitalism and capitalist rationality possible (Schluchter, 1979).

The modern world of the 19th century was marked by secularization in a big way, understood as the process whereby a new cosmology based on science and modern ideologies - a this worldly and active approach to life and social organisation replaced the previous reference system of religious otherworldly thought.

Weber's idea was, firstly, that the structure of religious thought conditions which social philosophy can be developed in a given society as it acts as a "stimulus" predisposing the community of believers for particular sorts of knowledge and cognition.

Secondly, that secularisation, understood as the institution of non-sacred space available for human scrutiny and agency is a precondition for the development of rationality. The source of Western rationalism had therefore to be found in the structure of Christian thought, Protestantism in particular. In this sense Weber draws on a long-standing German tradition in the 19th century "Kulturwissenschaft" which can be traced back to esp. Johan Gottfried Herder. Herder's theory of Culture as constitutive of societies not only produced cultural nationalism as an operative political ideology. It also produced a widely held assumption about civilizational and cultural continuity. Every culture or civilization was endowed with generically different cultural propensities and assets, among other places expressed in a condensed form in religious thought, which in the final analysis determined that civilizations capacity for change, dynamism and viability. Western supremacy thus had to be seen, not as a contingent outcome of many processes, but as a result of some of the inherent features of Christian thought which made it possible for Post-reformation/Renaissance European society to produce rationalism as an all-pervasive principle. Weber's indebtedness to Hegel's distinction between the people "with history" and the capacities for statemaking and reason, is also fairly obvious.

Weber's sociology of religion is in this sense mainly a study of *contrasting cases* vis-a-vis Christian thought than a *comparative* study of various religions. Christianity and the other Semitic theo-centric religions were the measuring stick (as Salvation-religions according to Weber were the most powerful because they are most organized and focused on one prophet, one Truth and one Scripture) and defined the parameters of analysis, whereas Buddhism and Hinduism and other cosmo-centric religions came to fit in nicely as the analytical "other". Islam provided- by virtue of its many similarities with Christianity - the function of an analytical "Mirror" held up in front of Christianity. In this sense

Weber was a child of his time, inspired by the dominant evolutionism of the day - and by the prevailing Orientalist discourse.

It is interesting to note, that at this level - civilizational history and the evolution of Western rationalism and global hegemony - Weber's idea of reality as an open-ended plurality of options and decisions and societal development as the outcome of unintended consequences, does not apply in any coherent way. World-history was in Weber's view, at the most fundamental level, driven by competition between civilizations. A point of view which still lies at heart in various exercises in comparative historical sociology. Secularization, to Weber, was thus a phenomenon deeply rooted in the inherent potentialities in Christianity for *rationalism*, and a logical result of the cultural continuity or logic inherent in Western civilization.

Other civilizations did not have the same potentials and were rendered with a more intellectualist religious philosophy emphasizing world-renouncing, passive attitudes to social change, philosophical eclecticism and inclusiveness and a reliance on charismatic leaders. Or in other words: incapable of instituting internal change and dynamism in a big way. In contrast, the Semitic religions were all characterized by a more robust, hard-nosed, popular, simple and single-minded theo-centric pursuit of fulfilling Gods will.

Interestingly enough this Culturalist approach, which sees *secularization* as a matter of form rather than content has a major following today in the academic world also.

Generally speaking there are two main aspects of secularization:

Secularization is an *institutional event*, closely connected to the *de facto* separation of political and religious institutions and hierarchies and the removal of religion in a manifest sense from the public, societal realm. Secularization is part of the differentiation of functions and institutions so central to modernity, which relegated systematic education to the nationstate, political legitimacy to the People, the generation of knowledge to scientific institutions, etc. As part of this *modern functional differentiation* (Durkheim) religion was relegated to the *private sphere*, in itself a historical novelty, just as its concomitant, the public sphere.

The other aspect is secularization as a *cultural process of demystification and social acquisition of still larger areas of*

human life. In this view secularization is the gradual emergence of a peculiar modern way of conceiving and acting upon the world in an active and acquisitive way - on the basis of what Weber called "thisworldliness". Secularization precedes the institutional separation of political and religious functions takes on its own momentum with the emergence of the two main modalities of modern thought: scientific cognition (demystification) and ideological world-construction (social acquisition). Both modalities of thought entail a continuous de-sacralization of the social and cultural domain either in the form of scientific inquiry or political (re-)construction of a desirable social order.

The two aspects of secularization outlined above, the institutional event and the cultural process, entail however, very different analytical corollaries.

If secularization primarily is viewed as a formal, institutional event which has differentiated the *forms* and structures through which symbolic cohesion is provided, it implies that secularization not necessarily changes the fundamental *content* of symbolic discourses in a society. Max Weber's Protestant Ethic thesis can be interpreted as a claim that modern capitalism started from a fundamental religious impulse (traced back to the very structure of Judeo-Christian thought) among the early radical Protestants. The sustained success of modern capitalism in NW-Europe, the massive internalization of individualism, rationalism and entrepreneurship - so functional for capitalism - are nothing but *secularized expressions* of the Protestant road to salvation, the personalized relation to God and the concomitant de-sacralization of the mundane human world. (Weber, 1920). In spite of changed institutions and structures it is still the same latent cultural content which provides the impetus for societal development.

