

Populism, Religion, and Nation in

Contemporary India: The Evolution of the Shiv

Sena in Maharashtra

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This text, first drafted in 1995 and based on the results of several years of fieldwork, is in no way intended to provide a complete description of the Shiv Sena as a political phenomenon or as a social reality. In response to what I consider to be impasses or weaknesses in the discourse of the contemporary social sciences regarding this movement and the ensemble of politico-religious tendencies in general, I attempt only to cast light on particular elements and on little-known processes. I wish to highlight aspects of the scene heretofore considered with perhaps insufficient distance (the position of a foreigner is sometimes valuable) and to take up problematics too delimited by narrow disciplinary perceptions. Entire areas have, therefore, been deliberately left aside, awaiting further consideration. I have relativized questions of the cultural dimension, for example, of the particularities of local implantation, of the political sphere properly speaking, and of caste, to allow for a comprehen-

sible presentation in a relatively limited space. Moreover, the undertaking aims at introducing certain sociological and socio-anthropological concerns and modes of analysis in a domain that remains the preserve of specialists in political science. The particularities of systems of representation and their very specific relation to the ideology of action are first examined in an attempt to consistently distinguish the part assumed by discourse and other aspects of reality. Fieldwork, so very necessary and fundamental at this level, only has utility when interpreted through a theoretical process. The importance of the actual and local issues concerning this movement and the entire Hindu nationalist scene must not cause one to forget that one is confronting a long-standing problematic which affects to varying degrees the entire world. It is this aspect that I would like to accentuate.

The Sudden Rise of a Political Force

Since April 1995, a provincial government controlled

by the Shiv Sena and the *Bharatiya Janata Party* (BJP) has presided over the destiny of the state of Maharashtra (75 million inhabitants). The most urbanized, industrialized, and modernized state in the Indian Union had thus, for the first time, passed into the hands of the Hindu nationalists. The victory of the two parties, allied since 1989, put an end on the local level to nearly 50 years of rule under the Congress Party and its dissidents. The regional powers are, of course, greatly limited, but this event nevertheless assumes an exceptional significance. The head of the Mumbai (formerly Bombay) government at the time of writing (M. Joshi of the Shiv Sena) promised radical measures to encourage development, to eliminate shantytowns, and to combat poverty, criminality, and violence. Before concretizing these intentions, Joshi ostentatiously designated those responsible for the prevailing problems as coming from the ranks of illegal immigrants and members of the Muslim minority. In India, where this type of rhetoric is becoming increasingly accepted and the successes of the Hindu nationalists follow one another from year to year, the event does not appear to have caused surprise or scandal. B. Thakre,¹ the 68-year-old head of the Shiv Sena, chose to be the *éminence grise* of the provincial government, rather than "dirtying the hands" with politics. The fact that he was being investigated by several judicial inquiries in connection with the large-scale pogroms of January 1993 in Mumbai did not at all represent a disadvantage for his cause. Nor were the success of the Shiv Sena and its ally called into question by memories of the days of December 1992 and January 1993, during which members of this organization had killed considerable numbers of Muslims in atrocious circumstances.² The country appears to be accustoming itself to the intrusion of religion into politics, as well as to the systematic use of violence. Campaigns have rapidly begun to fall in tune with the city.

The "Hindu nationalists" constitute a current of some longevity, as the first *Hindu Mahasabha* (Great Hindu Assembly) that assumed the task of politically promoting or consolidating Hindu interests dates from 1915. The victory in Maharashtra was, however, the first time that they camped at the gates of power. The BJP, which today dominates Maharashtra politics, is better known than the Shiv Sena. This large conservative political party is an emanation, today largely autonomous, from the *Rashtriya Svayamsevak Sangh*, or RSS (National Organization of Volunteers)³, founded in 1925 in Nagpur, which functioned for several decades without directly intervening in the political domain. Instead, their main program was communitarian self-defense, or aggression, combined with a project of cultural homogenization and of "moral rearmament" of Hindus. It was only at the time of the troubles related to Partition (1947-1951) that the organization began to secure mass support, soon called into question by its (at least symbolic) involvement in the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi (January 30, 1948). To counter the subsequent state repression directed against them, the cadres of the RSS in 1950 created the *Bharatiya Jana Sangh* (Organization of the Indian People), re-founded in 1980 under the name *Bharatiya Janata Party*, or BJP. For a long time very much a minority, it ascended to eminence for the first time during the government formed by the Janata coalition (1977-1980), which allied most of the elements of opposition to the Congress Party. The *Jana Sangh*-BJP enormously strengthened its position in 1989 (11% of the votes) and obtained 20.46% of the votes in the national elections in 1991. It is a national party whose principal areas of support and influence are the Gangetic Plain, Central India (Madhya Pradesh), Rajasthan, and the states of the Himalayan slopes. Associated with a dense and effective network of mass organizations, all issuing from the RSS, the BJP wants to promote the moralization of political life,

the advance of homogeneous cultural practices, and the imposition of a nationalism quick to take offense. It has taken a hard-line position on numerous occasions in the Kashmir conflict and during periods of tension with Pakistan. Supported first of all by stable strata of merchants, functionaries, and petty entrepreneurs, it is decidedly opposed to "class ideologies," primarily Socialism and Communism. It has, since 1991, resolved social conflicts instead by repression in those states under its administration in the central and northern parts of the country.

The BJP derives a substantial part of its present popularity from its intervention in two controversies that shook the peninsula in the course of this decade, placing symbolism at the center of the political domain. The campaign for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya, in place of the so-called Babri Masjid (Babar's mosque) lasted ten years after having been set in motion at the initiative of Hindu nationalist activists in 1983.⁴ The second controversy, following an attempt by the V. P. Singh government to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission, was the agitation of well-to-do students against job quotas (affirmative action) in the administrative and public sectors favoring members of the lower castes, which extended over a few months at the end of the summer of 1990.⁵ In the first case, the party appeared neither to play on the dynamics of identity which concerns potentially *all* Hindus nor, for that matter, to assert the agenda of only the educated élite of the socio-religious community. On numerous occasions, the BJP seemed, in fact, to remain in the background, behind the Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Assembly), another mass organization of the RSS, founded in 1966 to unify and simplify the Hindu body. This strange hybrid of cultural association and militant organization, which appears to be fascinated with the model of the world-wide Catholic Church, seemed in its turn to disappear on several crucial oc-

casions behind the Dharma Sansad (Parliament of Religion). Created in 1985 during the Ayodhya conflict,⁶ the Dharma Sansad brings together numerous conservative religious leaders. Populism and demagoguery, which had remained more pronounced in the ranks of Hindu nationalists than among their adversaries in Congress until the mid-1980s, attained unequaled heights as the austere soldier-monks of the RSS learned to manipulate symbols and methods of mass agitation in a "mediatized" era. The mosque was finally destroyed on December 6, 1992. The event gave rise to a series of terrible riots in the western, central, and northern parts of the Indian Peninsula as well as in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In the second controversy, the BJP gathered together its supporters from upper and high castes, doing so this time by substantially modernizing its rhetoric, as the central argument in the attempt to end job reservations was the proposal to substitute for caste-based quotas the criterion of "individual merit."⁷ The Hindu nationalists insisted that state aid should be given to poor families and not be distributed on a caste basis as is presently the case. Quotas were finally imposed in 1993, but the Congress government in New Delhi, preoccupied with the promotion of economic liberalization, was not in a hurry to generalize them.

The Shiv Sena, literally "Shivaji's army," is in many respects very different from the BJP and the numerous RSS organizations with which it maintains highly ambiguous relations. It was formed on the initiative of a nucleus of convinced Hindu nationalists in the wake of the movement for the accession of Maharashtra to the status of a state (1954-1960). This *Samyukt Maharashtra* (Unity of Maharashtra) movement, which resulted from the separation of the province from the present-day state of Gujarat, was at first led by confirmed progressives. It nevertheless evidenced a certain chauvinistic resentment, concomitantly with the

advancement of "historico-ethnic" problematics of emancipation. This chauvinism manifested itself through adoption and exaltation of the epic of Shivaji, founder of the Maratha Empire (1672-1818). The legend of the hero-warrior was partially founded on the theme of the Just Sovereign, highly regarded locally as it draws on the main theme of the *Ramayana*. History and the myth have been undergoing a slow fusion in popular oral tradition in Maharashtra for three centuries. In the context of the reinterpretation of the past by Indians in search of paradigms and sources of national pride during the colonial period, Shivaji incarnated the idea of a just, effective, and Hindu ruler. Tilak,⁸ Judge Ranade, B.C. Pal, and other eminent personages were eager to give their erudite or militant backing to the Shivaji legend at the end of the 19th century,⁹ gradually making him a national hero. The legend also inspired representatives of the movement for the emancipation of the lower castes, such as J. Phule.¹⁰ Shivaji was exalted as an ideal by V. D. Savarkar, the most coherent and radical ideologue of Hindu nationalism (1883-1966) who was imprisoned by the British on the Andaman Islands before becoming in 1938 president of the Hindu Mahasabha.¹¹ It is with reference to Savarkar that the Hindu nationalists vehemently oppose what they describe as the "politics of powerlessness" of Gandhi, emphasizing instead the example of the Maratha padshah (emperor).

If the right to be Maharashtrian had to be wrested by force from the federal state against the centralizing designs of Nehru (105 actually did die in the course of the agitation leading to statehood), the desirability of statehood was sometimes not very obvious in the commercial and industrial metropolis of Mumbai (four million inhabitants in 1966, ten million by 1995). Maharashtrians, limited to manual labor and domestic service, carried no weight compared to Gujarati, Sindhi, and Parsi entrepreneurs, Marwari and Punjabi merchants, Tamil administrators, qualified labor from

Kerala, or even in comparison to artisans and restaurant owners (Muslim and Hindu) from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The native language was looked down upon and employment prospects were seen as dismal. In 1965, 60,000 unemployed were registered, primarily Marathi-speaking youth, in the two employment agencies of the city. It was thus this atmosphere of local chauvinism, exacerbated by a recent political success, social troubles, and a sentiment of distress among youth that encouraged a group of déclassé intellectuals in 1966 to found the Shiv Sena at Shivaji Park in Dadar. Religion was not initially at the core of the political project even though the reference to Shivaji — and implicitly to Savarkar — from the outset introduced recognizable Hindu symbols and themes. The first battle which the Shiv Sena led was against Hindus rather than Muslims in the name of the right of the native inhabitants ("sons of the soil") to manage their affairs themselves and to benefit from jobs and housing.¹² For years, immigrants from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and the Gangetic Plain represented more important enemies than did the Muslims, although the Shiv Sena, with a leader who speaks in a high and mighty tone and is given to abusive language, had at an early date adopted and developed the tirades of the Hindu nationalists who wanted all Muslims understood as potential traitors and agents of Pakistan.

Credited in a few weeks with some 100,000 members and 99 branches in Mumbai,¹³ the movement immediately took root among textile workers, carters, domestic servants, and street hawkers, as well as among sections of the Maharashtrian petty bourgeoisie. Also securing the support of the unstable fringes of the unemployed, the déclassé, and minor criminals, the movement drew attention to itself by its close alliance with violent action and internal practices of solidarity. The branch organizations created an unprecedented network of assistance and mobilization centered around problems of daily life. The organiza-

tion also fought to obtain job quotas for Marathi-speaking people in the public sector and in the administration, an objective that was partially achieved in 1973. Politically, the Shiv Sena was the most unstable of partners, despite the significance and virulence of its initial anti-Communist rhetoric, as it increasingly veered towards pragmatic alliances. Bal Thakre was, however, favorably impressed by the authoritarian methods of Indira Gandhi. He forced his followers to support the state of emergency (1975-1979) in the name of order and the national interest. As a consequence, the Shiv Sena suffered a notable eclipse from 1977 to 1983. In the early 1980s it was a worn-out organization, short on themes, apparently clinging to the immense city of Mumbai, which it had neither the means nor the interest in leaving. Its electoral base in the city, so large that there had been in 1973 a Shiv Sena mayor, seemed to erode to the advantage of independents, Leftist elements in the Congress Party, and the Communist Party of India (CPI). These other movements had for a long time been important in the workers' quarters and among intellectuals, and they were thus able to gain from the Shiv Sena's seemingly inexorable decline.

Due to this crisis for what had once been a large popular movement, which had relied on the support of an unstable and particularly heterogeneous milieu and was accustomed to acting on an ad hoc basis in an unfavorable environment, the leadership of the Shiv Sena appears to have taken measure of its growing weakness. One cannot deny that the small group of frustrated local élite who founded the organization had an acute sense of political matters. It was, nevertheless, necessary for the leaders to take seriously the idea of *aggiornamento* (modernizing) as a means to keep pace with the evolution of society (especially in the city) in order for their small metropolitan movement with its virulent reputation to have any chance of achieving regional power. The 1980s were the years

of the "saffron wave," an identitarian upsurge centered on the theme of *hindutva* (Hindudom). This old idea, theorized for the first time by Savarkar in 1923, summarized the political project to unify and simplify the sentiment of Hindu collective identity in the framework of nationalism. Student youth in the 1980s were seen as little inclined to theorizing, other than longing for points of reference and being fond of symbols. During that decade, numerous student organizations and teachers' unions came under the influence of the Shiv Sena and the BJP, which favored the assembling of "Hindus" around easily recognizable symbols. The unemployment of educated urban youth is but one of the factors visible in a multifarious malaise well expressed in the cinema by the emblematic figure of "the angry young man." This symbol was ubiquitous in the films of blood and vengeance that were so prolific in the 1980s. This factor assumed, however, new proportions in Mumbai and in all towns of the state with the mounting aspirations of the youth, the stagnation of industrial employment, the defeat of the textile workers after the strike of 1982-1983 (100,000 were made redundant), the intensification of migrations of qualified educated youth, and the modernization of productive units. One million registrations were reported in the four employment agencies in the city in 1992 and four million in all of Maharashtra, despite the stricter registration modalities than in the past and the efforts deployed by the Shiv Sena to provide work for its supporters. The dissatisfaction in the petty bourgeois milieu, the development of an obsessive insecurity among the least well-off of the small property owners, and the perpetuation of extremely harsh, indeed inhuman, living conditions among young workers and street hawkers combined after 1984 to bring voters, clients, debtors, and fanatics to the *shakhas* (branches) of the Shiv Sena. In its manner, the Shiv Sena took charge of the exigencies of individual dignity and collective pride that so acutely concerned the

young people. It seems that the deterioration of the property situation, which had become quite extraordinary as a result of legal complications and the policies of cleansing the shantytowns, did much to contribute to the aggravation of tensions. "Illegal" lodgings, numbering 1,100,000 and mainly comprised of shacks, were razed to the ground in a period of 12 years in Mumbai. At least an equivalent number is currently threatened by the same fate. All the modernized and industrialized zones of Western India (Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra) that were directly affected by the evolution towards social anomie and economic liberalization appeared, moreover, to experience growing tensions. The Shiv Sena began to develop mass fronts, extending its influence into the large suburbs.

The use of violence, presented as "justifiable anger," appropriate vengeance, or "legitimate defense," has almost always been of profit to the Shiv Sena. In 1984 it won the elections for mayor of Mumbai after having provoked riots and having transformed them into atrocious pogroms in Bhivandi, the large northern suburb. All the campaigns of the Hindu nationalists (VHP, RSS, and BJP) during the 1980s also benefited from the movement which maintained that it possessed a "Maharashtrian" and singularly effective manner of regulating problems. Its leaders went so far as to claim they had relinquished the Ayodhya symbol.¹⁴ Themes such as "endangered religion," the "minority's cradle conspiracy," or the equation "Muslims equal terrorists" spread to the extent of becoming commonplace. Very serious events such as the autonomist movement in Assam, the uprising of Sikh youth (which resulted in 30,000 deaths from 1983 to 1993), the assassination of Indira and then Rajiv Gandhi, and the deployment of the army in Kashmir (from 1986 until today) helped to support the idea of a peaceful, but threatened, Hindu community in great need of moral and military mobilization. The notion of self-defense became popular. Other symbolic events,

such as cricket matches with Pakistan or the Residue Affair (in which the police killed twelve Muslim demonstrators in Mumbai) and the Shah Bano affair (during which 300,000 Muslims vociferously demonstrated in the city to defend the *sharia*) also had considerable impact.

Beginning in 1984 the Shiv Sena appeared to be organizing itself on the national level. It was a rather ambiguous process. Branches, bearing the Shiv Sena's name and symbols but devoid of any serious connections with one another appeared in Madhya Pradesh, then in the Punjab, the Gangetic Plain, Harayana, and finally in Karnataka and Gujarat.¹⁵ The new organizations were loosely, that is altogether informally, connected with the parent organization. Thakre always refused to leave Maharashtra to make the rounds of his movement. He relied on the spontaneity of the militants and was on his guard against outside influences. He has never been concerned to exactly define his organization, which is simultaneously a political party of the masses, a social movement, and a self-defense militia. This indeterminacy became greater, and the new branches fell into an increasingly unbridled activism, provocative and without principles. The assertion of collective identity and the wish to fight Muslims occupied a growing place in the movement which, on the other hand, abandoned its animosity towards Tamils, Keralites, and *Bhais* (from the Gangetic Plain) to adopt a Hindu ecumenicalism. The Shiv Sena also began, with a certain amount of success, to solicit wealthy Gujarati Jains, previously more known to value non-violence. It attempted in 1984 to promote a *Hindu Mahasangh* (Great Hindu Organization) to compete with the VHP. Although it had very little impact, it nevertheless symbolized a turning point. The Shiv Sena also spread in the countryside, where its proclivity to fight and its concern to promote individual and collective pride were diffused in a patchwork fashion, via the migration

of workers and transmission by artisans and idle youth.