In his later years Weber himself recognized the immense powers inherent in the new *forms of modernity* (rationalization, above all). But parts of his work remained firmly entrenched in the influential German Romanticist tradition of "Kulturwissenschaft" or "Kulturgeschichte", where fundamental structures and differences between various civilizations were seen as determinants of world history, and where cultural continuity in an area/civilization is an essential assumption.

One of the most influential works in this tradition is Karl Löwith's *The Meaning in History. The Theological Presuppositions of the Philosophy of History*. (Löwith, 1949).

Löwith's main thesis is that the entire idea of progress, of a meaning in history, of teleology, of historical stages etc. are nothing but secularized version of the Judeo-Christian eschatology, bent on the coming of Messiah, the Last Judgment, etc. Löwith's diagnosis was, that the fundamental problem of modernity was its lack of legitimacy: it had to draw its entire legitimation from pre-modern, medieval concepts of salvation and Providence translated to Progress; of Paradise translated to social harmony in consummated Democracy, The Nation or in Communism.

This idea of cultural continuity and of modern ideologies as secularized versions of century-old religious structures of thought have exerted enormous intellectual influence. Liberal critics of ideology as David Apter (Apter, 1967) draw on it, and so does Carlton Hayes who analyzes nationalism as a modern religion (Hayes, 1960). The assumption is also underlying in George Mosse's analysis of mass-politics as management of religious themes of death, eternity and immortality (Mosse, 1980), and lately Benedict Anderson's analysis of nationalism as a secularized version of the medieval imagined religious community (Anderson, 1983).

This interpretation of secularization and modernity as mere form, unable to restructure the fundamental cultural forms *from where legitimacy allegedly flows*, seems strangely blind towards the structure of modern cognition and the generation of legitimacy within the institutional realm of modernity itself. It is exactly these two points which constitute the central argument in the second interpretation of secularization: as a cultural process of demystification and social acquisition.

In my view secularization has everything to do with a change of cultural *content*: it represents a radical break with any previous system of thought, ontologically as well as epistemologically.

This break materializes in two realms where new forms of legitimacy are produced: the scientific and the political/ideological. Modern scientific knowledge as it became defined by Descartes and Kant is autonomous, guided by shared methodological rigour within the scientific community, but without any reference to Divine forces. Claims of knowledge of the world can now be validated and legitimated in only two ways, as summarized by Ernest Gellner:

They can be settled by *our* decisions and convenience (Kant); and they can be settled by empirical fact, independent both of our will and our social order (Descartes). The secularization of the world can hardly go any further..... Thus only two kinds of basic legitimation of knowledge are possible; and one of them inheres in *us*; and the other in *nature*. Our convenience, or blind nature, are the only two authorities which can validate our cognitive claims. (Gellner, 1988, p. 126)

With the emergence of modern political philosophy, notions of sovereignty, democracy and not least equality in the wake of the French revolution, the *People* arises as the new only and ultimate source of political legitimacy. The referential structure of power thus moves from being socially *outside*, that is extra-human, eternal and immutable to become socially *inside*, collectively human, alterable and indeterminate.

The dispute over secularization as form or content is not a matter of conceptual hairsplitting, but has profound consequences for ones analysis.

Louis Dumont' s influential analysis of caste and hierarchy (Dumont, 1980), for instance, draws on this fundamental notion of civilizational continuity - here between the West inhabited by *Homo Aequalis* and the Indian subcontinent inhabited by *Homo Hierachicus*. To Louis Dumont ritual/religious distinctions remain of paramount importance in the modern world and his work is in many ways indebted to Weber. A modern Dumontian is Bruce Kapferer who in his comparative analysis of nationalism in Sri Lanka and Australia concludes that the differential functions and shape of modern nationalism in Australia and Sri Lanka mainly can be ascribed to the fact that they operate with two entirely different sets of religious ontologies. The religious ontologies are secularized (*transformed*) into self-conscious culture, whose original meaning is so essential to them and culturally deeply inscribed in all practices and thought processes that even a modern, universal and powerful ideology of nationalism, is unable to *transgress* and *dissolve* the cultural logic of hierarchy in Sri Lanka, and the cultural logic of equality in Australia (Kapferer, 1988).

The most central corollary of a "Weberian culturalism" is that it is a society or culture's capacity for internal self-reform which determines its viability. According to the culturalist reasoning, the basic cultural matrix will determine this capacity and pervade whatever alien systems imposed. Hence in India, for instance, the

basic cultural matrix is constituted by values derived from a Hindu cosmology. These values regulate important relations such as power, legitimacy and authority. This is and has always been the case, the argument goes. The history of post-independence India, then, has been the story of a progressive permeation of indigenous practices into the colonial institutions and practices. The current Hindu-assertion is thus a quest for a faster indigenisation and an adjustment of the language and the practices of public life in India in direction of the Hindu-heritage. Seen from a culturalist perspective this is only but natural and confirms the Weberian thesis, that "organic secularization" is impossible in a cosmo-centric religion, where the sacred is distributed over all objects and subjects alike. Secularization in India will inevitably mean Westernization and eradication/negation of Hindu practices. The colonial power did not succeed in this. Neither did the postcolonial Westernized elite because such a project is impossible. This is, interestingly, exactly how the Hindu-nationalists argue.

I believe this is a false view built on a flawed analysis. The agenda and content of contemporary Hindu nationalism is modern (that is, deterritorialized Western), its aims and objectives are constituted by cultural nationalism. Its discourse and its organization are cultural nationalist - rather than essentially Hindu, indigenous or even traditional in any true sense. It is a hybrid construction of dis-embedded or de-territorialised elements from all over the globe and from modern Indian history.

Even more striking is that the Hindunationalist movement seeks to change the form and language of the public sphere, To put it bluntly: the Hindu-revivalists believe that they can control modernity by giving its elements and institutions different languages and names. But even their very language itself, and their obsession with "control" is thoroughly modern.

The multi-faceted Hindu-Nationalist movement seeks to legitimize itself in ways which openly demonstrate that it is only able to gain popular backing on the basis of Hindu-religion because the Indian society has become secularized. Hinduism is no longer a "thick" religion embedded in everyday practices, but has been transformed to a "thin" emblematic and symbolic structure, which no longer *constitutes* the cultural and intellectual horizon, but only refers to -symbolizes- such a horizon. The Hindunationalist discourse is deeply structured by the dominant secular discourse of the Nehruvian state, which stigmatized

politicised religion, promoted secularism (as co-existence of various faiths) and was committed to cultural diversity with respect for cultural attachments. The Hindu-nationalists, fundamentally operating with this political paradigm, therefore always stress that Hinduism is a *culture* and not a religion in the organized, Semitic sense. And they go as far as to say that Hinduism is a "secular religion" - meaning a tolerant faith compared to Semitic faiths. Such self-images - truly 'thin' symbolic markers - combined with the ideology of modern nationalism and jingoist anti-Muslim, anti-Pakistani discourses, nowadays constitutes a widespread popular common sense on what Hinduism is.

Taken as a movement in its entirety, the multiple organizations making up the Hindu-nationalist Wave in contemporary India, it must be characterized, not as fundamentalist, but as *nationalist and cultural revivalist*. Within the movement there is a considerable "division of labour" between the political wing, the BJP, student organizations, trade unions etc., the religious wing, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal (where revivalism flourishes in a very manifest form) which provide the religious "zealots" campaigning at the Ayodhya Temple/Mosque controversy in 1990, and the cultural/ideological wing, its organizational center and main force in the large and well-funded RSS-organization itself.

The VHP is therefore the organization which comes closest to religious revivalism, but even there the nationalist idiom takes precedence over religious discourse. VHP's goals are like the overall objectives of the RSS-family all bent on promoting national unity: (1) Syncretism, to create a common platform between the multitude of sects and practices within Hinduism. The aim is to define a national mainstream and a set of common religious denominators. (2) Turning temples into centres of educational programmes and social relief-measures for the poor in their area in order to strengthen - "the overall patriotic bonds among all social groups in the area". (3) Organization of large gatherings and agitations in order to reclaim sacred sites from other religious communities. (4) Intensive programmes among tribal communities and other marginalized (Dalit) communities.

Definition of a broad national mainstream, inclusion of almost any cultural group (except Muslims and Christians) in the Hindu-fold, and creation of a National Neo-Hinduism seems far more salient features of VHP than religious piousness or even

adherence to any kind of actual Hindu-tradition. Only a catholic Hindu-tradition in the abstract, as an imagined and glorified past, are paid homage to, whereas most of present-day religious practices are criticized as incoherent, commercialized or sectarian.

The political environment of competitive electoral mobilization within a largely liberal democratic setup in India, has added to the depletion of traditional religion and its reappearance as emotionally charged symbolic discourses, devoid of traditional content and, to some extent reduced to the status of a mobilizational/electoral vehicle.

This description (of Hindu nationalism as anti-modern fundamentalism, TBH), does not fit communal politics in India, where it is clearly a strategy to get more secure advantages within the arrangement of modern electoral politics. Thus modern communal politics in India presupposes the existence of parliamentary electory arrangements, or at least the numerical biases of the modern state. Communalism, although it uses religion with great stridency, must be seen as an ironically grotesque part of the historical process of depletion of religious beliefs, of the process Weber called disenchantment. (Kaviraj, 1993. p. 10.)

Legitimacy And Authority

The three main types of legitimacy and its correlates in terms of the authority a ruler or regime enjoys when this legitimacy works, again correlates with three types of rationality as shown below.

<u>Legitimacy</u>	<u>Authority</u>	<u>Rationality</u>
Tradition	Patrimonial	Substantive
Charisma	Personal	Affective
Rational order	Bureaucracy	Instrumental

This scheme is probably one of the very lasting contributions of Weber and a good example of the Ideal-type construct. As mentioned, the problem with idealtypes is the temptation to

regard them as depictions of actual reality. To believe that tradition or the traditional loyalties have a positive existence. Or that Charismatic leadership has to do with a regular historical emergence of actual persons endowed with special qualities in terms of leadership. Or to believe that bureaucratic regulation due to its cultural/civilizational superiority inevitably will win the battle over patrimonialism and unpredictable affective rationality.