In 1986, it won the post of mayor in Aurangabad and the municipality of Thane. In 1991, it put forward 16 candidates for parliament in the national elections (of which six were defeated), more or less openly "bought" by the Congress Party after they had been outraged by Thakre's attitude during the Mandal Commission affair (August-October 1990). In the name of national unity and in accordance with an old and constantly re-asserted anti-caste position, the "supreme leader" vehemently opposed job quotas and received strong student support. This mistake, if it indeed was one, was not sufficient to bring about a loss of the Shiv Sena's popularity among the low castes that benefited from quotas. It then relinquished, by a slim margin, the post of mayor of Mumbai in 1992, but immediately regained immense credit in the city by fostering the largest anti-Muslim riots in local history in January 1993. The events, which lasted some 15 days, were followed by violent manifestations of anger by Muslim youth subsequent to the demolition of the Ayodhya mosque. Despite police repression in December 1992,¹⁶ which resulted in 175 victims, the sentiment of fear by the majority was such that many people of all communities were supportive of the excesses of the Shiv Sainiks (Shiv Sena militants). To many the Shiv Sena appeared to be the last rampart of the Hindus in the face of an impotent state and an increasingly dangerous minority. The formidable capacity of this organization to transform the fantasies and currents of panic into instruments of political mobilization could be verified. More than 600 were killed.¹⁷ The Shiv Sena later won all the local elections in Mumbai and won 34 percent of the votes, and with the help of the BSP formed a relative majority in the Mantralaya, the regional assembly located in Mumbai and Nagpur.

The success of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai, already

caught up in its strained relations with the BJP, may not be replicated in the future. For the moment the electoral weight of the Maharashtrian organization is nevertheless noteworthy, and the two million members that it claims to have in the state are far from being phantoms. Nonetheless, it may well be that the essential importance of the movement lies elsewhere. It is by proposing a contradictory but fascinating mixture of positive action and violence, of moral standards and transgression, of charity and murder that the Shiv Sena has asserted itself. It has, therefore, a reference endowed with an enormous seductive capacity in an increasingly troubled world. Beyond its preserve it has asserted itself for the growing masses of people as a kind of emblem of the times by means of which, via a few basic gestures of allegiance symbolizing anger, they can come to grips with the search for identity and the desire to do something, whatever it may cost. Emerging largely from the most destabilized fringes of the Congress Party during the 1960s, the organization has never been able to bring to public discussion or election by plebiscite a clear program with concrete objectives of governance for the simple reason that it has never had one. It has perhaps done much more than that by taking hold of the millions of distressed imaginations upon which it nourishes itself as much as it provides sustenance for them through the communication of its hysterical tendencies, its fluctuating modes of thought, its fascination with borders, and its obsession with the movement. It has thus become a significant part of the political domain and the social scene. Coming from the most dynamic, liberal, and cruel city of the peninsula, it has modernized the methods and references of Hindu nationalism by utilizing a trivial chauvinism. This chauvinism opens society to a world of continuously reviewed conflicts in the framework of constantly simplified referents and a quest for power that is recurrent because regularly disappointed. It has constituted in its diverse versions

a loose conglomerate of generations of short-lived organizations scored with spectacular re-births. The latest variants have been increasingly populist, brutal, and centered around unequivocal and aggressive notions of collective identification and are today displaying at various levels Mafioso tendencies. While social tensions and symbolic aberrations that have led the organization to a position of eminence would appear to be taking a pause, it is time to inquire into the Shiv Sena's course and its roots.

Action, Destiny, Karma: Ambiguity and Forward

Flight¹⁸

The Shiv Sena thrives on antagonism. It derives a considerable part of its reality from an absence of substance, which is embodied in its provocative stances, transgressions of accepted norms of political practice and recognized social values, or in direct attacks against persons, corporations (such as journalists), and communities.¹⁹ Despite the fascination that it exerts among certain circles and the ambiguous respect that allows it to use such force, it is not surprising to find that it has numerous enemies. In the English-language press and in the large Hindu publications such as *Mahanagar*, these enemies tend to describe the organization as a "band of hooligans," "residue of the lumpen proletariat," "fascist organization," "Congress mole," "Mafia," "armed band," "demons," "cancer," or "communist virus." The Marathi papers, the readership of which is strongly influenced by "Shiv Sainikism," are clearly more moderate in their evaluations. The virulence and simplicity of criticisms aimed at deprecating the organization and the movement it embodies, in fact, very often profit the Shiv Sena, notably its most extremist cadres. The sentiment of being excluded from the political game and of being scorned and misunderstood, like the majority of the "people," was among the main factors that drove the Shiv Sainiks forward, encouraging them to

adopt increasingly less nuanced positions. Faced with Shiv Sena excesses — including assaults on journalists, stabbings of opponents and those in charge of investigations, beatings of recalcitrants, verbal provocation, and pogroms — how could local observers outside the movement possibly retain their composure? The misfortune is that their moral condemnations and emotional protests, perfectly legitimate in the given context, have too often become the basis of the rare analyses of this movement that would appear to defy analysis. Schematic ideas, centered on the search for the harmful agent or principle are, certain to find an attentive audience in the context of contemporary Mumbai. This approach is valid enough for various types of discussions and for the majority of political positioning. But more complex perspectives would entail the serious difficulty of bringing to light the density and ambiguity of relations that the organization maintains with all political forces (including the Muslims), with eminent sections of middle-class businessmen, and with significant elements of the artistic and media world. Innumerable and self-assured commentaries appear regularly aimed at negating the Shiv Sena's capacity to intervene in the social scene by reducing it to a mere harmful possibility or by claiming that it is a fringe group executing services at the behest of the obscure interests of dominant political party or of big capital.

This is extremely simplistic. It is no accident that the theme of action occupies such a central role in the thematic of the Shiv Sainiks. Although they do not always make use of the financial and intellectual means to fulfill their wishes to change the world, they nevertheless accord an eminent place to the latter, continually reasserted, and, moreover, concretized by a burgeoning galaxy of unstable achievements. The primacy of action is actualized daily by the cadres, above all the heads of the 210 metropolitan branches. "One must forge ahead," "one must not fear the ad-

versary," "one must know to dirty one's hands" are admonitions that are often repeated by the cadres, at times scrawled on the walls of the premises of the shakhas. Their unity constitutes a kind of punctuation of organizational similarity, activism generally serving to take the place of or elude any form of political theory or any manner of reflection on society. Rooted in the conviction that the people possess the profound truth, although they must be guided by the "supreme leader" (*Sena pramukh*), and exemplified by the structure of the organization itself, this obsessive valuation of action cannot be understood without taking into consideration the context of passivity, punctuated by riots, of the popular masses in Mumbai. Furthermore, this passivity itself has a historical context that can be traced back to the paternalistic manipulation of the people of Mumbai by the Congress Party's system of power, which is quite often also utilized by the Left. For the rank-and-file militants, it is often a question of escaping at any cost the surroundings that one basically considers to be in some way dominant and nearly ineluctable. The exaggerated activist orientation of the Shiv Sainiks is thus rooted in refusal and ambiguity.

The Shiv Sena of Mumbai, however, has existed long enough and has had sufficient experience for its relation to the problematic of change to have assumed a relatively complex form. Action is not for it a magma beneath which is to be found a mobilization without objective. An analysis of the acts and the discourses of the cadres and militants shows, in fact, that they correspond to four main orientations which define related but distinct areas of intervention: hygiene, utilitarianism, work, and charity. Legal action, although not entirely disregarded, is no doubt the most neglected category; the organization only attained one of the seats of legislative power. The explicit discourses and the contiguous representations of the Shiv Sainiks, at least as regards the first three areas of in-

tervention, are "modern," if not openly modernist categories. They are as closely related to the large industrial city as they are interwoven in the life of the organization. As with any contemporary representation able to produce a long-term social impact, these perceptions are also, at certain levels, the heirs of structural schemas and pre-existing manners of thought. They survive, in fact, through their hybridization with older, popular, and valued categories.²⁰

Social Hygiene, Noble Incarnation of Action

Hygienic representations and concerns occupy a very important place among the high-level cadres and leaders of the Shiv Sena. The further one goes down the organizational structure and in the social hierarchies, the more these representations appear to be considered with a distanced attitude, if not with open suspicion. In the course of the last decade, they have continuously gained in influence at the expense of the other perspectives of action. This is, for example, clearly the case as concerns the sons and nephews of Thakre, who have lived almost all their lives in the simplified perspectives and homogenized worlds of the movement. The hygienic conceptions of action are, however, never presented as a balanced doctrinal whole likely to be the basis of an orthodoxy. There is no such thing in the Shiv Sena. Firstly, the conceptions are not at all an original product of the activity of the movement. They spread much more often from the concerns, sometimes obsessions, of the well-off milieu in the city and from certain representations of modernist élite (doctors, engineers, administrators). In a strained context in which no one holds the solutions, they evolve with the fears, the movements, and ideas of the entire society. The milieux of the militants and supporters of the Shiv Sena frequently only accentuate or reorient commonly held ideas, interpreting them according to short-term political opportunities. The pithy remarks and provocative

statements of the "supreme leader," who gives a considerable place to them, play in some cases the role of catalyst.

When one speaks of cleansing activities in the Shiv Sena, it is first a question of social and urban hygiene, the brahmin accent on ritual purity quite rarely serving as referent, agent of cohesion, or of radicalization. Within these representations, which derive referents simultaneously from a belief in progress and the symbolic relation to a transcendental order, dirtiness and backwardness are clearly associated. For the majority of the urban cadres of the Shiv Sena today, there are too many people in Mumbai, which is increasingly seen as a metaphor for India as a whole. Recent branches outside Maharashtra have produced particularly radical views on this subject, at times concerned with the adoption of a global perspective. The majority of the Shiv Sainiks take an unequivocal stand in favor of family planning in India — or the world — which they propose to conduct in an extremely authoritarian manner, somewhat similar to the practices of employers in the Godrej factories in Mumbai (expulsion from work and lodging in the case of the third child). They advocate adding even harsher measures in the form of forced sterilization of "useless" and "dirty" impoverished people, something which had already been practiced during the state of emergency. Some cadres evoke concentration camps.

Hygienic concerns are also inscribed in the political domain with violent condemnation of the "corrupt" and the "monopolists," as well as of the government which allows them to prosper. These extremely popular themes are illustrated by the repeated agitation campaigns in the suburbs. Concerns for urban hygiene are centered around the question of shanty towns and other self-built quarters, which the Shiv Sena proposes to stabilize or to get rid of, according to the given times and audiences.²¹ Populist problematics are mixed in this regard with the urban concern for

hygiene, illustrated since 1984 by campaigns for the "embellishment" of the city and the destruction of numerous shanties. To give Mumbai a form, which is linked with the concern to make reality and particularly the entanglement of social relations controllable, represents a veritable obsession for the nucleus of leaders most influenced by Thakre. In this context, the Shiv Sena leaders have shown themselves to be very keen on main roads and motorways. This tendency, which corresponds to a modernist norm going well beyond the Shiv Sena itself, is closely related to the increasingly asserted interest of some of its cadres and leaders in large public building sites, entrusted to private firms of which they are owners or shareholders.

In what is called "dirtiness" and also sometimes "disorder," the Shiv Sainiks see both threats to life and sources of political and economic powerlessness. This is done by referring to schemas employing medical metaphors *ad nauseam* and by adopting organicist social theories, underlined by popular clichés and reflections drawn from experience. In this context they only adopt what is written every day in the large English-language press regarding the poor, more or less veiled by a mixture of condescension and preoccupation with the sordid aspects of life.²² Faced with the sickness and degradation of the social body of the city, one must act. This is a leitmotif embodied in numerous interventions, from public speeches and articles in the daily paper *Saamna* ("The Confrontation") to the "medical camps"²³ and attempts to expel migrants coming from Bangladesh (May 1995), and denunciation campaigns and parliamentary initiatives against rising birth rates. If the party were to accede to uncontested power, which those behind the movement dream of in terms of an "enlightened dictatorship," it proposes the limitation above all of the expansion of poor Muslim families. These are considered to be extraordinarily large and phenomenally growing in

reference to deeply ingrained fears in the collective subconscious. This control over Muslim families would thus also resolve the question of urban criminality.

It is in the choice of expeditious methods integrating explicit cultural criteria, reinforced by the conviction that one can and must immediately act using any means, that the difference between the Shiv Sena and its leaders from the ruling classes is first manifested. The different types of cleansing processes are combined in the active perspective of high-level cadres and leaders. However, their views on social hygiene scarcely make use of racial categories, or only marginally, in areas which are the most violently modernized and open to the world (some colleges, but also especially brutal shanty towns). Members and cadres coming from popular milieux consider the perspectives of hygienic action in a much more ambiguous manner. This is because one frequently finds oneself in the sights of appeals to clean up the city. It appears that some cadres and numerous members attempt more or less consciously to divert onto migrants, or another community, the peril of expulsion or redundancy which hangs over the majority in the name of a hygienic logic which they have neither the means nor the will to counter. It is, in effect, a manner of perception that fascinates its own victims. Numerous members of destabilized milieux give their tactical support to the organization, frequently engaging in anti-Muslim or "anti-criminal" excesses, because they feel directly threatened.

Economic utilitarianism also presents varied and sometimes contrasting representations, depending upon whether it concerns high-level cadres, B. Thakre's entourage, elected members, or branch leaders of militants and supporters. It is very widespread, but less dominant and central than the perspective of hygienic action, to which it is frequently subordinated. As in the context of representations which posit the hygienic will as the motive force of

activities, the upper echelons give a more important place to perspectives of a utilitarian nature than the representatives of the organization, who appear to be much less interested in this theme. Some of the members are resistant or openly hostile thereto. In the most currently expressed utilitarian perspectives, which are subject to differentiation and continual variation, religious renouncers, mendicants, hooligans, propertied rentiers, and politicians are judged in such diverse terms as useless, harmful, or undesirable. Wealth is the key to a flourishing of society. Anything that impedes production is explicitly condemned. The Shiv Sena offers no economic ideas and its contribution to the problematic of development is practically non-existent. The latter is, however, not at all denied and this problematic constitutes an implicit basis of the Shiv Sena's system of action. It is borrowed uncritically, as with other concepts, from the ideology of the dominant urban classes. It also happens that the middle management (i.e. heads of branches) put forward entire planks based on the "religion of development" much like that spread by the Left of a mechanistic Marxist persuasion in India since independence. Reference is also made to local political theoreticians of a rather anti-Gandhian inspiration to bring to the fore the concern to promote a productive and profitable society. The writings of S. C. Bose and Savarkar inspire the cadres, while the heads of the shakhas and the active militants absorb bits and pieces from the academic and journalistic "vulgate." In this respect, the utilitarianism of the Shiv Sainiks is apparently rooted in three specific substrata that are quite often unconnected. These are: (1) the concern for the immediate profitability of daily efforts, the "give and take" inherent in popular milieux; (2) political opportunism, which never totally disregards the economic realities and powers that be; and (3), in certain sections of the organization, the logic of racketeering, an unbridled and apparently primitive form of the ide-

ology of profit.

According to the Shiv Sena, utility is measured, first, by the capacity to satisfy the basic needs of the masses and, increasingly more often, by the desires of the well-off strata termed "middle class," without ethnic or religious distinction. This explicit conception is, however, continually amended by the influence of such criteria as communitarian interest, Maharashtrian regionalism, and historical legitimacy. These criteria, which are not opposed to "utility" but which deprive it of its general pertinence, gain in importance with each social or political crisis, when the Shiv Sainiks recognize the extent of their inability to change the world. Their productivist concerns, which are more or less rational and can be quite intense, also recede to the advantage of other perspectives each time the organization is affected by internal tensions or suffers a loss of popularity. Productivist utilitarianism rarely eliminates the preoccupations of an organization whose leaders cultivate a very high idea of their historical destiny. In this respect, the representation of a historic realm of power and affluence, which is almost always linked to the rule of Shivaji, inspires the Shiv Sainiks more than the evocation of a mythical Ram rajya, the preoccupation of the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The interest in work is one of the least-known aspects of the organization, but it occupies a significant place. It is of particular interest to the intermediary cadres and the most active militants of the urban branches in Maharashtra. Outside the state this interest is not so vivid. The organization was first called upon to manage a very significant capital of working class and artisan pride. The organization has never called this orientation into question despite the prejudices of the "supreme leader." In Mumbai, the influence of the Shiv Sena remains centered around the textile mill areas, with the oldest and most restive of the large concentrations of labor in India. There the Shiv Sena carved out its influence by gradually dis-

lodging, between 1966 and 1972, the Communist Party of India, other Leftist tendencies, and the trade unionists connected with the Congress Party. Municipal employees, public sector workers, and minor government officials (whose jobs were often procured thanks to the organization) are also among the ranks of Shiv Sena militants, more concerned with status and respectability than the cotton mill workers, but who are nonetheless highly unionized. They comprise a very significant proportion of the branch heads. In the countryside and in numerous shantytowns in Mumbai, their approach, apparently free from the paternalism of the upper-caste elite, guarantees the support of numerous artisans. For example, in Pune the Shiv Sena first gained the allegiance of the copper-working artisans. It has inherited the pugnacity and the ambiguities of the anti-brahman movement of the lower castes.