I have previously dealt with the term tradition as a modern ideological invention. Current claims to blood, territory, lineage, custom or religion do refer to a tradition, but are not identical with that tradition. I do therefore find the term "re-traditionalization" utterly misleading, when the fact of the matter is that ideological representations of tradition reflect and contribute to the real dissolution of tradition. Traditional authority may still make real (substantive) sense in remote or marginal areas on the globe. But I will claim that if tradition gives legitimacy it is not because it is old, but because it fulfills some needs in today's world - an illusion about the fullness of the lost paradise. And if patrimonialism works today, it is not because it is traditional, but rather because it is more efficient in distributing the given assets of a system, than its bureaucratic institutions. Or as Gellner points to systems of patronage - as opposed to actual kinship systems - come into existence in situations of imperfect centralization of bureaucratic and political power in the state. Patronage operates in a kinship-language, but is fundamentally dependent on the existence of a modern, bureaucratic, but imperfectly centralized state.

Similarly the category "rational/bureaucratic rationality" lives an empirical existence as a system of fairly contingent and not always coherent actions and decisions. It is the language and institutional paraphernalia of bureaucracies, rather than coherence of action which makes bureaucracies appear as instrumental, impersonal and bent on pure rationality.

Instrumental rationality and bureaucratic legitimacy is therefore, as in the case of tradition, rather than an empirical fact. And this is, I believe fairly well in line with Weber's intentions with these Ideal-types: That the real illumination of the observable reality lies in rather than in its direct application to the multifarious reality.

This distance is less observed and less discussed in the case of charismatic authority. Sometimes it is restricted to personal

leadership, and sometimes it is generalized to be every legitimacy bestowed on leaders or organizations by the virtue of the emotional response and following they evoke - e.g. populist movements.

Max Weber's classical formulation of charisma ascribes charismatic qualities to certain persons, who by virtue of their extraordinary qualities were recognized by a great number of followers as 'natural' leaders.

The term *Charisma* will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are as such not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual is treated as a leader..... the charismatic hero does not deduce his authority from codes and statutes, as is the case with the jurisdiction of office; nor does he deduce his authority from traditional custom or feudal vows of faith, as is the case of patrimonial power. The charismatic leader gains and maintains his authority solely by proving his strength in life. (Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1968, p.)

Weber made a very sharp distinction between rationality and charisma. They were two entirely different types of authority; Charisma bent on the extraordinary, heroic, singular venture producing ruptures and disorder, while bureaucratic rationality is predictable, orderly, anonymous, producing a dull and leveled form of social order. Weber therefore largely attributed charisma to premodern or non-Western societies and anticipated that charismatic leadership, however powerful and mobilising in brief glimpses in history, as something transient and unstable would vanish under the onslaught of rationality and the primacy of economic interest in capitalism.

Charisma is basically an extraordinary and hence non-economic power, and its vitality is immediately endangered when everyday economic interest become predominant, as threatens to happen everywhere..... Invariably, however, the reign of genuine charisma comes to an end when it can no longer withhold the unqualified permission to found families and to engage in economic pursuits. Only the common danger of military life or the love ethos of an unworldly discipleship can preserve such 'charismatic communism', which in turn is the only guarantor of the pure charisma vis-a-vis everyday interest.

Every charisma is on the road from a turbulent emotional life that knows no economic rationality to a slow death by suffocation under the weight of material interests: every hour of its existence brings it nearer to this end. (Weber, Max, 1968, p.)

The scholarly discussion of charisma has emphasized the modification of charisma Weber added in his later years, "routinized charisma" as a form of institutionalized power, seemingly more fitted to modern conditions than the idealtypic charisma. Routinized charisma is attached to an office rather than a person and is, in a sense, drawing legitimacy from the traces of charisma left from the original institution of an office or function by a leader, or drawing on a "commissioned charisma" by performing certain functions on behalf of the leader. Routinized charisma, as Weber used it, is thus an intermediate form between "pure" charisma and bureaucratic rationality. The usefulness of this term seems to apply primarily to the specific situations when movements are successful, take over power or office, and start transforming themselves into a ruling organization, as the typical scenario was in many new states emerging in the 1950's and 1960's. The leaders of anticolonial movements sought, on the one hand, to retain their charismatic grip on the mass-sentiments by employing various forms of populist rhetoric, while on the other hand, appropriating various modern and traditional symbolic signifiers of power and authority. In most cases this strategy failed, not because a leader lost his personal "aura", nor because his power was rationalized and successfully institutionalized (on the contrary most state-apparatuses failed in this respect) but because the moment and conditions conducive to authority of charismatic leadership was gone.⁴

⁴ Robert Merton, Reinhard Bendix, Ronald Glassman, Karl Loewenstein, Edward Shils, and many others have discussed the relevance of charisma in modern politics. There is some sort of agreement that the pure charisma Weber defined is rarely significant in modern societies, whereas 'constructed charisma', through systematic mediaized and ideological construction in the public is an all-pervasive phenomenon in modern electoral as well as totalitarian and authoritarian politics. The attractiveness of mediaized charisma has been explained by Merton as the "pseudo-Gemeinschaft" which a leader is able to construct: An illusion of intimacy, emotional attachment and mutual affection between the leader and the followers. Bensman and Givant has in an article summarized the crux of modern charisma as *political presence*, the ability of politicians, speakers and public figures to transcend the technical regime of the media they employ, and project themselves as

Francesco Alberoni offers a very useful re-interpretation of charismatic leadership, which overcomes some of the limitations of personality-centered, and "genuine - false" distinction applied to it in American mainstream sociology (Alberoni, 1984, p. 127-165). Alberoni suggests that charisma is not attached to persons, but to certain *functions* in determinate social situations and to certain strategies of power and cohesion. Alberoni suggests to regard the charismatic leader as

The leader is he who has the power to absolve from guilt.. The charismatic leader is, first and foremost, an ethical leader, a strategist of moral behaviour. It is for this reason rather than for his victories, that he becomes a 'saviour'. There is nothing magic or mysterious about his behaviour. He has no fluid or magnetism - none of those things that people for thousands of years thought they could see in him. He is recognized...., because he is able to ensure salvation and social cohesion among the groups members and to overcome danger from without.... Elaborated in a profane way, he will be acknowledged as having a special voice or some fascinating gesture. But these are only ex post facto elaborations.....

In this case, instead, charisma is a property of the group, and it is the divergent tensions awakened in the group itself - in contrast with the tendency towards unanimity, that give rise to the need for a center and therefore a leader.. (my italics, TBH) (op.cit., 1984, p. 144)

Charismatic leadership in this understanding is the power that comes from an ability to mediate between divergent interests in a fast-growing movement, and the ability to formulate a synthesis of divergent ideological elements into an easily comprehensible and workable ethic as well as guidelines for action. This makes charismatic leadership legitimate in the early phases: clarity of vision and capacity for expression and representation of the group. What from outside might look as personal rule, might very well from inside - on the part of the leader as well as followers -

dramatic, visionary and not least, *authentic and sincere*, that is "real" behind the screen and representation. The crucial difference to "pure" charisma is that "real" charismatic figures do not represent and arrange their charisma - they are their charisma. (See Reinhard Bendix, *Reflections on Charismatic leadership*, and Bensman, Joseph & Givant, Michael: *Charisma and Modernity: the use and abuse of a concept* , in Glassman, R. & Swatos, W. Jr. (eds.), 1986: *Charisma, history and Social Structure*, Greenwood Press, Conn. USA.

be considered a relation between equals - the leader is merely the first among equals.

In more consolidated forms of charismatic leadership, however, the power-relation changes significantly, in spite of rhetoric repetitions of the 'first among equals' - principle, in expressions like Comrade Stalin and Comrade Mao.

Firstly, the essence of power is non-reciprocity, says Alberoni, and the power of the charismatic leader is exactly based on a non-reciprocal love-relation. The followers need the leader and love him intensely (because he incarnates their collective aspirations). But the leader does not need any individual per se, he only needs the movement or group as such to consolidate his power. The leader can prefer and favour anyone in the group, or even outside it, at any time, whereas the followers are only allowed one exclusive love-relation: to the leader. Shifting affections on the part of the followers are betrayals and severely punished. The asymmetry is often so pronounced that the leader in fact shows little affection for any individual follower, while the followers do everything possible to get the attention of the leader - maybe only in a glimpse - to display their unconditional affection in return for a nod, a few words or just a glance. This mechanism of non-reciprocity is what drives men to suicidal sacrifice - to display ones ultimate devotion and love by sacrificing ones own life. Maybe in the vain hope that the leader will remember and respect one for that, at least.

Secondly, the collective pain, suffering and achievements of the followers are projected onto the leader. The followers ascribe to the leader an immense endurance and courage and an almost superhuman capacity for anything.

In the relationship with the leader the process is taken further, attributing to the leader what is true of the dominated. The leader, who in reality does not love the single individual, is perceived as the one who has given more than any other, who has suffered more than any other and has received less than any other: the sleepless guardian who keeps watch over his people at night and carries the burden of the world on his shoulders, so that all love is owed to him and all he asks for must be given him.

There is a substantial lack of proportion between the charismatic leader's real experience and what his followers attribute to him. The followers perceive their sufferings as being universalized through their leader, but they attribute their sufferings to him, not to themselves. (op. cit., 1984, p. 150)

Thirdly, because of the asymmetrical love and power relation and due to the projection of pain and glory onto the leader, there emerges gradually a morality and normativity for the leader substantially different from that of his followers. The leader can do things forbidden to the followers as well as in the outside system. He can transgress any boundary and indulge in any excess, without violating his legitimacy and power. In fact he only consolidates his power by confirming his own unattainability and absolute sovereignty: he is the one who can define norms and standards. Thus the leader comes to embody the quest for freedom and belief in contingency which the movement started out with, while the followers gradually are transformed to a relatively immutable mass - slow, weighed down by convention and lack of vision. The followers can thus only re-experience the fermenting and rebellious atmosphere in which the movement was formed, through their leaders transgressions and representation of this moment.

This process of consolidation of charismatic leadership can lead to either a *divinization* or a personality-cult. The myth of the person, the re-enactment of his heroic life, the re-enactment of the formation of the movement, the wild exaggeration of the vision and intelligence of the leader, becomes a substitute for a movement which is no more alive as a movement in any meaningful sense. What Weber calls 'routinization of charisma', Alberoni calls 'personalization', and is an elementary form of institutionalization of a movement. Personalization is characteristic of a victorious movement which after consolidation of its power creates an elaborated myth about either living or deceased leaders in an attempt to re-awake the charismatic legitimacy of those leaders and the "effervescence" (Durkheim) they invoked in the movement. There is in the same move also an attempt to cover the often imperfect installation of a formal and systemic rationality in the newly established order. Examples of this are the personality-cults well-known from USSR, China, North Korea, Cuba, but also the Gandhi and Nehru-myth in India, the Khomeiny-myth in Iran, etc.