The Shiv Sena has reaped dividends from the labor movement. Since 1967 the Shiv Sena has formed unions, which only established themselves in the factories after a long struggle. Their ideology mixes regional nativism with a quite vague "national corporatism," in sharp contrast to the social conflicts of the city. The unions have, however, multiplied over the last 15 years, bringing in the employees of small workshops, taxi drivers, porters, and cobblers, and their influence is presently at its peak. Revealingly, the discourse on work, which can at the same time transform the world and regenerate the people, is not widely diffused by the unions of the Shiv Sena. This is usually reserved for the numerous local meetings that seek to mobilize the youth. For their part, the Shiv Sena unions have adopted the style common to most organizations of wage earners, open to all (despite the obvious communitarian polarization) and primarily concerned with extracting minor concessions from the management of the enterprises. Once they have placed their saffron flag at the factory gate, they are

more concerned with short-term results, an outcome of the very competitive union milieu. References to ennobling qualities of work are used to condemn specific social groups, in particular the Muslims. Some variants of this discourse make the Muslims prototypes of the "anti-social," allegedly living off the profits of trafficking in drugs and women and other criminal activities. The Muslims are rendered as paradigms of the parasite subsisting at the expense of "the others," namely the Hindus, the nation, or simply their hard-working neighbors. Notwithstanding the political capital to be made from this discourse and the recent trade union expansion, the theme of work seems to have lost its importance in the Shiv Sena over the last 15 years to the advantage of hygienic perspectives.

The central axes of the perspectives of action embody so many "positive values" of the Shiv Sena. These insistent and sometimes obsessively repeated values also seem to be remarkably unsettled, vacillating or, perhaps more aptly, reversible. Their promotion in party propaganda is accompanied, latently in everyday life and resoundingly in some circumstances, by the expression of their contraries. This duality perhaps best expresses the "primitivizing" tendency of the Shiv Sena and the mode of its ambiguous dalliance with the most contemporary representations of an imagination open to the world. Action in its globality side-steps powerlessness, exaggerated conceptions of hygiene coexist with the impure, utilitarianism gives way to squandering, the valorization of work regularly yields to the affirmation of rentiers and speculators.

Furthermore, two dimensions of action give rise to an intense and permanent turmoil. First, the issue of sacrifice. Shiv Sainiks emphasize that actions that can serve as the foundation for a better world are based on either the symbolic or real sacrifice of the best elements of the organization. However, the "supreme leader" and a number of high-level cadres have no inclination whatsoever to sacrifice themselves and

appear as martyrs. First, it is not the martyr but the individualistic hero whom they value, mixing Hindu references and the dominant themes of contemporary popular cinema. In reality they are not heroes either; for example, Thakre's shameful contortions when confronted with the threat of imprisonment have been mentioned on numerous occasions. Obviously, none of the leaders believe that they must shed their blood for the cause. They hold themselves to be valuable, have a quite hedonistic conception of life, and some of them consider the concept of a martyr an exclusively Muslim notion. It is among the subaltern cadres that the ethic of sacrifice is most sincerely expressed. It draws inspiration from several sources, foremost the example of Indian heroes in the struggle for independence, who are lauded by school and state, and references to Marathas fighting Moghul emperors. Certain Christian and Gandhian influences occupy subordinate, but noteworthy, positions in the realm of representations, coexisting with heroic legends constructed by the Communist Party around martyred workers and the living memory of victims of state repression during the traumatic events in the history of the city.²⁴ Countless militants of the Shiv Sena have since 1966 been felled by police bullets, although the average constable is strongly influenced by its ideology. The memory of those who fell is vividly fostered. Recently, branch leaders, municipal councilors, and deputies have been killed during internal organizational rivalries or in the context of their involvement in or, sometimes, opposition to trafficking and racketeering. The principles that inspire the new generation of martyrs appear to be quite unclear. This no doubt explains why the investment of the organization in the vindication of their example is so ambiguous.

The theme of liberation is fraught with even greater ambiguity. The Shiv Sena is an organization of the dominated aspiring to the status of those who dominate and a political expression of the subaltern élite.

To that end, this élite is prepared to employ the potential power of popular movements and aspirations; the Shiv Sena is both apt to make use of rhetoric of collective rather than individual liberation while simultaneously limiting its influence. They borrow their emancipatory themes, once again, from numerous levels, generally without mentioning their sources: the Shivaji epic, the anti-brahman movement, nationalist and Samyukt Maharashtra movements, the wounded feelings of Maharashtrians scorned in Mumbai, Dalit assertions, and finally from a combination of Christian and Muslim influences. While the attraction of liberatory action is common among workers and lower-ranked government employees, the group to be liberated varies disquietingly. The meaning of liberation also strikingly lacks clarity. According to time and circumstance, it is a question of freeing oneself from the oppression of the feudal lords, from the tutelage of politicians, from the privileges of the (Muslim) minority, from the power of hooligans, the domination of the Center, from foreign exploitation, from the disdain of the *sethlog* (Gujarati patrons), from the hold of backwardness, or from the vagaries of nature. Discourses on social emancipation borrow freely from the Shiv Sena's former Communist enemies, the academic vulgate, patriotic history, or from the anti-brahman tradition and are a regular feature of life in the Shiv Sena-dominated neighborhoods of the city. This is notably the case during hard times or when police attack the organization.

The Shiv Sena always attempts to appear at the forefront of spontaneous movements, whatever they may be, although subsequently this leads to impugning those who oppose its hegemony. In these contexts the government is an easy target, its obsessive fear of social troubles allowing the Shiv Sainiks to present themselves as liberators. However, the organization, particularly its high-level cadres, are much too committed to order for seditious remarks and protests to

become the dominant stance of the party. Its leaders are very apprehensive of movements that elude their control. Along with the issues of power, they particularly dread what would call into question their dream of a fusible society, that is a society that can be mobilized in the service of their historic cause. The example of the large textile strike is illustrative of the contradictions that paralyze them in this respect. The strike movement, which was to last nearly two years and severely disrupted Mumbai's economic life, developed as the culmination, or ultimate avatar, of a wave of combativeness of wage earners which had begun in 1977.²⁵ Discontent had smoldered for months in the 63 textile mills of the metropolis, and an indefinite strike was called in eight mills in October 1981. The leadership of the Shiv Sena could not remain insensible to the threat of being sidelined, as the workers turned to an independent with socialist tendencies, Datta Samant, who had come from the movement of the Congress Party. Thakre announced a day of strike in November 1981, proclaiming his intention to call for a general strike if the warning strike were to succeed. It was a massive success, but the organization retracted and became in a few weeks, under various pretexts, a foremost adversary of the conflict, as well as of its leader. It was only subsequent to their complete failure, underlined by renewed pogroms directed against Muslims, that the workers of Parel, Prabhadevi, Vorli and Lalbag — the textile quarters — returned to the Shiv Sena.

The Shiv Sena's relations to revolution are directly inscribed in the context of its ambivalent attitude towards the problematics of liberation and sacrifice. The Shiv Sena does not place revolution at the center of its political project which is, in any case, essentially vague and evolutionary. Nevertheless, they make use of certain revolutionary rhetoric. Once again, the references are multiple and quite contradictory. Savarkar is thus eclipsed by S. C. Bose, very often put forward

by cadres at intermediary levels and by the most active militants, while examples of revolutionary martyrs of the movement for independence, such as C. Azad and Baghat Singh, also constitute important sources of inspiration. The “movement for total revolution” of J.P. Narayan (Bihar, 1974)²⁶ considerably impressed the young Shiv Sainiks, above all the regional Hindi-speaking branches (Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh). He is quite well known in certain sections of the Shiv Sena movement in Mumbai, which are much less chauvinistic in this respect than appearances would suggest. The Naxalites — the revolutionary extreme Left of Marxist and secular ideology who exhibit a more calculated and more intense violence than the Shiv Sena — are notably, but inconsistently, popular among the fringes of youth and even among middle-level cadres.

However, it is above all in its own actions and origins — particularly in the movement for unity in Maharashtra, in the struggle for linguistic unity, in the caste conflict in Marathvada (1979),²⁷ or in border conflicts with neighboring states — that the Shiv Sena finds sources for its revolutionary rhetoric, which emerges in fits and starts. The same is the case regarding the riots that followed the clash in Ayodhya. In several sections of the cadres and active militants these events are analyzed *a posteriori* as a movement of revolutionary assertion by the masses, a moment of resistance to “the aggression of criminals,” rendered crucial and heroic by the “powerlessness” or the “betrayal” of the state. Finally, although much less representative, there are positive references to foreign movements, “fascist revolutions” for a few ideologues in near proximity of the leadership, anti-colonial struggles throughout the world in the 1960s, uprisings against Communism, and, finally in certain cases even the Islamic revolution in Iran. In the problematic of the organization, revolution is a complex association combining the restoration of order, renewal of

vigorous forces in society (in the context of a “conflict of élite”), and an assertion of the oppressed classes. Revolution is not prophecy, revelation, accomplishment, or transcendence. It is subject to the unobtrusive but tenacious depreciation of the politics with which the Shiv Sainiks are imbued. The intrusion of the masses on the scene is perhaps linked with the perspective of a “total cleansing,” as in the utopia of J. P. Narayan, but it is also in some way a blemish. Revolution is certainly one of the highest levels of actions, although it awakens fears in its hypothetical demiurges, as much as it fascinates them.

Several types of action are not overtly valued by the Shiv Sainiks, who can, however, devote themselves thereto privately, or even lead the organization to become unwillingly involved. Egalitarian and competitive action that has individual profit in view is foremost among the latter. The Shiv Sena officially aims at promoting a society of cooperation. It is reluctant to admit that, on the level of explicit references, individuals would or could be free, equal according to law, and capable of coming into an open conflict of interests. The judiciary, embodiment of the Just Sovereign Shivaji, alone could determine the place and function of each member and group in society. On the one hand, the struggle for life is an unavoidable fact in contemporary large cities in India, particularly in Mumbai. Through the positive relation which they maintain to the accumulation of power (inevitably a factor of inequality), social and economic competition fascinates the majority of young Shiv Sainiks. Those who have received an education have almost all integrated more or less simplistic types of egalitarianism into their complex of representations, which can co-exist with idealizations of hierarchy. The Shiv Sena and the Shiv Sainiks participate, finally, in the functioning and radicalization of the struggle for life (for popular sections) and competition and rivalry (for “petty bourgeois” sections) at numerous levels while

attempting at the same time — in solidarity with their putative battle against unemployment — to limit their expansion and some of their manifestations. The heroic ideal, always in some way hyper-individualistic as it is highly valued, is a conception of individuals who are no longer accountable to their families, friends, or their communities, which has a rather negative connotation when such behavior is not frankly diabolized. Once again sees here a “knot of tensions” in the Shiv Sena’s imaginations and attitudes, the evolution of which must be closely followed over the years to come.

Bureaucratic action, conservative and aimed at the continuity of order, structure, and institutions, is also not positively valued. Diatribes against red tape and pen pushers belong to the daily discourse of the organization. The Shiv Sena is, however, besieged within by an increasingly prolific bureaucracy, while it has for a long time had to adapt to a highly bureaucratized political and institutional context.

Destiny and Powerlessness

If it appears impossible to understand the Shiv Sena without presenting its valuation of action and the importance of the concretizations which it undertakes, it is also true that one cannot seriously understand this populist mass organization without considering the practices and perspectives that curtail or annihilate this action within the organization in direct relation to the representation and social integration of its members. External resistance also seems to exert a mobilizing effect. The consideration of destiny is foremost among its perspectives. The notion of destiny is not very cohesive because it is based on popular conceptions that are little valued and inconsistently constructed. It is nevertheless ubiquitous. References to destiny are to be found in the discourse of all types of the organization’s members. It is not certain that the cadres, or even the leaders, accord it less importance

than the workers in the textile quarters and the small street hawkers. Generally, only explicit cultural referents to a consideration of destiny, as present in all milieux, change.

The allusion to destiny as such is not often present in the discourses and practices of the Shiv Sena, notably in the urban milieu and among educated youth in which the high status of references to modernity and urbanity involves a strong self-censure of everything which appears to be “backward.” It is frequent in a relatively familiar context, or at an implicit level of the discourse acknowledged by the Shiv Sainiks, that they succumb to the significance of what they term destiny, the order of things, or sometimes tradition. It is not at all a clear concept, or a doctrine, or system of argumentation, but a mobile and essentially imprecise perception of reality, the variability of which often originates in the multiplicity of its collective dimensions. The recognition of its significance is closely linked with numerous processes of compromise with social and political realities, which hinder, relativize, or annihilate the results of the diverse forms of the Shiv Sena’s action. Beside its activism and in direct correlation with the exacerbation ensuing from its actions, the Shiv Sena thus appears in a new light, as authentic and reversible as the socio-political context in which it must operate. It is first an organization of pragmatic people, then an unstable group surrounded or overwhelmed by realities which go beyond it. The local, chauvinist point of view partially enters into this perspective. The idea, or indeed the possibility, of changing the world has very narrow limits for a local populist organization. The Shiv Sainiks appear, moreover, particularly avid to find out, that is to set and consolidate, their limits. They fear the action that they extol with so much constancy and regain with relief the world of destinies.

The massive institution of political patronage, for example, is frequently recognized by the Shiv Sainiks

and those close to them as an expression of destiny, that of India and Maharashtra, that of the people (the poor and powerless), and finally that of the Shiv Sena. It is the question of a phenomenon as fraught with consequence as it is variable in the contemporary metropolis. In the context of inegalitarian and tense social relations to which they lead, notable and lesser-known racketeers organize the destabilization of the most unstable milieux, to which they subsequently propose order and the onerous security of their patronage. They thus, more or less, protect people against their own wrongdoing (speculation, expulsion, etc.) and only secondarily against authoritarian tendencies and certain vague "neo-liberal" impulses²⁸ of the state machinery. In this context, relatively stable political systems are established, which can be qualified as "neo-feudal;" the ferocious struggle between the different fief holders and eventual challengers is part of the setting. In flagrant contradiction to its discourse on the utility and effectiveness of cleansing, the Shiv Sena became and remains involved to a very great extent in the installation and functioning of these criminal systems. Only the Congress Party surpassed it in Maharashtra, in 1992, but such was the cynicism exercised on the question of moral values and political principles that this kind of involvement would apparently not represent a problem. Of course, these systems of "political income" relate to the party, in which they are invariably relativized and rationalized. Their recent development, when the organization dominated the municipal corporation in Mumbai, nevertheless called the Shiv Sena's capacities for action into question to the extent that the leaders felt the necessity to react. All branch leaders are graduates of 1992. Thakre recruited others in the course of interviews held in a large hotel in the northern suburbs,²⁹ illustrating, moreover, a revealing way of functioning. The constitution of fiefs, shortly thereafter, continued and became worse than previously, as the propensity of

deputies to neglect the less well-off among their voters again became conspicuous, as did the tendency towards a middle-class outlook of those elected from popular milieux. Thus, destiny has precise and highly political embodiments. Violence is also prevalent each day between members of families, milieux, nations, or parties, the perpetuation of brutal relations with the state, or in the cruelty of political maneuvering. The entire range is very frequently interpreted in terms of "decadence," the destiny of man and that of India appearing to consist of weakness and mediocrity interspersed with bursts of holy fury.

"No one escapes," "we are all compromised;" such are the refrains, certainly possessing stabilizing virtues, which make up the everyday philosophy of destiny in the organization, in particular at the lower levels of the machinery. Destiny appears as a mixture of rationalization patched together with intolerable realities, negotiation with their own contradictions, more or less calculated submission to those possessing power, and the consideration of the fatality of degeneration. The Shiv Sena's frequent tendency to mix concepts (not recognized as such) of reactionary brahmins with the cruel experience of popular milieux and its inclination to remain far removed from apologies for action — which are also incarnations of destiny — are even more dissatisfying than the tendency of the organization's elected office holders and cadres towards corruption. The latter is integrated in the ensemble bequeathed by the "Congress culture," which is the common property of all political tendencies. The Congress, its almost irremovable political rule, and its deleterious influence on the domain of politics are often diagnosed as the basis of evil (of destinies, of decadence) by the most politicized elements. However, it is done with an ambiguous leniency, for no one knows where "Congress" stops, combining as it does organization, sphere of influence, culture, and patronage system. Everyone has been Congress and

may again be in the future. Certainly, faced with expressions of what one recognizes to be a mediocre fatality, the Shiv Sena is often presented as the heroic exception. It is, however, well known that the organization must resolve to take fatality into account, and one frequently anticipates it to be evolving in this direction (a process that is, in fact, occurring). Faced with numerous shady deals which appear to overwhelm them, the Shiv Sainiks are frequently tempted to assert that they only conform to higher laws, vague and regrettable, which direct humanity — or at least this world — devoid as it is of justice and perfection. They make no bones about it.