Charisma at work: Shiv Sena in Bombay

Let us by way of conclusion apply this understanding of charisma to a very obvious example of charismatic leadership in

contemporary Indian politics: Balasaheb Thackeray, the "Supremo"(dictator) of the Bombay-based rightist, populist organization Shiv Sena (Shivaji' s Army). The Shiv Sena emerged in 1966 as a kind of "nativist" protest-movement claiming more jobs for Maharashtrians, that is speakers of Marathi, in the thriving metropolitan economy of Bombay. Bombay had in 1960, after a protracted political battle, become capital in the newly formed linguistic state Maharashtra. But the city was dominated numerically by non-Maharashtrians, and people of Gujarati and South Indian origin dominated in business and white-collar professions. Shiv Sena wanted to turn Bombay less "cosmopolitan" and more Maharashtrian. Ideologically the organization, its leader Thackeray and its official organ *Marmik* a weekly cartoon magazine, promoted a rather chauvinist and idealized notion of Maharashtrian culture as particularly "pure", "authentic" and martial, the true defender of all Hindu-values in India. And it promoted a very aggressive and agitational type of street-politics, which in a few years made the organization both feared and admired among rank and file Bombay'ites.

This organizational structure was from the outset, and remains, highly centralized and authoritarian and elections or even contesting candidates for various posts are never found. All office-bearers are appointed by the top-leadership, mostly by the "Supremo" Bal Thackeray himself, though distribution of low-level posts are done by the *Zilla Pramukhs* (zonal leaders) in consultation with the supervising member of the *Karya Karani* (the council of senior advisers) and hence endorsed by Thackeray. The Shiv Sena was in the early days managed almost single-handedly by Thackeray, and although the second-rung leadership has gained considerable influence as the organization has grown and differentiated, the final decisions are always made by Thackeray. These decisions are final and cannot be challenged or questioned. The central concept in the Shiv Sena organization is *loyalty* to the leadership and the proximity and standing with Thackeray are decisive for an individual's prospect for a career within the organization. Thackeray sees himself as a father-figure: " I look upon the Sainiks as my children. A family can only run when one man makes the decisions " (Thackeray, 1973, quoted from Gupta,1982, p. 97). Thackeray takes the issue of personal loyalty to his own person and challenges to his authority very seriously. City-corporators, middlelevel leaders, *Shakha-pramukhs* (local level leaders) who do not obey unconditionally, under-perform in their assigned jobs, are too close to other

parties or individuals, etc. etc., are openly supervised by emissaries from the central leadership who supervise them and report directly to Thackeray concerning their performance and activities. If Thackeray is dissatisfied he removes office-bearers from their office and degrades them in rank or simply ignores these individuals. Another method is to ridicule individuals publicly in meetings among Sainiks or even expose their alleged misdeeds in the *Marmik* weekly. To fall in disgrace with Thackeray is a disaster for a Shiv Sainik and can often terminate his association with the organization, as the peers of the unlucky - or slightly critical individual - isolate him out of fear of being accused of conspiring against the leadership. Thackeray has announced this style of leadership and the incontestability of his decisions - very openly. Anybody disagreeing or opposing Thackeray is "welcome to leave. Once he is out I'll never take him back." (Ibid, p. 98)

Quite a few higher level and middle-level leaders in Shiv Sena have left the organization in this early phase after falling into disgrace - several city-corporators, Legislators and Shakhapramukhs, and even Datta Pradhan, a former RSS-companion⁵ of Thackeray who was appointed as a sort of Chief Organizer from 1967-69 fell into disgrace and was removed - to be reinstated later in the Karya Karani after confirming his continued loyalty to Thackeray. (Gupta, 1982, p. 96-100). This climate of fear combined with unmediated sycophancy vis-a-vis ones superiors makes the Shiv Sena an inhospitable place for talented and ambitious individuals. The organization has all through been strained by lack of talented and imaginative middle-level leadership capable of independent decision making and capable of institution-building. The organizational consolidation of Shiv Sena has by and large taken place within the Greater Bombay region where all the members of the Karya Karani stay and work, while a stable and powerful organizational frame has never successfully been established in the provincial cities and rural areas in Maharashtra.

At the same time the dictatorial and charismatic style of leadership exercised by Thackeray, his taste for ridiculing the middle level leadership, and his ability to establish a direct and unmediated rapport with the rank and file followers, makes his

⁵ RSS stands for Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (The national Volunteer corps) is a strong and influential Hindunationalist organization with branches all over India.

personal following and command over the ordinary Sainiks impressive, and inordinately effective when agitations are launched and rallies are called.⁶

Although *discipline* was another key-concept in the early days of the movement and impressed most observers, it gradually became subordinated under the quest for loyalty to the leadership. The rather stringent rules of conduct (no liqueur, smoking, or abusive language in the presence of leaders), which was (and still is) observed in the Shakhas - who are treated respectfully as crystallizations of authority - and at meetings, are obeyed primarily in the presence of superiors, and not in the day to day routines of the organization.

The *language* internally in Shiv Sena is fairly simplistic, straightforward, aggressive in its assertiveness and tone, and overtly militaristic in its vocabulary. The Shiv Sena discourse is almost ideal-typically populist: Anti-establishment, boiling complex problems down to identification of an identifiable enemy, activist and action-oriented, assertive, and promising a "quick fix" to any problem.