More elaborate notions of destiny evolve on the political scene and in the organizational sphere. The significance of astrological considerations, vital among the entire political class in India, is not unknown to the Shiv Sena. In this regard, the setting is not very simple. Cadres from the milieu of employees, for example, seem to be less credulous concerning the planets than the racketeers devoid of the nuances of the Congress Party. Some reject the principle of individual destinies written by the stars and interpreted by the *pandits* by invoking diverse references to action. Some profess to scorn astrologers, associating anti-brahman culture and rationalism. Others, finally, without doubt the most numerous, make use of malicious gossip and remnants of popular culture, willingly suspecting incompetence or extravagance on the part of the upper-caste specialists who have a near monopoly on authorized prediction, but, at the same time, recognizing the pre-eminence of these specialists. They have, at times, a tendency to “force” or “invent” the destiny that suits them, peppering their discourse with visionary superstitions borrowed from peasant practices, which they revere but from which they occasionally intentionally distance themselves. Youth from the popular milieu, for their part, are steeped in an atmosphere of “astrological gossip” derived from

bits of knowledge, associating several traditions with a fragmented symbolic coherence. This is foremost the case among poorly educated adolescents from upper strata, but also among college students. This ambivalence is distinguished by the importance of globalizing and apocalyptic predictions. References to the theme of Nostrodamus, directly or indirectly borrowed from European sources, the “sectarian” astrological sub-culture, and above all the popular press are, for example, continually mixed with ambiguous praise for science and techniques taken from academic discourse and from the media or popularizing magazines for youth. Deculturation thus insinuates itself in what has until recently remained a preserve of Hindu thematics, or at least references, constituting a stronghold of cultural coherence that is not very militant but is remarkably stable.

The main characteristic of this eclectic astrology, which is schematic and universal and disregards neither Plato nor inter-continental ballistic missiles, is the simplification of the scene (presenting an ever-evolving humanity faced with its enemies — Muslims, Pakistan, etc. in the Shiv Sainiks interpretation). The Shiv Sena’s simplified “astrology” does not require practices such as individual purification, ritual sacrifices through the intermediary of a brahman, the purchase of stones symbolizing the planets and their powers, pilgrimages, or other forms of penitence.³⁰ There was an upsurge of these themes, which drag on perpetually in the educational establishments in the Indian Union, at the time of the demolition of the Ayodhya mosque. Generally, the numerous militants of the organization are unable to combine the pragmatic belief in the stars and cynical and brutal action in the service of personal interests as effectively as the notables of the parties in power. A terrible destiny looms ahead, pitted against the brutal negations of those who must give concrete expression to it (the cadres and the rationalist leaders), at least in the

imagination of the Indian urban youth influenced or mobilized by the Shiv Sena. The organization does not appear to be able to do more than contribute to its aggravation, demonstrating thereby its fundamental powerlessness. It loses its role as creator or midwife of the reality that the problematics of action tend to attribute to it.

The *culture of vengeance*, a practically ubiquitous fact and powerful structuring agent of social relations, creates a particular mixture of destiny and action. It assumes a considerable role in the life of the Shiv Sena as a hybrid reality alternating references to actions and their contraries. A number of forms of rhetoric employ other referents, aggregating them in a more or less disguised manner. The sentiment and practice of collective vengeance is particularly embodied during large riots, but it also intervenes on innumerable occasions in everyday life. These are eminently "popular,"³¹ that is to say, in this case, "interclass" contributions and are linked with situations of penury and deprivation in contemporary social life without being reducible to milieux or cultures. Very particular historical products, they seem to have been constructed during the course of the 19th century, in the presently understood meaning, as systems of cross-retaliation based in the setting of "communities" (in this context, wholly with reference to blood, honor, and the mode of shared life). From this system is derived the basic principle of collective responsibility. The chain of vengeance is atomized as a somewhat primitive social relationship (like many products of modernization) based on mass movements and representations. One recognizes therein the Other, but in a very specific manner: as a collective from whom tribute is to be exacted.

The exchange of lives competes with mere exchange. In the context of a culture of vengeance, one closely associates notions explicitly considered as "noble" (often introduced or transformed by coloniza-

tion) such as history, religion (more or less atomized religion of the family and everyday social practice), or the nation with the basic concerns of young gang-leaders on the street corner, notably the control of petty thieves, the honor of mothers, and the protection of sisters. Numerous episodes in the culture of mass vengeance, historical and historicizable, also express class tensions. It intervenes foremost in all contexts in which the resentment of the dominated does not avail of organized channels of expression. Servants, numerous among the supporters of the organization, for example, sometimes take their revenge on both life and their masters when bouts of communitarian vengeance break out, increasingly centered on the Hindu-Muslim antagonism. The culture of vengeance, however, goes far beyond this actual historical drama, rooted particularly in the Partition of 1947. The idea of vengeance is, for example, ubiquitous in the cinema, while revenge assumes a significant place in the diverse expressions of nationalism. One must repay what one has suffered, a hundred-fold if possible; diverse conceptions of virile honor are combined in this respect with simplistic exigencies of equality. There exists in vengeance an element comprised of deliberate action: taking out arms, reacting, not failing to be included, burning, looting, "putting them in their place," "giving them a good lesson," "setting an example," are concrete actions. These acts at minimum fill the columns of the press and often mobilize the forces of the state, provoking grave political crises. For a number of Shiv Sainiks, primarily the young people, war is the ultimate stage of action, but vengeance is far from being considered the highest level of war. Its accomplishment involves numerous dirty and dishonorable acts with regard to moral principles explicitly put forward by the militants or regarding principles that influence them from outside. The role of the organization then often consists of producing rhetoric which would place this blemish and degradation in the services of

higher interests, but not many are really deceived.

Furthermore, vengeance is manifested as a particularly expressive embodiment of fatality. It concretizes the tendency towards self-destruction in the popular milieu in which the neighbor becomes the enemy because of lack of space. It implacably illustrates the entropic worlds in which loyalties are so unstable that one attempts to create them by searching for eternal enemies. The culture of collective revenge appears to be rooted in the mists of time and to symbolize a destiny of stagnation. It is not surprising to see the emergence of a fascinated repulsion, which brings the Shiv Sainiks into step with the destabilized sections of poor urban youth during periods of tension between social groups.

Culturally Constructed Destiny: Karma and the Shiv Sena

References to destiny are characteristic of nearly all members of the Shiv Sena, whether they are Hindus or not. There are, in fact, numerically limited but symbolically very important contingents of Parsis, neo-Buddhists, Christians, and even Muslims in the movement. The reference to *karma*, the specific socio-religious destiny forged by Hindu conceptions of the universe, is notably distinguished from informal references to destiny, whether seen as fatality, cycle of vengeance, or as the result of the influence of cosmic forces.³² The notion of karma upheld by the Maharashtrian Hindus contains nothing particularly specific, as the region has several influential centers of Brahmin orthodoxy, among which is Pune. It makes of life a passage, related to a particular status, which is inscribed in a series of incarnations, the unfolding of which is conditioned by the observance of *dharma*, the socio-economic order "illustrated" by the hierarchy of caste.³³ Status groups are the elements of this socio-cosmic order, individual acts being accountable for the aggregate equilibrium of the universe. It is per-

haps at the level of *varna* (states, orders, "colors") configurations that the Maharashtrian situation differs from numerous other Indian situations, as a very strong group of dominant castes, forming a relative majority, claim the kshatriya status (princes, groups associated with political power) without — although it is classic — this claim being accepted by everyone and in all circumstances. It is the Marathas with whom the Shiv Sena identifies itself, taking up the legend of Shivaji Bhonsle and modernizing it. In the usual conception of karma, the duty-destiny (*dharma*) of the kshatriyas is to govern (well). In the edifying story (the myth-history) of Shivaji, which structures the popular and Shiv Sainik representations in this regard, the sovereign embodied a perfect expression of the socio-economic order, which cannot be understood without reference to his close relationship to his brahman chaplain (Ramdas) and his direct relationship to the divinity (*bhavani-durga*). Thakre, who is a highly gifted actor in this role, recognizably draws inspiration as much from Ramdas as from Shivaji. He is not a Maratha but a Kayashtha (educated high caste, placed below the brahmans in hierarchic rituals). He strikes a plurality of outward postures, recently embodied by his refusal to take the reins of the provincial government and, at the same time, assumes attitudes of one inspired, transfixed by divine forces which surpass him, although none of these attitudes prevent the parallel expression of solid political pragmatism.

It is, in any case, not possible to reduce the Shiv Sena and its members to categories of karma, even taking into account popular and divergent interpretations of the latter. By placing a strong accent on the notion of (social, humane) justice, the cadres and militants of the organization, perfectly in agreement at this level, introduce into the notion of karma, first of all, heroic action in the service of the entire society and of the organizational spirit focused on the electoral tactics. Considered in this way, the two categories extend

beyond the traditional role of the kshatriyas. Although quite variable and mobile, the notions of justice advanced by the Shiv Sainiks cannot at all be reduced to the reproduction of the order of varnas. To enable the reign of justice, which is a noble and valorized manner of demonstrating power, is one of the most obsessional dreams of the leaders and cadres. They draw their inspiration as much from super-heroic films produced in Mumbai and from their school cultures as from the Shivaji epic, adopting in addition bits of concepts from S.C. Bose, socialist theoreticians, Gandhians, the RSS, and emancipation movements of the lower castes. However, by making a national hero of the legendary prince, provided in advance of his times with a Unitarian concern for collective identity which disregarded, exceeded, or displaced the relevance of caste preoccupations, the Shiv Sainiks consistently call into question the order and categories which they extol elsewhere. The fate accorded to the main symbol of the organization, the roaring tiger which evokes both the Shivaji epic and the goddess Bhavani, lies at the center of these ambiguities.

Parallel to these references rooted in popular cultures, regionalism, and in nationalism, the aggressive tiger symbolizes, in effect, the impetuous action of the youth. The latter become under its aegis a general category, quite essential for serving as a central emblem, which stands in contradiction to most traditional representations. This youth, collective midwife of history and a multitude of individual heroes — these are the contradictions between “Shiv Sainism” and the milieux in which it is integrated — does not bear the stamp of a caste if it can embody, in the context of a simplification of religious concepts, the return of the *avatar*.³⁴ The Shiv Sena wants to be the organization of all Maharashtrians, of all Hindus and all Indians, as much as the expression of “Maratha genius.” The Shiv Sainiks are, therefore, notwithstanding modalities which vary according to circumstances, all symbolic

Marathas. Acceding to a rank and a community by filling in a registration form and by sharing organizational membership or a combat plan does not belong to the traditional world of caste and the ideology of karma. The ranks of the shakhas have always been open to all those who accept the leader and the symbols of the movement. One evidently does so by referring to the example of Shivaji, but this concrete practice can only be understood by introducing other references, notably the ideals of egalitarian citizenship, popular among the educated youth, and the project of fusional nationalism developed by Savarkar. The tendency to constantly confuse Maratha and Maharashtrian in discourses and practices of the organization well illustrates the essential ambiguities of the Shiv Sena in this respect.

Preoccupations with status are continually affirmed and negated by the principles and practices of the Shiv Sena. It would be a mistake to attempt to unmask the arrogance and the Maratha interests beneath the urban modern and leveling guise. Quite on the contrary, it is a perpetual process of balancing, which can be very destabilizing for the actors themselves. In the branches of the Shiv Sena that have developed outside Maharashtra, the explicit reference to Shivaji, to his exceptional destiny, and to the Marathas becomes less frequent, when it does not entirely disappear. In the Punjab, Bhopal, or in Harayana, the “Shiv” in “Shiv Sena” more readily designates the god rather than the hero. However, one finds in these branches a number of Rajputs, as well as aborigines, Sikhs (in Chhattisgarh), henchmen, hooligans, and policemen, who all have something to do with the myth and kshatriya culture. They play therein the roles of foundational elements of the organization and of creators of ideology, without which the basic contradictions between the Hindu national project, the general consideration of the youth, and the restricted cultural character of these groups would never be

resolved. In almost all the outside shakhas, the preoccupation with justice, compared to that which exists in Mumbai, loses ground to caste representations and above all to their radical modernization in the form of the idealization of "individual competition for merit," categorized as "Western" and "modern." This process is today advanced by the supporters of the political hegemony of the upper castes, who still form the majority of the educated strata. The refusal of job quotas by Bal Thakre's organization, which is rooted in a real contradiction between a culture and the support by the lower castes, a will for equality repudiating caste and high-caste prejudices among the cadres, has often been seen outside Maharashtra as unequivocal support of the cause of upper-caste students, to which it was not always reducible. Numerous students belonging to the most privileged milieux and influenced by ideologies of the extreme Right have joined the movement on that basis. This tendency does not preclude the exacerbation of representations of fusional unity of the Hindu community that explicitly repudiate any reference to caste.

In the outside versions of "Shiv Sainism," as well as at the heart of the most recent crises which have troubled the Maharashtrian organization, the relation to the notion of karma then becomes more tense, exacting and decomposing at the same time. According to Hindu categories, destiny is no longer viewed as a personal and socio-cosmic matter, causing all levels of a complex identity to intervene. It tends to introduce more or less affirmed absolutes separated from their environment, such as humanity or the Hindu community. This restriction of humanity, which a valuation of Unitarian collectives underlies, is accompanied by brutal simplifications of notions of identity. It is no longer appraised as the restoration of an order under the guidance of an inspired individual, of a divine avatar or transcendent model. Finally, it appears, in certain cases, only to be able to evolve towards total ca-

tastrophe. Because the Shiv Sainiks are modern young people and the international situation does not render their ravings absurd, the foreseen apocalypse is readily described in the form of nuclear war, either on a world scale or with neighboring Pakistan. It nevertheless partially adopts the Brahmin descriptions of the end of the "age of Kali," in which as an ancient prophecy notes "the rivers will flow upstream, it will rain blood and the earth will grow dark with shame," radicalizing pessimistic visions of "world destiny," replaced by the "future of civilization" which is associated therewith. The cyclic perception is, however, made absolute, this cycle of decadence being seen as the last opening into a hypothetical and highly restricted realm of bliss. In Jammu and Kashmir and in Chhattisgarh, the young Shiv Sainiks of the organization founded in the 1980s have taken this type of problematic the farthest. In the first case, the situation of civil war marked by the disastrous expulsion of Hindus from the Kashmir Valley, appears as the trauma which gives impulse to the exacerbation and simplification of perspectives. In the case of Chhattisgarh, the sentiment of ritual downfall and political dereliction of the old Rajput elite seems to constitute the determining factor. In Mumbai, one again found themes of this type in 1993, themes integrating the idea of a renaissance — reserved for a very small minority of those who would have passed the ordeal of fire — among educated youth in the quarters most affected by Hindu-Muslim opposition.

From the Complex to the Simple, Towards the Massification of Perspectives

A fundamental variation in the relationship to reality, constantly interfering in the process of consolidation of identitarian references and the fossilization of doctrines, forms the basis of the Shiv Sena and the social movement that accompanies and sometimes submerges it. The tendency is in no way exclusive to

this organization. On the contrary, it is manifested throughout the political domain, notably in tendencies which are partially disengaged from the control of the paternalist elite of the state characteristic of the political culture in the Nehru era, without assuming stands of coherent and explicit rupture. The Shiv Sena is comparable to the student-led regionalist movements (Assam, Telengana, Jharkhand), to guerrillas — explicitly secular, but which, in this case, can be secondary — of the JVP type and the Eelam Tigers in Sri Lanka, to “culturo-populist” movements such as the Tamil Dravidian parties — the DMK of the 1960s, and finally to the BSP of Kanshi Ram and the radical wing of the Dalit movements in Maharashtra. One finds, in the context of contrasting or overtly opposed ideological reference points, the same inclination to form hybrid realities by making use of wild modernist rhetoric as well as of the contraries, traditions constructed in the 19th century. The same culture of the “angry young man,” the same fascination for rigorous moral, cultural and political exigencies — which can only be denied in practice, the same centrality of the reference to justice, the same course towards provocation and violence embody this hybridization.

A protean capacity is required for the Shiv Sena to adapt itself to the changing times while sharpening its tendencies towards the malaise perceptible among youth and in proposing itself as a versatile model of affirmation and as a system of easily adaptable symbols which lead to success. It is because this system relates to short-term political situations that it has become more or less consciously the hallmark of a Shiv Sena which now offers itself as a national alternative and not because of its (indiscernible) programs, or its (changing) ideas, or its (shrewd) tactics. The generalization of its model hardly appears to be hampered by the initial chauvinistic intentions, by its numerous obsessions with borders, or by the parodies of feudality³⁵ which serve to establish the Shiv Sainiks. On the con-

trary, the organization apparently revitalizes itself via these proofs of pragmatism and contradictions, which appear nearly everywhere transposable at the expense of simple emblematic inflections. The character of a mobile hodge-podge, in which one scarcely perceives in the beginning the “self-radicalizing” propensities, seems to make it both attractive and easy to appropriate. The cultural background of the Mumbai Shiv Sena was very far from being simple, and we shall consider this below. It is still relatively complex. However, it is its movement — from an historic conjunction founded on complicated itineraries and varied cultural references to polarized and simplistic worlds articulated around unequivocal drives — which distinguish the organization and make it a product of its time and its society, capable of stamping its mark on all types of tendencies.