The style of action and agitation is correspondingly more violent, uncontrolled and careless than any other organization in Maharashtra. In Thackeray's populist strategy, visibility and publicity rather than political credibility or display of civic responsibility and reliability are of paramount importance to the organization. Another characteristic feature lies in the recruitment to the organization. The recruitment of young men and boys at the Shakha-level is based on the attraction of joining an active, organized and highly visible peer-group providing a strong sense of involvement and importance, and providing a heightened respect-cum-fear in the local community.

In the early years of the organization, the appointment of Shakha pramukhs and contestants for the civic bodies were done primarily on the grounds of activity and loyalty to Shiv Sena and

⁶ Critical and independent journalists with an intimate knowledge of the organization claims that Thackeray, if he calls for action, in a few hours can assemble 100.000 young men ready to do anything. The potential of the Shiv sena in creating large-scale unrest was demonstrated lately in the bloody communal carnage in January 1993 in Bombay where Shiv Sena activists went berserk on the Muslim communities in Bombay. In a few days thousand of homes were looted and burnt, 1000 people killed (primarily Muslims) and 100.000 - 200.000 people (mostly Muslims) fled the city.

Thackeray. A majority of these leaders were drawn from the middle and lower middle-class, some were college-graduates, other petty business-men etc. but their common feature was their earlier political involvement in either the RSS or in the SMS⁷ (Gupta, 1982, p. 100-102). By the early seventies the selection-procedure of Shakh-pramukhs gradually favoured educated men with a certain capacity for public oratory and a certain local reputation, but loyalty remained the main factor. As Shiv Sena entered elections for the Legislative Assembly in the 1970's and consolidated its seats in the Municipal Corporation two new considerations came into play in the selection of candidates: Their ability to win the seat on their reputation and their ability to generate money and patronage for the organization. Educated and more "polished" types were favoured and so were local business-men who were able to finance their own campaign and attract funds from the business-community. In this respect Shiv Sena was moving close to the Congress-style of electioneering, while retaining an effective grassroots network of activists. Although not verifiable it seems likely that another feature of the "Congress-culture", namely the purchasing and trading of party-tickets for the elections started in a big way in the 1970's and became a major source of finance for the party. Also direct extortion of money from South Indian and Muslim shopkeepers (protection-money), from industrialists (pay-offs to abstain from industrial unrest), and the spoils routinely extracted by city-corporators (from all parties) from builders and contractors added to the increased importance of flows of money within the party⁸

⁷ SMS stands for Samyukta Maharashtra Samiti (The movement for a united Maharashtra), an umbrella organization fighting throughout the 1950's for the reorganization of the Western states of India along linguistic lines, particularly the unification of all Marathi-speaking areas under one administrative unit.

⁸ According to Hemchandra Gupte, former Shiv Sena Mayor and former member of the Karya Karani, one of his major reasons for leaving the party was his growing disgust with the prominence of money, and the "goondaization" of the party. (Interview in October 1992, op. cit.) As we will discuss below, this trend accelerated in the 1980's when the Shiv Sena won control with the Bombay Municipal Corporation. The accumulation of funds from Bombay builders and the film industry in the 1980's facilitated the state-wide expansion of the party in the 1980.

The cohesion in Shiv Sena seems to be provided by two factors: (1) Ideology crystallized as a strong identification of a threatening enemy as well as a strong sense of peer-group identity at the grass-root level. (2) The charismatic leadership of Bal Thackeray. The role of clientelist networks and patronage seems primarily to be important vis-a-vis the electoral and local constituency, and more so in the 1980's. Internally in the organization its capacity for patronage for example, improved chances for white-collar jobs, improved local image and so on seems to have been of secondary importance.

The power of Thackeray's charismatic leadership has, (as Gupta notes. p. 71-2), not diminished as the organization has grown and diversified. Although considerable powers and competence have been devoluted to the second-rung leadership, corporators and Legislators, Thackeray's style of leadership - especially his demand for unconditional loyalty and his continuing ability to create a direct rapport with the rank and files - has ensured his continued uncontested leadership. Thackeray's power is generated from the sustained "non-reciprocal love-relation" (Alberoni, 1984) reproduced in the organization. Thackeray rules "by proxy" - by extending and withdrawing his attention and affection for different persons all the time in such a way that nobody, ever, is 100 % sure of their own position. He as a leader is allowed multiple bonds of affection, he does not need any individual - only the aggregated mass of rank and files - while the followers only are allowed one: the loyalty and love for Thackeray. This creates a permanent atmosphere of "suspense" where the followers at various levels all the time try to get the attention and grace of Thackeray, and where the interpersonal relations and ranking among leaders become dependent on their real or perceived proximity to - and confidence with Thackeray. His position as an unrivaled crowd-puller and orator and the inordinate affection extended to him by the rank and files, their belief in his wisdom, shrewdness and care for them, makes this unusually autocratic and "whimsical" style of leadership possible. This unique position allows him to transgress the normative rules of conduct and speech and elevates him, in the eyes of the followers, above the social yardstick applied to ordinary individuals. This special feature of the "inner life" of the Shiv Sena is, therefore, crucial for any broader understanding of the logics and trajectory of that organization.

The most attractive feature of Shiv Sena was beyond doubt its *public style*: assertiveness, masculine/martial values, its straight

language implying a subversion of existing hierarchies of class, caste and power, and its substitution of these "ascribed authorities" with its own discrete, and elective community or subculture⁹. The inordinate popularity of Thackeray had initially - and still has - everything to do with his normative trespassing: using street-language and derogatory nicknames for opponents in public; promoting himself as the brave and fearless leader who is honest and straight, non-hypocritical.¹⁰ Thackeray transmits an imagery of himself as a common man who speaks and acts according to his own, fairly simple moral code and sense of justice. A man who does not fear anybody, who has plenty of self-respect and self-confidence. Not because of manners, education or money, but because of strength and a will to use force to make oneself visible and audible. Thackeray's strength and masculinity consists of his command over thousands of boys, the Sena. Hence, the logic goes along the rank and file, Shiv Sena is only taken seriously because of this latent physical threat. For the rank and file, self-respect and strength are crucial and desirable effects of their affiliation with the Sena. They feel stronger, self-assured, manly and capable in the Shakhā, and when Thackeray derides the authorities, the Muslims, the public morality, or the complacency of the average Indian belonging to the generation of their parents, he speaks genuinely on their behalf - against compliance with parents, bureaucrats and hierarchy, and in a language and style they desire to command, but simply do not dare to use. To use Alberoni's phrase, Thackeray absolves them from their feeling of guilt vis-a-vis family and social obligation produced by this (suppressed) desire to speak out, to be violent, disrespectful, and self-made.

⁹ All Shiv Sainiks I interviewed (close to 100 in all) during my fieldwork in Maharashtra in 1992-93, were asked what had attracted them to Shiv Sena. In virtually all cases the answer was "Its aggressiveness"; "its straight language" ; " its active and aggressive style"; " Shiv sena is more attacking", etc.

¹⁰ Thackeray has, for example, become quite famous among young people all over Maharashtra for his public statements, where he openly admits that he loves beer and he drinks it often. Given the glaring discrepancy between the amorality and decadence attached to drinking and smoking in the public discourse, and its actual prevalence in most social strata - including politicians and other *nouveau riche* - Thackeray's admission is exposing the massive hypocrisy on these issues. Hence, the popularity of Thackeray as a public speaker.

The middle-level leaders represent the language, style and assertiveness of Thackeray and the Sena vis-a-vis the constituency and "the boys". They "inherit" a part of Thackeray's charisma, but their real appeal probably lies in their assertiveness: emboldened by the association with the Shiv Sena leadership they dare to challenge local power-holders, to assert themselves and display public bravery through various actions against employers, South Indians, and in the last decade violently to "bash" Muslims. The crucial point is that they in any social or political status-hierarchies otherwise are "nobodies": semi-educated, employees without cultural sophistication or high-caste culture, and without appropriate social connections. Their only asset was - and is - their assertiveness, their numbers, their ruthlessness and their connections to the Shiv Sena leadership. They became successful in attracting mass-support as they represented a growing awareness and desire of visibility and voice of a large group of urban dwellers in metropolitan Bombay belonging to lower and middle-castes, some of them socially upwardly mobile, others only hoping to become mobile through education of their children.

Shiv Sena was the first organization in Bombay and Maharashtra to elevate and promote so-called "plebeian" elements into the public arenas of city-politics. But throughout the 1970's and even more in the 1980's similar types of activists and leaders from the same strata entered the Congress-party as well. A fact which further invalidates the thesis of Shiv Sena as a vehicle for particular class-interests. If Shiv Sena was a vehicle for anything, it was a vehicle for the democratic revolution by throwing a new type of people and a new type of politics onto the Bombay stage.

Shiv Sena exemplifies a rather extreme form of charismatic-cum-dictatorial style of leadership. A style which has proved successful under the peculiar social structures produced in large urban agglomerations like Bombay: the compression of social and cultural transformations; the stiff competition for jobs, status and money; and the large surplus of young men (a widely accepted estimate puts the sex-ratio in Bombay at 70% males and 30% females), who form a large and "disposable" mass of supporters for populist mobilization. Movements with a host of similarities to Shiv Sena can be found in the large urban centres of Latin America, for instance.

Charismatic leadership can also take on a less violent, but no less conspicuous form, as for instance the "saintly" style of

charismatic leadership founded by Mahandas Gandhi in the nationalist movement in India, and emulated ever since by social and political reformers in the subcontinent. Or the more institutionalized or "routinized charisma" of the Nehru-dynasty - coalescing the paraphernalia of quasi-royal lineage with the representations of state power inherited from the colonial Raj into a unique authority and political style which has been emulated and drawn upon by the entire ruling Congress-party in varying forms since Independence. The era of these "tall figures" on the political firmament in India seems, however, to be irreversibly terminated. The stage is set for a continued deepening and broadening of the democratic participation and assertion by the Indian electorate, along with a mounting crisis in the political and administrative institutions of the Indian state. As this "democratic revolution" proceeds, the language of politics, the style of leadership and the democratic ethics are also "vernacularized". Populist mobilization and projection of charismatic leadership has become the dominant form of political mobilization in the Indian democracy. Rather than the moral leadership of a Gandhi, it is Shiv Sena, thriving on the discrepancy between the high social expectations of urban modernity and the actual poor deliverance of jobs, affluence and status of the Indian economy, which demonstrates what the future has in store for the Indian political culture.

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