Long subsisting between action, destiny, and karma, even in Mumbai, are zones of non-interference linked with identitarian complexities (rural-urban identities of caste, group, quarter) and with the mode of functioning of society. The different levels were not experienced as realities or contradictory principles. On the contrary, one saw complementary elements of a social life that would have one speak of caste on the occasion of marriages, of community in the streets, and of nation in the schools. Each notion of collective identity availed of its own domain of relevance, despite the oppressive propensities of several versions of nationalism, the authoritarianism of the state, and totalitarian tendencies of certain perspectives of modernization which combined to produce the state of emergency from 1975 to 1977. This vague but slightly polarized dimension of the social whole, which could also be the most vigorous, seems to be in danger of disappearing.

Evolution apparently proceeds from phenomena outside the reach of political intervention, such as the diffusion of models in mass identification, the adoption

of the ideology of the "middle class," the regulation of social attitudes in the large city, the use of the expedient of competition and of fantasies which are centered thereon, or the growing popularity of "anti-caste" ideologies in all domains. The result of this evolution and convergence is a collection of rather schizophrenic attitudes. This ensemble, which cannot be exhaustively discussed here, seems to take place behind the present evolution towards identitarian, one-dimensional thinking. The Shiv Sena and the entire scope of Hindu nationalism is repeatedly confronted with changes which they have neither impelled nor controlled, but which largely proceed from their recent development. This is particularly the case in the context of constantly renewed and simplified constructions of the enemy required for the mobilization of the organization's troops. They are subjected to these changes which they sometimes attempt to counter and with increasing frequency heighten. In this context, that which constitutes the elements of a fragile complexity (depolarized identity, fragmented on several levels) often tends to become a tense corpus of untenable contradictions that are expressed by the propensity towards ambivalence, a tendency to place itself alternately on the opposite poles which are distinguishable from an older ambiguity.

Action becomes absolute, and it is less than ever a question of negotiating its rhythm and its norms. The discourse on modernity is exacerbated, as well as the ostentatious cult of some recently constructed traditions (Shivaji festival, etc.). Karma and destiny also assume their roles, their perspectives harden, and it is less often the question of rendering them tractable. Radical powerlessness gives rise to dreams of absolute power. Compared to the petty-bourgeois section of the upper castes, avid for cultural coherence, which constitutes the BJP-RSS affiliation, it is specifically the Shiv Sena that profits particularly well in crisis situations. It nourishes itself on the sudden appearance of

the masses, simplified to the extreme, as it draws sustenance from their destabilization. Moreover, the organization shows itself capable of misrepresenting certain troubled situations and managing them to its advantage. It greatly contributes to the disarray and contradictions of destabilized milieux of the large Indian contemporary city, being almost systematically one thing and its opposite, raising its hysterical nature to ever-greater heights before experiencing spectacular downfalls. It attracts to itself all protests and polarizes all fears by practicing the transgression of cult and order and by giving the impression of transforming scattered revolts and dispersed frustrations into an indomitable force.

After 30 years of evolution in that direction, one could think that the march towards simplification of perspectives, the "emblemization" of cultural points of reference, and the polarization of political practices would come to an end. That is not at all the case, a fact which may be connected with both the unwieldiness of the social group and the powerlessness of an organization which dreams of so many radical actions. The practices and references of the Shiv Sena retain in this context a significant degree of complexity. This dimension refers as much to its tormented history as to the variety of milieux in which it is integrated. The increasingly pressing invocation of brutal notions of rationality, of the desire to master nature, or of hygienic obsessions is very often made tractable in routine activities by a "feudal" or "neo-feudal" functioning. In this feudal framework the controlled territory (the fief) and the leader demand allegiance, while everything else can be negotiated to adjust the countless specific treatments of very diverse groups, including the most obsessional enemy of the given moment, thereby gaining a nearly institutional freedom for the city. The terrible perspectives of utilitarian cleansing are thus frequently reduced to rhetorical figures, briefly concretized by exemplary acts of violence. The conception of

society and the world as a field in which forces are expressed, among which are those of people and mass movements, a conception at the basis of some of the most brutal tendencies, is for its part modulated and made tractable by communitarian networks and the power of notables who play an enormous role in the organization. This role is strengthened each time the latter comes to power.

The structuring of political reflexes and conceptions of the world by the gang-leader on the street corner (*dada*, signifying also "big brother") and the bond of protection, combining ties of affection and allegiance that associate brother and sister in the popular milieu, provide constant impulses towards a certain humanization of practices and representations. One must ascribe to these local actors the Shiv Sena's attempts, which despite everything are noteworthy and numerous, to make the presence of the organization a force that renders crisis conditions more viable and humane (unemployment, the scorn of the élite, the dehumanizing effects of the dualism of the organized-unorganized, land pressure and so on). However, through their inclination to impede the actions of the Shiv Sainiks and lead them to the powerlessness they so greatly fear, such conditions also impede tendencies towards violence and hysteria. When they briefly achieve global coherence, the Shiv Sainiks tend to destroy in and around themselves elements of complexity (for example, the neo-feudal construction) to the advantage of representations and practices which are traversed and motivated by an extreme tension. Their notorious incapacity concretely to construct an alternative form of political organization in India, is, therefore, not surprising, even though they are inspired by the categories of nationalism of Savarkar and the example of Shivaji. They are not at all reducible to their capacity for destruction, but their unity only exists in an absolute manner in moments of paroxysm.

The cult of force, the fascination with strength, the valorization of virility, the obsession with power, and the concern to master nature form a very revealing aggregate in the conception of the most active cadres in the Shiv Sena. Of course, they only now and then can occupy the forefront of the scene. However, they always constitute a latent configuration in which the most culturally typified perspectives (with an accent on virility) tend, moreover, to regress to the advantage of more concentrated and destabilizing forms of entrancing power. This power acts as a type of drug; for the Shiv Sainiks and those who follow them, the effect thereof is accentuated as the modernization of the social milieu progresses. At the end of the progression towards radicalization, a dramatic and disenchanting world emerges, and, convinced of its relentless end, the members realize with diverse expressions of rage or despair that they have broken with the cosmos, as well as with their nearest neighbors. It is in this context of decomposition and perpetual distress that the search is initiated for a single and stable enemy able to serve in the reconstruction of notions of personal and collective identity that have broken adrift. The refusal of determinism, inscribed in the modernist themes of action to which the Shiv Sena subscribes, thus changes very often, and apparently with an increasing frequency and absoluteness, into particularly narrow and constraining forms of determinism that one endeavors to impose on others (Muslims, minorities, foreigners). In these conditions, the persistent weight of anti-modern or a-modern considerations, such as destiny or karma, exacerbates the situation when notions are mixed to produce *hybrids* of conceptions, increasingly more difficult to manage by reasonable procedures, but also increasingly susceptible to the violent and simplistic efforts of the manipulators of symbols. The Shiv Sainiks gradually find themselves reduced to this role which many of them had not intended. It is primarily the badly controlled infu-

sion of power — of which capitalism is one expression — into society by means of contemporary competitive and liberal practices and the situation of the frustrating weakness of the subaltern strata and new “urban savages” that result in processes of uncontrolled fusion of categories. The “traditional” did not constitute at any time a discernible central reality; it is therefore liable to autonomous intervention. At the end of the reckoning, the Shiv Sainiks appear at the same time to be “pirates of the large city”³⁶ who express that term’s implicit “modernity” and also a manifestation of nostalgia. Their ideology is somewhat wedged between social and ritual orders which they have never entirely known, but which they tend to idealize more or less naively.

Violence is at all points at the rupture and outcome of the Shiv Sainik enterprise. It co-exists very closely with a stubborn, albeit rather nebulous, irenic dream of a society of equals in which the leader causes benevolent justice to reign, but it evidently also introduces its own norms, habits, and constraints. It is not possible to minimize the role of the recourse to violence to a simple method. That is to say, part of the brutal acts perpetuated by the Shiv Sena — and all actors in the milieu of Indian politics — correspond to deliberate actions, effective in their field and more or less rationally orchestrated. Very enlightening illustrations of this tendency are the manner in which strategies of tension are regularly conducted, or the fact that the Shiv Sena does not shy away from the most barbarous of acts, making of them arguments which are politically negotiable at any time. However, it would be a mistake to confine oneself to that and reduce this mass organization, which combines thousands of ordinary destinies centered on work, quarter, and family, to a clique of professionals who are very qualified in violence. What precisely characterizes the organization is the popularization of new forms of violence, while it at the same time provides legitimacy

and justifications for an old popular (and less popular) violence. Every generation discovers brutality and its most dehumanizing aspects in a different manner. This profoundly and specifically marks the organization.

In the last three decades, violence seems to have become greater in intensity, cruelty, and “modernity” (industrial efficiency), and each experience constitutes a degree of evolution which no one controls. At no level do the Shiv Sainiks have a monopoly on political and social violence in India, or even in Mumbai alone. They have learned much from the state and their living conditions and have borrowed a great part of the brutal ways of making politics from the Congress Party. They have been imbued with the history of intrinsically violent cities and been marked by situations in which human life was of no great value. At this level, the organization assumes multiple and quite contrasting roles which expose a new facet of its ambiguity. It serves as a rampart against certain types of violence, such as acts of domestic violence, neighborhood conflicts, racketeering, and police harassment. The organization radicalizes other forms of violence, above all the conflict with foreigners. It exercises and tames latent violence, and regulates, in its manner, violence of a cathartic, liberating or sacred nature. However, it tends, above all, at the end of its recent evolution to draw boundaries in the social ensemble to determine who can be protected and who can, or must, be exposed to the lethal forces of an era considered to be inevitably violent. Violence assumes meaning in this connection and the Shiv Sainiks appear to many people as the midwives of a certain truth. The boundaries they draw, however, remain vague in relation to their complex conceptions of political organization and social life. But processes operating outside their control — sanitationism in the large cities, the spatial separation of rich and poor, the removal or confinement of the latter, the emergence of

avaricious, well-off classes who take themselves to be the nation — as well as changes within the organization move in the direction of a simplification of themes and a hardening of borders and boundaries. Violence tends, and no doubt will continue, to become increasingly “useful” and systemic.

Furthermore, in direct relation to violence and its dehumanizing tendencies, the particular significance of aesthetic considerations must be underlined. The founders of the Shiv Sena are aesthetes in their domain and their culture. From the beginning, art has held a considerable place in their perspectives. One could speak of Thakre’s intense relation to theater and the fact that his discourse is on the nature of representation. One could evoke the family’s passion for visual representation, the endeavors to “embellish” the city of Mumbai, placarding and wall painting, the many attempts to intervene in the cinema world, or the innumerable artistic manifestations sponsored by the Shiv Sena in popular quarters. The Shiv Sena as a whole, with its movement and “the people,” is considered by some of its founders to be an aesthetic manifestation. There is no lack of expression of this concern to make its mark on the world, or to reduce or transcend its relations to the latter on the level of aesthetic emotion. It is sufficient to participate in a large mass meeting of the party at Shivaji Park to be convinced of this. Although art frequently expresses that which is strongest in humanity and the most humane, and although the leaders of the Shiv Sena are not insensitive to this aspect of things, one would nevertheless tend to think that their politico-aesthetic intervention is better expressed in unbridled violence and the most dramatic of tensions. The matter of life and death certainly has structured cultural antecedents which are highly valued in Hindu tradition (e.g. the Mahabharata), but the way the Shiv Sena presents them is both a very modern misappropriation and a reflection of a highly “kitschy” and outdated medioc-

ity. It is also not irrelevant to consider that leaders in the central group of the organization and the changing fringes of militants are, to a greater or lesser degree, quite aware of this. And no doubt it is at this level that they would most closely approach European Fascists and the Nazis.³⁷

Religion: to Revive or to Simplify

Contemporary secular critics of the Shiv Sena often tend to question the popularity of the organization by denying the quality and authenticity of its religious practice. The argument, which curiously appears frequently among those on the Left, bears witness to the particular evolution of contemporary Indian politics, in which Communists could well be the final experts on the Vedas while secularists pose as defenders of popular religious practices in the name of inter-communitarian harmony. All of the Shiv Sena’s opponents readily describe the organization whose symbol is the tiger as a self-interested attempt of cynics using religion to come to political power by shamelessly manipulating symbols of proved effectiveness. Religion would be for the Shiv Sena just one more field of action, made relevant by the intensity of the religious sentiments of the masses and the “weight of tradition.”

These assertions refer to certain established facts. The religious sentiments of the leaders, notably Thakre and his family, seem to be of no great consistency. The “supreme leader” appears to have emulated for a long time Savarkar, atheist on the plane of personal convictions and Hindu as concerns the valorization of symbols of collective identification. This type of criticism of the Shiv Sena, which is, furthermore, more or less discernibly rooted in Christian and Muslim criteria for religious practice — a form of faith presupposing separation from the creator, which is not a central tenet among Hindus — nevertheless tends to regard the part as the whole. Such critiques deeply misconstrue the roots of an organization whose reli-

gious practices are perfectly authentic and representative of its time, as well as of the milieu in which it is integrated. To understand what takes place in this connection, it is first necessary to stress that the Shiv Sena does not fit into a single religious tradition, but involves rather several currents, a diversity ensuing quite normally from the large city and its intermixing. In some circumstances, this multiplicity is admitted and even encouraged, but appears to become less prolific with the years. Then, the religious practices and sentiments related to established traditions are constantly placed in a position of interference with "quasi-religious" practices and objects ensuing from current experience, of the constructions of the Shiv Sena, or of the fragments of the modern enterprise which the organization is called upon to manage. More or less controlled combinations or hybrid creations thus constantly operate between the two series of religious and para-religious references within the context of the organization and in the milieu in which it evolves. The Shiv Sena and the religious are atomized, finally, which is to say that the interference and evolution inherent in religious categories are produced according to their own norms and in particular spheres, even within the organization. Certain dynamics at work at that level influence the organization, without the cadres or leaders appearing desirous, or capable, of intervening.

The religious practice of the movement is rooted, firstly, in the popular religious culture that develops an ensemble of familiar cults with deep rural roots articulated around such practices as pilgrimages and small ritual sacrifices (*pujas*). The variable ideologies are dominated by a pietist tone and are very strongly influenced by a religion of effusion (*bhakti*) which, without caste distinction, gives access to the sacred³⁸ according to the genuineness of sentiment. It is a question of a densely arrayed practice, following the rhythm of the seasons and local festivals, in which

belief — personal faith — assumes an important place. Different organized religious groups (scholars, monks, mendicants, etc.) evolve in the framework of this current which appears to dominate popular (non-brahman) religious practice throughout Maharashtra. They are present even in the workers' quarters of Mumbai in the context of continual "urban" relations. This living tradition appeared in 12th-century Maharashtra with a succession of great saints who left important writings and founded pilgrimage centers which continue to be very active.

At the beginning of his political career, the urban and modern skeptic, Thakre, on several occasions let slip disagreeable remarks regarding the tradition of *bhakti* saints, notably described as "religion for women." He nevertheless rapidly toned down his criticism in the face of protests by cadres and militants in the popular quarters. With its texts written in Marathi and its deep roots in the Maharashtra countryside, the religion of saints which, to an extent was that of Shivaji, has everything needed to satisfy a nationalist. Since 1985 there have been no further disparaging remarks of this type, which perhaps also contain the scorn of a Shivaite for the more Vaishnavite currents in which faith plays a role of prime importance. The organization quite systematically woos, using various styles, *boas* (a kind of priest) and *sanyasis* (renouncers). Since 1992 Thakre has acquired the habit of making speeches at Pandharpur, a very active center of *bhakti*, devoted to the Maharashtrian saint Tukaram (13th century), while the shakhas organize bus trips to pilgrimage centers. The countenance of Sai Baba (1835-1918), enormously popular on the pavements of Mumbai shocked the ideologues of the Shiv Sena. Attention was drawn to this renouncer's strong attraction to an Islam characterized by Sufism. For a long time, he preached from a mosque. Popular pressure proved the stronger, and portraits of Sai Baba are to be found in numerous shakhas. The example of the

Maharashtrian saint is, moreover, sometimes used by informed propagandists to illustrate the ideals of Savarkar, according to which the spirit of the earth (the nation) is to remain Hindu, come what may. If everything must be marked with his emblem, religious belief becomes a private affair.

The brahman "great tradition," which strongly influenced the RSS and the BJP, constitutes a somewhat secondary mooring, but it is very notable in the religious construction of the Shiv Sena. Thakre, it would appear, has no high opinion of brahman tradition, but it would be simplistic to derive this from the traditional brahman-Kayashtha rivalry. The latter does not represent a fundamental element of politics in Mumbai, and this is certainly evident to the Shiv Sena. The leader would be more inclined to reproach this tradition for having divided and weakened the nation and being incapable of change. Traditional religious authorities such as the sankaracharyas and Sanskrit scholars (pandits) are, moreover, very often criticized by the cadres and the militants, who are not responding to orders to do so, but are expressing to a certain extent the sensibility of their social milieu in emphasizing this issue.

Nevertheless, brahmans are Indians and Hindus and, as such, they are respected by the Shiv Sainiks. Thakre is, furthermore, greatly impressed (or at least he certainly appears to be) by the actions of Shivaji which gave brahmans essential and positive roles. The warrior example of the brahman dynasty of the Peshwas of Pune, which maintained and extended Shivaji's empire into the 18th century, counterbalances in his eyes and in those of the ideologues of the older generation of Shiv Sainiks the weakness and mediocrity of other brahmans. The works of Tilak and Savarkar, both of whom were brahmans, are positive acquisitions and sometimes objects of great deference, mostly on the part of the leaders, while the popular milieu of the lower castes in the organization

often judge them differently. Thakre seems, like many in his party, fascinated and irritated by high-caste people and culture. He has precociously surrounded himself with young members of elevated ritual status (for example S. Joshi and M. Joshi). There are many cadres and officers of high caste, no doubt a strong minority, in the Shiv Sena, but they play no particular religious role. In urban society as a whole, the brahmans tend to entrench themselves behind the ideology of individual merit and the mask of the middle class. Many of them vote for the BJP and the Congress Party.

The religious reformism of the lower castes constitutes another group of religious references. It has the particularity of being expressly political. It does not give rise to unanimity in the Shiv Sena and is not in a central position in the systems of collective representation, but it is adequately large and widespread to constitute a source of legitimacy. It calls as much upon social utopias as on religious tendencies, the latter often being subordinated to the former. The influence of the lower caste reformism is expressed by the conspicuous references of the cadres and militants to J. Phule and, in less numerous but nevertheless noteworthy cases, to Dr. Ambedkar. If the caustic criticism that the leaders, above all Thakre, address towards Ambedkar, co-drafter of the Indian constitution is concomitant with his valorization, this would seem primarily due to the extreme populism of an organization which takes local situations into consideration and gives great freedom to the heads of branches to let the ambiance appropriate to their fiefs prevail. The valorization of Ambedkar occurs despite the repeated and sometimes dramatic clashes which the Shiv Sena leadership has had with his political heirs. Phule and Ambedkar are often considered in the shakhas Maharashtrian personages, as such assured of a certain consideration.³⁹

Tensions with the Mahars, who form the main body

of Ambedkar's "worshippers," are frequently the result of the prospect of seeing a section of Maharashtrians, whose "national" character (patriotic and "culturally correct") no one in the Shiv Sena has until now questioned, escape its influence. As with everything that pertains to allegiance and adherence, this is a most sensitive subject. The reformism of the lower castes appears diluted when interpreted by the Shiv Sena cadres. One idealizes a just and caste-less society, which corresponds to the official doctrine of the organization. On the other hand, anything which might divide the nation (such as the connection between low status and class oppression often made by Dalit groups) is eliminated. The Shiv Sena also endeavors to elude what has been locally crystallized under the name of the "Western type" of rationalism and the Christian influence, which imbues a number of emancipatory currents. Very frequently and quite genuinely, the "dignity" of groups of low status is invoked, stressing the full adherence to Hindudom (the sentiment of belonging), perhaps even more than to Hinduism. The specific religious beliefs and practices of the lower castes are, however, openly valorized and taken charge of by the organization. More than the Mahars, well organized by the movement of the (Ambedkarist) Republican Party of India, it is the artisan castes (carpenters, fishermen, blacksmiths, potters) who receive the politico-religious sanction of the Shiv Sena along with some groups of very low ritual status, such as the Mangs (rope-makers, alcohol distillers) or the Chambhars (leather workers).

The para-religious realities that the Shiv Sainiks place on a pedestal are not very numerous, but they seem capable of transforming everything which they approach. There is, first, the movement and the power embodied in the example of the roaring tiger, the symbolic importance of which is illustrated by a great number of rituals of the organization. These abstract entities are linked to Hindu symbolism of the "great

tradition," influencing the choices in the immensity of the pantheon, of which above all Shaivite representations (action, creation, destruction) are preferred to more popular forms of Vaishnavite cults (principles of preservation and continuity). Referents to the symbolism of *shakti* (feminine energy of the gods) are also evident. One should, however, not deceive oneself: the immoderate fondness for large motorbikes, the noise, the lorries and mass parades, these manifestations of power which the Shiv Sena is able to offer, belong to the worlds of the industrialized masses and are centrally linked with implicit mythologies, sometimes with the explicit rhetoric, of modernity. They very quickly impose their simplifying norms, placing mechanized brutes in the center of the scene rather than renouncers who accumulate power drop by drop through mortification. Logical and cultural continuities would, thus, not appear to suffice in placing the Shiv Sena in the tradition of producers of ritual and other elements of Hindu culture grappling with the problematic of power.

Power, in fact, is not only incarnated in a novel manner that is readily technical; it is transformed by the nearly exclusive use of mass dynamics. It is not at all a question of making use of it to preserve the socio-cosmic order. Against its will and as the continual bearer of their negations, the Shiv Sena makes itself an agent of traditions. Active reason, that power mastered according to particular categories, avails of a capital of popularity among part of the cadres. However, it is not a cult object of the organization. The cult of modern power imbues the ensemble of religious manifestations of the youth and seems to contribute to the divesting of these manifestations of their speculative and philosophical content, which it frames or inspires (in all innocence?) to the advantage of stereotype and brief mass rituals. The logic of these manifestations and practices is most often reduced to the reinforcement of aggressiveness. These rituals

grow in number, with still quite appreciable reorientations, in all social milieux.

Along with the incarnation of power, the action of sacralizing the *nation* forms the second level of para-religious activities. It is of much greater complexity than the devotion to power because it is linked with multiple historical traditions and is in perpetual reconstitution. The heritage of the movement of the Hindu "cultural renaissance," which began in the 19th century in upper-caste milieu in contact with the colonizer, is fragmentarily present in the Shiv Sena milieu. A great deal of what remains, however, is still able to interfere with the religious practices and the aggregate of representations of the organization. The legend of Shivaji, such as it is presently experienced and interpreted, belongs to the register. The Maratha prince is celebrated on May 3 as an equal of the divinities and nearly in the same manner. One must, however, go as far as Bengal and to the erudite preachers of the Arya Samaj (quite active in Mumbai) in order to find all the sources of the deification of the nation, the daily discourse of the state (supposedly "secularist") also adding its stone to an edifice which is constantly being rebuilt. If the Shiv Sena often practices overstatement regarding this subject, making of Shivaji a national hero and the Hindu gods the guarantees of the combativeness of the people, it is perhaps because it spans ambiguities which can extend until they constitute veritable chasms. There are numerous militants who join the Shiv Sena, a hollowed out political space, with the purpose of opposing their close neighbors, be these states bordering on Maharashtra, qualified Tamil employees, or simply migrants from the countryside near Mumbai. The national deity to worship has no fixed border. This lack of definition would not be serious with regards to Hindu perspectives experienced in complex movements of identity, but it becomes very destabilizing in the context of modern ideologies of the nation, even cultural ones, and with the

increase in the general climate of powerlessness and incoherence which imbues the Shiv Sena.

The transcendental nation has, thus, greatly varied during the history of the Shiv Sena, starting in metropolitan Mumbai (to go beyond the limits of the municipality was not envisaged until 1967) but spreading until it encompassed the whole subcontinent "from Kashmir to Kanyakumari." Some renderings of the nation, pictured on calendars, even include the present Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma. The frenzy of the cadres of the Shiv Sainik branches outside Mumbai are much more "imperialistic," going so far as to include the entire world (after the apocalypse). This excessive chauvinism, which is exaggerated until it becomes universal by a kind of cannibalistic process, certainly symbolizes an opening to the world such as is permitted to this type of frustrated subaltern élite. A process which has been only slightly mastered, it has made numerous militants feel uneasy and makes the valued national religion a dangerous subject on the internal level, as well as giving an impetus to diverse forward flights into activism.

It is in the sacralizing of the community that the Shiv Sainiks often find a point of equilibrium, as this is one of the rare levels at which the organization avails of a means of intervention briefly allowing its destabilized members to perceive their heroic fantasies as realities. It is unstable because this tendency almost always leads to political crisis. The "community" is an infinitely mobile entity in India, where the levels of adherence (blood and rank, type, species, and single group) are particularly numerous. Despite the references of some of its leaders to Savarkar, the Shiv Sena has not developed precise definitions of the Hindu community, although in the long term this may evolve, as the people of the RSS have done. The communalism⁴⁰ of today's polemics has a history of more than 100 years. As regards our subject, it appears judicious to take stock of the paradoxical juxta-

position and ambivalence of representations and of modern power with the fossilization or hardening of ideas and experiences drawn from modern societies in which the (complex) collective adherences would openly define the personality. It is also an inherited historical legacy, notably as a by-product of the social logic and modes of the former imperial government.⁴¹ In contemporary India, the communitarian project more and more often consists of building coherence and unifying collective adherences by articulating the personality around a privileged level, Unitarian and simplified. It atomizes the sentiment of species contained and maintained in, but also subjected to, the ideology of caste. It is frequently the case that, when the multiplicity and overlapping of communitarian (thus "depolarized") referents become enviable, outdated, or intolerable, the communitarian monsters (the state uniting with a single community), nationalism (masses and state in the context of secularized myth-histories), and more or less destructive forms of individualism are asserted concomitantly and competitively.

The sudden identitarian-political and symbolic appearance of the aggregate whole of Hindus, unknown until the 19th century as a simple designation and inconceivable without recourse to parodies of modern nations, belongs to a process at the end of which the Shiv Sena is situated and of which it has controlled neither the genesis nor the development. The most conspicuous result is that in contemporary Indian — certainly not only Hindu — society, religious sentiment, and belief are never separated from the problematic of adherence. The deification of the community appears in this context as a current and almost fatal tendency. It constitutes a very particular project for Hindu nationalists, for whom it coincides with the nation of their dreams. In contemporary India the problematic of adherence is, however, not at all reduced to the large denominational polarizations. On

the contrary, it assumes, owing to specific characteristics of socio-religious practice during the past centuries in India but also to the recent evolution of political and identitarian domains, a significant measure of complexity and variability. The impetuous and changing appearances of caste in politics, which endangers the large "para-national" or transcendental communitarianisms as much through competition as through the expression of difference, bears witness to these ambiguous developments. However, the Shiv Sena intervenes when communitarian constructions have produced innumerable sector-based and hardened identities, often fraught with internal conflicts. They attempt to act when these constructions, which offset the failures of the state and are nourished by its weaknesses, are jeopardized by tendencies of social atomization, the brutal development of a dualistic market economy, and the uncontrolled pressure of desires.

In these conditions, it appears to the Shiv Sainiks more urgent and difficult than ever before to promote a religion, or rather religions, of the community. They have moved on to many levels of the communitarian dimension, from Maratha clans to anti-brahman caste alliances, from the Hindu aggregate to Indian nationality (Muslims included, or excluded). They do not disregard any of the means of employing communitarian sentiments, which are extremely intense and easy to polarize, in order to agitate the political domain. They sometimes unwillingly submit to the effects of group loyalties and cults addressed to communities in the world of the large modern city, these cults today influencing the entire religious sphere. In attempting to unify them, they always call themselves partially into question. By allowing such cults and loyalties to proliferate, they also condemn themselves to powerlessness. The temptations to take flight forwards are all the more pressing as the communitarian practice of the Shiv Sena must always reckon with the continual

valorization within the organization of heroic acts that challenge all collective interest and practice. Further incentive is provided by the mounting pressures of an unprincipled racketeering in which communitarian loyalty counts less than the unremitting quest for profit.

Finally, the organization sees itself at the crossroads of the community and the nation. It sometimes reaches, as such, the status of a para-religious element. The relation of the Shiv Sainiks to their party-movement is, however, neither as clear nor as devotional as that of RSS militants of the Sangh. Perhaps the Shiv Sena is overly commandeered by its militants (one always says, "our Shiv Sena"), who relate to it in a very familiar manner. The shakhas are almost everywhere in some way familial. It also appears that the continued involvement of the organization in dirty acts and atrocities, which a number of militants and — more numerous — supporters admit to having committed at one time or another, hinders the expression of any form of deification. The concept of organization itself is the object of ambiguous sentiments. One harbors the suspicion that it will entail highly disparaged bureaucracy, which partially explains why the rituals of the militants and the embryo of theory of the cadres often avoid viewing the Shiv Sena as sacred. Finally, the importance of the leader eclipses the movement. The leader is a kind of cult object. His portraits are on the walls of the shakhas beside those of Shivaji, the major Hindu deities (Durga, Ganesh), and nationalist heroes. Thakre's birthday is celebrated on January 23 on a scale comparable to that of the large Hindu festivals, or even Shivaji's birthday. Even on this level, it appears difficult, if one considers the ambivalent discourses of the militants and those standing near that discourse, to make a para-religious dimension out of the aggregate of practices which valorize the leader.

The Shiv Sena has no religious project. It has never elaborated principles nor availed itself of an adequately coherent accumulation of knowledge to

introduce a structured practice in this regard, as the militants of the RSS attempted, before failing when the Ayodhya movement carried them along and then surpassed them. The attitudes of the organization respective of religious syncretism and its mode of intervention in the sense of a popular contemplative religion are illustrative. Hindu-Muslim syncretism is very current and remains deeply engrained in India, particularly in Maharashtra. It is concretized in the worship which Hindus offer to the *dargahs*, tombs of Muslim saints which occupy a very notable place on the religious map of the popular quarters of Mumbai. The cults of the *dargahs* have been an issue since Muslims and Hindus began to encounter each other in the cities, but it recently became a particularly remarkable matter of contention. Countless holy places of this type were destroyed or desecrated during the rioting of 1992-1993 in Mumbai. Numerous profaners did not react to orders from the Shiv Sena, but simply took certain propaganda arguments of the organization to their logical conclusions. The Shiv Sainiks were often at the head of raging groups who destroyed the *dargahs*.

Less numerous, but still noteworthy, Shiv Sena cadres proclaimed at the same time that the bones of the holy men contained in the tombs were an expression of the "genius of the national soil." Did one not see the head of shakha-84 in Mahim place a garland of flowers on the small tomb of a Muslim Saint, located just across from the shakha's door, in the midst of the rioting? The existence of several other examples of this type, in which sincerity and heartbreak have their place beside political calculation, shows the lack of consistency, or the evolving ambiguity, of the Shiv Sena. Young Muslims, outraged by the Ayodhya affair and very often victims of their "communitarian" pressures, themselves refused the entry of Hindus into their places of worship, bringing to an end in another manner centuries of syncretism. The practice of

the Shiv Sena in religious matters appears to be particularly well illustrated by a peculiar "active non-intervention," an attitude which is, moreover, to be seen on numerous other levels of its practice. It consists in allowing movements to develop, to which one has given impetus, or simply sensed to be near, while keeping a minimum, sometimes extremely tenuous, control over events. It is then a question of politically capitalizing on their impact with a more or less frenzied opportunism.

Leaving aside the introspective poverty of Shiv Sainik practice, which cannot be brought together as a unified whole, and the predominance of populist tendencies, the centrality of such wait-and-see attitudes as mentioned above explains why the organization has never seriously criticized the least susceptible elements of the "virile" mobilization of the entire Hindu religious spectrum, with the exception of some conservative brahmins. A certain manipulative cynicism mixes with the profound sentiment of the ambivalence of realities in contemporary society. Action can arise out of renunciation and the power of powerlessness. Since the events at Ayodhya and the Mumbai riots, numerous sanyasis have supported the Shiv Sena. It is, however, by placing the accent on the perspective of urban hygiene, the putting forward of projects for the rationalization of society, and by vigorously spreading models of behavior which ridicule or, more profoundly, "de-realize" attitudes towards renunciation and begging that the Shiv Sena, along with all modernist forces, undermines with a degree of effectiveness certain foundations of popular practices. It should be emphasized that in this regard Hindu-Muslim syncretism is a general fact that is not limited to dargahs. All South Asian culture was and remains largely Hindu-Muslim, which explains the profound trauma that attempts at cultural purification create. These attempts are, moreover, in no way the monopoly of Hindu nationalists. To take an illustrative exam-

ple, "secular" Congress governments have attempted to "refine" popular languages, in which Arab, Persian and Sanskrit words have been interposed for centuries, so as to construct purified and "indigenized" idioms. The result of this bureaucratic voluntarism has been above all the irresistible progression of English among ruling classes and even in popular milieux.

The absence of projects and the availability that is rooted both in populism and in the logic of "movement before all else" without question form the basis of the religious impact of an organization which generally does not directly intervene in the domain of beliefs and rituals. It influences the scene unequally, reorienting prevailing realities, introducing evolutionary tendencies rather than defending positions, and taking a stand as regards dogmas. Seen from these perspectives, the global impact of the Shiv Sainiks appears to be particularly difficult to assess. It is considerable when in phase with large social developments and with transformations in the political domain, as well as, and perhaps foremost, when keeping pace with the evolution of systems of representation and symbolic configurations. The contemplation of idols (*darshan*) is one of the essential moments in the creation of the sacred in the Hindu cadres. A kind of energy seems to circulate between the contemplators and the images which charges the groups with something of the sacred, while at the same time affirming it as a transcendent entity. Darshan does not appear to predispose to action. Nevertheless, this type of thing has never been criticized in the Shiv Sena. The Shiv Sainiks have simply invented new types and styles. The contemplation of the leader or of symbols of the organization, which is supposed to lend force to the Shiv Sena rather than serve as calls for good fortune, quite evidently emulates certain religious ceremonies. Rather than the cadres, it is very often the militants and voters, imbued with modernist principles pertaining to the quest for power, who frequently along with

crypto-rationalists favor this type of compromise. To take from the "people" to give to the "people" is the basis of the organization's "culturo-populism." However, for several years, the large darshans of the Shiv Sena have been facing competition from television (Doordarshan!), which induces or reinforces a formidable passivity for an organization which values the movement and initiative so highly. But this perhaps also opens a new field for the Shiv Sena's capacities of imaginary intervention and for its symbolic configurations. Numerous cadres complain about the demobilizing effect of the electronic media, but in no way consider relinquishing the television set. Will the Shiv Sena be devoured by an "economy of desire" and manipulators of fantasies stronger than its rudimentary and brutal construction? Could the representation of matters by the electronic mass media engulf the realities and socio-religious practice with which the organization is concerned, returning the Shiv Sena to square one after an arduous process of simplification and "primitivization"?

The Shiv Sainiks are, on the other hand, religious, with all the nuances this term embraces in contemporary urban India. They generally live with the forcefulness and sincerity of deep religious sentiments, which they place at the center of their value systems. They nevertheless participate, at times exacerbating the evolution of the ensemble of religious practices towards schematization (more than reform), causing the extinction of some practices, while others occupy the forefront. The enormous importance acquired by large pujas (ritual sacrifices and annual festivals in honor of a deity) in contemporary Indian cities is in no way a creation of the Shiv Sena. It is once again the inheritor of a situation, the origins of which date from the end of the 19th century, in the process of the assertion of communities as divisible from the social whole. Sometimes precociously associated with the nationalist movement, the pujas, embodiments of a mass prac-

tice rooted in the quarters and trades, have long remained under the control of notables and been influenced by caste configurations. Education led to their expansion after independence, as they multiplied their centers of initiative and handed the organization over to youth who were without experience and were imbued with crude egalitarian ideologies. The large Ganapathi (Ganesh) festival in the month of September is organized in Mumbai by more than 10,000 listed puja committees, the majority of which seem to be controlled by educated youth.⁴² The mass practice is rooted in numerous small groups, which guarantee its lively character, but the latter are evolving towards an increasingly uniform style. The movement was already well advanced when the Shiv Sena appeared, but the organization put all its efforts in accentuating it and using it as a relay for its political implantation. It favored youth, placing the puja committees on the level of initiatives that were suitable for promoting the framework of its valorization of actions. It encourages the modernization and standardization of the pujas, which today invariably include soundtracks of disco music and large loudspeakers. In 1992 a leading cadre, C.P. Navalkar, prided himself on controlling "70%" of the Ganapathi puja committees. The organization has, moreover, increased the occasions for mass pujas, systematizing the Shivaji festivals and introducing their mass style to other occasions (such as *makarsankranti*). In certain respects similar to Brazilian carnivals, contemporary Indian pujas, moving between rioting, ritual, and mass release, also sometimes have a tendency to embody the repetitions of civil war. Muslim quarters are closed during large Hindu festivals out of fear of provocation connected with the passage of processions. Clashes have multiplied, despite increasingly strong police mobilization. The interest which an organization with para-military aspects, such as the Shiv Sena, finds in these particular and always more tense moments in social life is

readily understandable.

Mass pujas have since the beginning been associated with the relation to urban space, a majority of the poor and the migrants in particular experiencing in this regard a situation of permanent shortage, which is only equaled in the old commercial quarters. The pujas have made it possible to mark the positions of "communities" in the process of assertion by associating the geography of the sacred with the stability of social groups. They have expressed variations in the organization of socio-religious ensembles. They have also produced tensions and distinct claims of religious preoccupations by using the idiom of ritual status as well as that of precedence (the order of arrival at a given place). Since Indian independence, the development of the Shiv Sena has greatly accentuated this tendency, and the pujas have been inclined to express relations of power in an increasingly brutal manner. Considerations of rank (ritualo-brahmanic) and perceptions in terms of rights connected with precedence have been gradually eclipsed in favor of an immediate perception of the capacity for group intervention. In these conditions, the puja assumes the appearance of a general mobilization, and this is increased by the use of symbols such as the saffron flag of the Shiv Sena (the *bhaghva dvaj* of Shivaji) or the green flag of young Muslims. It is during pujas, by means of the disorder that invades the city, that one dares to provoke the adversary and transgress the usually accepted limits. One draws provocative pictures and covers walls of the enemy up to the windows with posters. The use of sound to occupy space plays a significant role in the exacerbation of mass pujas related to special issues. Music⁴³ and sometimes firecrackers are used for that purpose. The politicization of pujas is not new, but it reached unprecedented heights with the Shiv Sena, most often directed at the Muslim minority, which makes use of the same means to designate and make sacred their

own territories. Only the central ritual, which has become a very small part of the large popular festival, has clear roots in each of the religious cultures.

The affair of mosque loudspeakers and the Friday prayer is a somewhat specific continuation of tensions connected with the communitarian occupation of space. Mosques received the right to be equipped with loudspeakers in 1978 during the rule of Janata Party (1977-1980). This measure was endorsed by the BJP, a prominent member of the coalition then in power, which seems to have been an attempt to show that it harbored no anti-Muslim prejudice. If nothing else, this was at least a move that showed a measure of respect for the kind of communitarian claims asserted by Muslims, which were in part a reflection of the Hindu communitarians' own perceptions. The 1980s were marked by an animated revival of religious practice by the minority. The mosques proved to be too small and the crowds began to block the streets at the time of the main prayer on Fridays. During this period, the Shiv Sena leadership vacillated between entering into negotiations with the Muslim League and the denunciation of "minority privileges." The Muslim minority was said to have "annex[ed] public space for itself like Pakistan" and it was maintained that the workers "could not take rest" because of their loudspeakers. In December 1992, after the first wave of riots, it was decided to make use of the theme to revive tension and prepare to take revenge against the Muslims of the city. Militants were called to the large ceremonies around the temples. Thousands of Shiv Sainiks obstructed the streets and transformed the lamp ceremonies (*artis*) into sessions for shouting slogans demanding the conclusion of the public prayers of the minority and the destruction of the loudspeakers. This strategy of tension, which moved from one quarter to another in the second half of December, achieved its objective. In the beginning of January confrontations resumed.

The polarization of religious practice on the occupation of space is considered by none, except a few secular ideologues, as a perversion of religion. For centuries, Hinduism and Islam have covered the countryside with their symbols. The establishment of a sacred geography is regarded by all sides as an entirely normal aspect of religious practice. Friction has always existed in this connection, as the religious, in its manner, bears the totality of social tensions, which tend, however, to become heightened through the shift from considerations of ritualized status to rivalry without principles. By reducing religion as a whole to a tendency which is, and will remain, relative, the Shiv Sena puts forward its own communitarian notion, functional and united, mobilized by extreme tension. By disrupting the complex regulations which had enabled a partial control by notables and the state over the appropriation of space and by replacing popular practices of intervention with a populist and overtly violent political organization, the Shiv Sena accentuates the evolution, which originated outside its control, of popular and very diversified religious practices. The organization advocates a symbolic mass religion reduced to an identitarian logic concerning Muslims as well as Hindus. The preponderance of the spirit of puja among the Shiv Sainiks is, furthermore, a revealing indication of the importance given by the organization to the awareness of the quarters. They often appear to be incapable of seeing farther than the end of their street — and the minaret of the nearest mosque — even during quasi-insurrectional situations, such as the riots in January 1993. More generally, it seems that the large mass pujas, which are increasingly often at the center of religious practice, exercise an uncontrollable effect on the organization, binding it to countless fragmented chauvinistic perspectives and bogging it down in the “culture of powerlessness” (*napunsakta*) of the popular quarters.

Although the practice of mass pujas cannot be re-

duced to the pressure of identitarianism that is clearly embodied by the phrase “*main hindu hon*” (I am Hindu) which has flourished on the walls of popular quarters throughout North India since 1983, this practice, however, tends to be more and more often linked with identitarianism. It is as if the large sacrifices and ritual festivals, formerly midwives of time and illustrations of the complexity of myth for popular uses, were now only occasions to assert “Hindudom” — the simple fact of feeling oneself to be Hindu — and opportunities to be counted. Whereas a number of Shiv Sainiks have religious backgrounds characterized by multiplicity, complexity, and sincerity of engagements and experiences, the organization and its entire sphere of influence are found to be embodied in the general movement of youth, primarily its urban and educated sections, whom it orientates towards a religion which, deprived of substance, is ostentatious and unified. This evolution certainly did not displease the founders of the movement, who above all took into consideration the possibilities which were thereby offered to penetrate the political domain and provided means of drawing mass support to new arrivals who had been subject to ostracism.

The organization’s setback in the early 1980s gave it a particular push in this direction. However, it seems that this evolution was regretted by numerous cadres and supporters in popular quarters, who do not appreciate seeing religion serve increasingly frequently to mobilize militants and inflict trauma. They appreciate just as little the intrusion of globalizing symbols of socio-religious identity, leaving aside Maharashtrian specificities, local inflections, and sectarian currents. All, however, find themselves caught in the trap of the evolution of symbolic fields which no one controls, but in the framework of which the Shiv Sena also appears to be doomed to assume the role of an agent of radicalization. It has that position because it is especially heteroclit and unstable. Its eclipsed power comes

from its ability to make use of and exacerbate dangerous symbols. It also seems that the organization would be frequently forced into this role by the attitude of the other protagonists on the political and social scene, as if everyone had to keep to their place in the concert of modernization and its cataclysmic consequences for certain popular milieux. One sometimes observes branch leaders and militants attempting to get out of simplistic cycles of conflict or seeking to preserve a degree of distance. They are rapidly swallowed up by the monsters that they themselves helped to spawn.

Charity, Solidarity, and Murder in the Struggle for Symbolic Trajectories

A significant and general investment in charity is one of the main characteristics of the Shiv Sena. It is one of its basic trademark images, and cadres as well as militants value it very highly. The pages of the daily *Saamna* (Marathi edition founded in 1984, published in Hindi since 1993) and the columns of the weekly *Marmik* ("Essence") are filled with reports of activities of this kind. These publications feature the distribution of provisions, blankets, medicines or essential products, work to improve living conditions in the old quarters and shanty towns, the holding of medical camps where needy persons can consult physicians gratis, collections in the case of death in poor families, the organization and management of blood banks, dispensaries and infirmaries, the establishment of ambulance services centralized in the *shakhas*, and so forth. Also involved are old people's homes and banking services. The list is impressive and the Shiv Sena speaks constantly of developing and improving these services. These charitable works have greatly contributed to the entrenchment of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai and, it seems, also to a certain extent in Chhattisgarh (Madhya Pradesh), while the other versions of the movement are apparently combining, in a relatively

nuanced manner, solidarity and racketeering.

The fact that these activities assume such a significant place in the legend and reality of the Shiv Sena stems from the desiderata of Indian popular milieux in a democracy in which an apolitical organization must provide this type of services if it wants to receive votes. This was, less elaborately and with considerably scantier means, the practice of the Communist Party of India, as well as the doctrine of the Gandhians, who were more or less situated on the fringe of the Congress Party. It is a question then of the quite classic expression of the paternalistic relationship of the élite to the political milieu in popular quarters, a relationship which the Shiv Sena has re-oriented, but from which it has never extricated itself. It seems, finally, that Thakre himself, whose father was a known philanthropist and intellectual, would have been led to this type of intervention in conformity with the ideals of his milieu. In addition, he briefly passed through the RSS school, in which charitable concerns also occupy a central position, assuming a quite distinct content.⁴⁴

Drawing on the legacy of the colonial period and of the culturo-nationalist renaissance, which emulated Christian missionaries, charity assumes an almost structuring role in the political domain and in social relations in Indian popular quarters. This structuring function is particularly pronounced in Maharashtra, where the state avails of a greater effectiveness than elsewhere and where the political system is especially competitive. It underlies, in effect, the activity of the state-cum-guardian established since independence but is far from being presented and accepted as a variation of the state based on the rule of law. On the contrary: it is still often perceived as a continuity of the good will (along with a pitiless repression) of the former sovereigns, or it is seen as a somewhat modernized version of the "State as father and mother of its subjects" so emphasized in the self-glorifying repre-

sentations of the former colonial authorities. It is not surprising to see all the political parties involved more or less seriously in this sense. The charity of the Shiv Sena is not, however, entirely identifiable with other types, to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to employ this term to characterize its practice. As with all concrete constructions of the organization, it is a mixture of elements that would be incompatible if activism and repeated crises had not allowed the co-existence of contraries by eluding internal antagonisms.

Shiv Sena charity is not only a matter of assuring the popularity of a political party by distributing minor benefits or by attempting to fleece public property, as is frequently practiced.⁴⁵ It is also not a question of making the masses infantile by helping them so as to stabilize its "vote bank," a tactic for which the Congress Party has been renowned for such a long time. The charity of the Shiv Sena does not disregard these aspects, but its positive action is something more profound which involves the survival of the organization by very strongly conditioning the quality of its relationship to the population. When the proximity to power and the pressures of racketeering demobilize the cadres and some militant fringes, as occurred during the long trajectory of the organization leading to the center of the municipality of Mumbai (1984-1992), the diminishing quality of charity, the loss of initiative, and the absence of vigor are the first things called to account. The charitable activities integrate, in effect, the religion of the movement, the aspiration for justice (equality in the face of destiny), and a certain number of solidarity projects (or even nostalgia), a fact that far removes the Shiv Sena from the classic world of paternalistic organizations. "The Shiv Sena dares," "The Shiv Sena is the people," and "Something can always be done" are a few of the slogans, sometimes posted on the walls of Mumbai, which punctuate its charitable activities. The latter do not constitute a patient work of national construction, imbued with a certain hierarchic

spirit, as in the interventions of the RSS. The Shiv Sena likes even less to think of itself and its charitable works as a bureaucratic routine bound to the functioning of an electoral system. It is openly constructed as an heroic act, involving everyone, but above all youth, who most deeply testify to the quality of the organization and its project. The references to justice, which often introduces the historico-legendary figure, Shivaji, is also essential. It makes charity a product of history and the incarnation of divine will, without perceiving the unmanageable contradictions. The "supreme leader" plays more than willingly the role of the great apportioner. In certain cases, the notion of charity is eclipsed by the expression of the "just anger of the popular masses" who — in the name of the notion "there is reason to revolt" sometimes borrowed from the Naxalites — are summoned to loot depots of monopolists or block roads until the state provides shops with basic commodities.⁴⁶

It is the reference to justice, the "justice of the people" taken from the Communists, and the "justice of the nation" borrowed from Savarkar and S.C. Bose which lent the early Shiv Sainiks the impudence which now routinely characterizes them when it comes to the matter of organizing collections. The collection of funds is done by groups of young strapping militants. They sell subscription coupons, targeting first those who can pay, notably those who practice the ostentation of the wealthy, merchants with a reputation for usury, as well as members of minority groups and migrants. The subscription is, as it were, compulsory. The organization readily adopts in this regard a Robin Hood ideology, associating class vengeance and the transgression of order. It is a system with a formidable effectiveness and a less certain popularity which has enabled the Shiv Sena to give form to a number of projects and to appear more effective than the Communists. Since then, its method of subscriptions has become popular, if it does not incarnate the *Zeitgeist*.

It is used by the even smallest puja committee. Their solidaristic practices are exemplified by the current practices of universalizing familial relationships with a dominant ethnic theme (all of the same blood) and by extolling the egalitarian and unifying power of fraternity. The latter, however, most often belongs to the fanciful dreams of the Shiv Sainiks, rather than to the everyday reality of the organization. Solidaristic references are also rooted in the idealizations of village life and life in the quarter, although these two realities, above all the latter, would be much better described in terms of the struggle for life and bitter competition rather than via principles of solidarity. It is often precisely because the Shiv Sena wishes that the popular milieu would abandon their wearying struggle of each against all⁴⁷ and their powerlessness rooted in perpetual mutual distrust that the Shiv Sainiks conduct their charitable activities and carry out their acts of distribution and justice. Without having disrupted the scene, they have accomplished in this regard a few remarkable things. This can be verified in the zones in which they could only achieve apolitical hegemony by displacing the Left, for example in the textile quarters of Mumbai.

Charity is one of the levels at which the Shiv Sena most overtly assumes the characteristics of a parallel state. In this connection, one encounters one of the main sources of its ambivalent nature. The Shiv Sainik cadres frequently hold the state in contempt, because it is comprised of bureaucracy and thus epitomizes an unwieldiness standing in the way of their impatience. They also believe that it is the state that creates their "powerlessness." Nevertheless, this state greatly fascinates them because of its opposite potentialities. The military, even mythical, model which they call upon represents a version of the state that is idealized, near, benevolent, and a dispenser of justice. In any case, it appears natural to them to emulate the aspects of the state's social interventions which raise

its status most, at the center of which is charity. The latter, as much a moment of solidarity as an expression of justice of the people, appears in fact to be the perfect expression of an exemplary order which, moreover, is of an hierarchic nature, the big providing for the small. Violence expresses somewhat the same thing without, however, creating the legitimate recognition for which the Shiv Sainiks are extremely eager. Its perpetration, which makes one impure and is a sign of weakness, lowers the status of the state, as that of their organization, which appears only to exist for them in the transgression of their values.

The close and essential association of violence and charity is, however, at the center of the entire existence of the Shiv Sena. It is also to be found at the center of the reality of the Indian state and at the core of the activity of all large contemporary powers. The Shiv Sena is in this respect illegitimate because it does not have the means to realize its ambitions, while it simultaneously replaces the usual discourses on law with a changed rhetoric of legitimacy. One cannot insist too much on the significance of this symbolic association which is the brand image of the Shiv Sena and which introduces into the scene, in view of the crude manner in which it is employed, an element of exacerbation of numerous social crises and imaginary tendencies. This association between violence and charity is rooted in practices which are quite startling, such as when the Shiv Sainiks incite riots or clashes and then offer the services of their ambulances. It is frequently said in the shanty towns, where the Shiv Sena is both elected by an overwhelming majority and feared, that the Shiv Sainiks are people who "strike a blow and then offer a handkerchief." On the plane of political and financial profitability, this practice is embodied in different kinds of large-scale racketeering or blackmail of a relatively depersonalized nature, the terms of which are generally as follows: "You pay for our benevolent and chari-

table activities," which support the entire apparatus of the Shiv Sena and its mass organizations, "or you must face violence." Usually, in distinction to ordinary hooligans, the Shiv Sainiks do not threaten the population, above all merchants, with looting, arson, theft, or with rape. It is sufficient for them to cause the tension in the city to rise by provoking young Muslims, or indeed the state or certain sections of the underworld. In some zones, such as Prabhadevi and Gorapdev in Mumbai, the presence of the *shakhas* has probably become an element of urban security. Open late in the evening and clearly more active than the police stations when it is a question of protecting ordinary citizens, they would appear to impede the extension of petty criminality. This is at least the popular sentiment. The cadres have only to threaten to leave the streets to the hooligans or, more cryptically stated, to give rise to inter-communitarian conflict, should one not put up with their demands.

The violence which the Shiv Sena causes to reign in the city of Mumbai (it has never obtained elsewhere such a control over events) measures up to its charity and is directly related to the latter. Being central, it inspires and represents a permanent basis of Shiv Sainik activity. When violence is not present, it acts insofar as a symbol, which is often less nuanced than reality owing to the re-interpretation effectuated by rumors in the popular milieu.⁴⁸ Violence is frequently global and the Shiv Sainiks, who highly value the reign of (re)distributive justice and providing aid, also love nothing more than "holding the city in their hands," according to the expression of Thakre. Violence is also absolute and exemplary. One continually experiments with new dehumanizing practices, such as during the riots of 1993; children were thrown into the well hole of stairs, taxi drivers were doused with petrol and charred with their vehicles, the wounded were murdered in their hospital beds, etc. This violence is not extraordinary from all points of view, as

acts which are at least as dehumanizing have been committed by the state in the course of the last two decades; members of the Indian police have frequently tortured, summarily executed, and arbitrarily imprisoned people.⁴⁹ The particularity of Shiv Sena violence (other than its involvement of "the masses") is the ostensible association with charitable and positive activities. Professionals in violence appear, finally, to play a quite secondary role in the perpetration of abominations. All are brothers in the work of justice, all are accomplices in horror; the Shiv Sena thus pursues its endless quest for the construction of loyalties.

The close and central association of violence and the highest forms of Good (according to locally recognized norms) constructs a totality, or one might say a particular symbolic field, which evolves according to its own norms and tends to transform the entire scene. In the given conditions, Good and Evil represent the object of extremely intense competition between institutions, movements, parties, clubs, and associations. More and more charitable services, solidaristic endeavors, and campaigns to further awareness are emerging. They are increasingly better developed with a growing number of participants (foreigners, churches, sectarian groups, Hindu nationalists, the state, etc.) to achieve persistently indecisive results. Parallel thereto, one observes the spreading of a spiral of violence that generates competition among hooligans, gangsters, secret services, forces of law, and political parties. However, it is not only in the Shiv Sena, the state, and a few other political organizations, but also in a section of the Mafia milieu, that the two sets of realities are closely linked to the point of appearing to exist in symbiosis. The Shiv Sainiks always want to appear as the best in everything. At all costs and within the narrow limits of the awareness and information that they can propagate, they want to position themselves at the head of a movement that appears to them to encompass two

opposed domains which are, however, inextricably linked extremes of action. The bipolarity charity-crime, which also occupies an important place in the cinema, is a striking example of the re-organization of the world occurring in the imagination, and it is organized on the basis of simple and absolute principles.⁵⁰ Its generalization appears to be inscribed in the context of modernization such as it has developed until the present, referring sometimes explicitly to rhetoric concerning modernity, but also to more or less old Christian themes.

The symbolic configurations which associate charity and violence and prompt their intrusion in the Shiv Sena and the entire political domain are, however, not reducible to the simplistic working of the bipolarization of the world followed by the interference and confusion of the two elements. One must recall the particular weight of the representations of Gandhism, which has remained quite vital in Maharashtra, in the evolution of things. The use of non-violence to attain political ends (power) on the one hand, and the Gandhian accent on the charity of atonement — from the crime of Untouchability perpetrated by the upper castes — on the other, influence the scene. Of course, the Shiv Sena officially impugns Gandhism, and its leader is one of the rare political figures who, during a political gathering in 1994, was able to take the liberty of approving of Gandhi's assassination without provoking an immediate scission and revolt by the cadres.⁵¹ The charity of the Shiv Sena, although fundamentally conservative, is not reducible to the neo-traditionalist project of Gandhi, who dreamed of restoring the mythic harmony of the four *varna-s* in a rural world freed of the historical sin of Untouchability. However, one cannot preclude the influence of those categories. The thought constituted by Gandhism filled the vacuums of Shiv Sainik activism for a long time before arrival of a state of intellectual stupefaction which has taken hold over the last few years in a city caught between man-

agement literature and the new MTV culture.

The organization has, nevertheless, produced in a general but little regulated manner, quite specific symbolic schemas. They would appear to be the result of the interference of a past cultural complexity and of numerous contemporary processes of exacerbation of tensions and simplifications of culture. According to one of these schemas, which is to be found in the rhetoric of a few cadres but also characterizes above all the discourse of the destabilized militants from popular milieux, filth and crudity, categories inadequately distinguished in current perspectives, carry in themselves a form of the Good. It is a Good that India and particularly its popular milieu can hope to attain. By recalling in plain language that there is no hero without a sod, they at times intend a form of re-balancing of the world, giving the "damned of the city" the opportunity to participate in the common political work, indeed in the maintenance of a simplified socio-cosmic order, with their qualifications. "All are needed to make a world," to repeat an apparently universal popular logic. According to militants and Shiv Sainiks inclined to religion and in some cases to the "tantric"⁵² tendency, filth and crime foster equilibrium, ensuring in some way the possibility of a better future because they represent ways of taming power. The "supreme leader," an expert in transgressions, incitement to murder, and insults, would in this manner sit astride the tiger of modern violence — and that of the shakti. It is a violence that only he would be able to transform into a positive factor in the complex game of his historic election, his divine inspiration, and his privileged relationship with the masses. These themes are again found among members of the organization's leadership who are the most modernistic and the most "fascistic."

The conception of the supreme leader and of the entire organization as a system of atonement for criminality and for exceeding violence by way of a

deepening of the first and an exacerbation of the second haunts certain specific milieu within the movement. This phenomenon most notably afflicts cadres on a tormented course, artists sensitive to the evolution of society, and members of destabilized fringes of the youth. At the end of the latter representation, the supreme leader is at times represented as a kind of Christ (Hindu version or modern version?) who assumes the burden of the evil deeds of the world. We are in the presence of a probable form of hybridization of Christian and Hindu categories in an ambiance of an inadequately mastered modernization which, in a frequently unconscious manner, lends a universal significance⁵³ to the experience of the chauvinistic party. Simplified fragments of Christian themes, reduced to the status of free elections in the system of representation and associated with traces of modernist reference, are presented under the banner of Hindu cultural assertions. It could be thought that the phenomenon is representative, and that one finds therein equivalents to several other levels of contemporary Indian society. What could be more normal when large proportions of the dominant élite are still educated on the basis of Victorian principles — somewhat adapted to the prevailing tastes — in private colleges dominated by Christian religious figures? The particular schemas of the Shiv Sena and the simple inflections to which the organization subjects major themes, such as the epic of the “angry young man” repeatedly taken up in popular cinema, appear to have strong propensities to universalization. One finds therein fragments everywhere that demonstrate the fact that the Shiv Sena has exercised a similar influence well beyond its field of political intervention. The fragments are still at work.

The Other: The Muslim, the West, and All the Enemies

Relations with the outside world, on the one hand,

and relations with others, on the other hand, constitute the core of the Shiv Sena’s identitarian undertaking and one of the main axes of intervention. By grappling with numerous enemies, the Shiv Sainiks were able to constitute themselves as a political force, retaining a minimal cohesion and giving impetus to their perpetual movement. Before condemning the aggressiveness of the Shiv Sainiks, one must recall the characteristics of this grouping of young people from often terrible milieux in which the struggle for survival verges on insufferable problems. Everything divides them. What associates them is only a kind of collective enthusiasm and the discovery of a leader, an irresponsible unifier of a movement, the outcome of which is known to no one. Since its beginnings, the activities of the Shiv Sena have been inscribed in a context in which the hate felt towards the Others represents an important fact. It did not invent inter-communitarian rioting, nor the massacres of Partition, nor class conflicts, nor repeated pogroms against members of the lower castes, nor chauvinistic movements articulated around regions, states, or ethnic groups. All these elements abound in India along the fault lines of society. It suffices to open a newspaper to find examples of heterophobic practices of an astounding variety and of remarkable virulence, among which even the stoning of witches is included. “Shiv Sainism” is, however, far removed from being reducible to a culture of aggressiveness. The valorization of fraternity, the cult of friendship, certain perspectives of citizenship, or utopias pertaining to the realm of justice, contain and idealize diverse forms of recognition of the Other. Moreover, it is very often the impossibility of living up to those ideals combined with the will to ensure the co-existence of notions incompatible with the relation to others which lead the Shiv Sainiks to aggression.

In many “Hindu” systems of relations,⁵⁴ which often tend to be Indian systems, the relation to the Other is

marked by a deeply ingrained association of tolerance and negation. *Toleration is inscribed at the level of the open recognition of moral and non-Hindu institutions*, which apparently pose less problems than in the "Muslim" and "French" worlds.⁵⁵ *Negation ensues from a permanent tendency towards embodiment*, the inclusion of exterior and different entities in its own world and reality, as if separate, well-recognized identities, as proclaimed in laws and in institutions, were in some way inconceivable. Monist philosophy⁵⁶ and the hierarchic mentality, often diluted and mixed with other factors such as the influence of systems of infantile socialization and modes of education, are combined in different ways. Contradictions between the tendency towards benevolent toleration and engulfment are resolved by particularly unbridled bursts of violence which have characterized the Indian style of communitarianism. Coming from the city, from work and industry, the Shiv Sena is often out of line with these culturally rooted problematics, which often present themselves as coherencies and seem, for example, more productive in the RSS. However, they constitute the background of numerous instances of behavior, notably in popular milieux where explicit references are often fragmentary. Everything occurs as if the will to appear unitary and unique, possessing a clearly autonomous identity, would provoke a sentiment of brutal division. Islam and the Muslims have for a long time been major concerns in these problematics, and the national focus on their difference only seems to have grown since 1980. Muslim practice in India cannot be reduced to the invocation of unity and the search for separation. The call to unity is an explicit foundation of Islam, but it has co-existed for centuries with much hybridization, accommodations, and relativizations. However, it has been adopted anew, purified, and radicalized in the last decades by large organizations involved in "re-Islamization from below," such as the Tabligh-e-Jamaat (1926), weak

communitarian political parties (Jamaat-i-Islami, 1941), the Muslim League (1906), and countless local movements centered around education and the building of places of worship. The ideological complexity and ambiguity that has been forced upon the Hindus (and more specifically the Shiv Sena) by internal and external circumstances has similarly affected the Muslims. They must likewise construct their quest for identitarian homogeneity according to their past particularities, as well as on the basis of their present geographical situation, social disorders common to the entire society, and recent symbolic and imaginary worldwide constructions (concerning Islam and the West). No one controls this process any more than is the case with Hindu communitarianism, and those who are dominated have proven as incapable of influencing the course of events as their Hindu counterparts.

In the context of contemporary Indian and above all in popular milieux which have conserved a certain measure of relational complexity, the political and social rupture with the neighbor, whether Muslim or not, would appear to have above all led to the destabilization of temporal and spatial points of reference. This has endangered the entire system of structuring the personality. In cities in which large communitarian ghettos are still rare, each group or each individual tends to initiate or follow processes of separation, assertion of limits, and exacerbation of difference, although this fragmentation is deplored by all. The result is sometimes rioting, sometimes the tightening of links and the creation of hardened, sector-based identities, and, finally, at times the emergence of extraordinarily crude competition which is rooted in the unending eruption of sector-based references as much as in the devaluation of all identitarian referents. These contrasting movements do not preclude combinations and interpenetration. The Shiv Sainiks belong to this social evolution, among the most banal and most global in

all of South Asia. They are generally not the initiators. As members of threatened milieux and as confused bearers of a fraught and self-destructive cultural and political configuration, they, however, are subjected to them with a particular acuteness. They react both by radicalizing these tensions — multiplying and hardening the limits, spatial borders, and bounds of identity — and by leading more or less controlled processes of fusion of the individual in the collective and of collectives with each other which intermittently call their previous constructions into question.

In this context, the relation of the Shiv Sainiks to individualism exhibits a rare ambivalence. The party is certainly haunted by fusional perspectives which would impel it to idealize the nation and the community as “inspired” collectives, bearers of a variable dose of transcendence. Communities, nations, and political parties, however, only appear to be acceptable to the Shiv Sainiks when they are their own, the possession of which affects the allegiance or conformity to an ideal. Parallel notions and other collective entities thus all appear to be potentially objects of hate or rivalry. Vague and encompassing entities such as “the masses” or “the people” are objects of repeated public offers and fraternization, adjusted by exclusions which change with the wind and which the unstable references to “the nation” can partially explain. As has been previously stressed, the valorization of the individual and individualistic heroism are ubiquitous in certain discourses and practices of the organization. They characterize notably two essential poles, often united by concrete interest and symbolic schemas, namely the nucleus of leaders at the top and the semi-criminal gang-leaders on the pavements. These two groups often view the masses with scorn. The leaders, with extraordinary arrogance, attempt to create or maintain mobilization groups on the basis of what they perceive to be the amorphous substance of the masses. The hardened egos of the hooligans are an

instrument to reach that end. The two groups also perceive the relation to the collective and construction of identity as simply issues of power. As at other levels of its political enterprise and its religious perception, the Shiv Sena is part of a certain rational complexity. At these levels, it has evolved and led the evolution of its environment towards a growing schematization and the spread of hysteria. The influence of the “traditionalist” themes of the Hindu Mahasabha among the leaders, the particularities of the Shivaji myth, the presence of a hostile or frightened “imaginaro-political” configuration in popular Hindu milieux, and the consequences of Partition have resulted in the Muslims being from an early date (1967) on the horizon of the Shiv Sainiks. On the basis of experience they appear to be the best agents for the construction of a Hindu collective ego that continually conceals itself.

The organization for a long time availed of, and still maintains, varied registers of intervention with regard to the Muslims. Several of these are sharply distinguished as hysterical identitarian compulsions and as an obsession with the theme of radical separation, which appears to gradually submerge all else. In the context of a “feudal-imperial” conception, for example (a complicated hybrid construction which refers to the model of Shivaji, to the colonial heritage, and to contemporary urban practices of patronage), Muslims are again classified in elaborate categories according to their proximity to Maharashtrian, or Indian, culture and history. Even in the midst of the 1992-1993 riots, heads of branches made distinctions, sometimes highly subtle, between “our (good and allegiant) Muslims,” the Marathi-speaking Muslims from the Konkan Coast (south of Mumbai), the “less good” elements from Aurangabad or Belgaum (“the Marches” of the mythico-historical kingdom), and those “who can be assimilated” or already were relatively assimilated (with whom it was possible to enter alliances, gener-

ally coming from Kerala or Tamil Nadu). All these Muslims are, moreover, considered by the leaders imbued with Savarkar's theories and RSS propaganda as Hindu converts, "impregnated" even against their will with the "genius of the national soil."

In the same framework, sects like the Khojas and the Bohras, considered the product of the conversion of "sons of the soil," are objects, at least rhetorically, of favored treatment. It is the culturo-nationalist conception that is thereby taken into account. An interesting nuance is introduced by popular discourse, in the shakhas and in the street, when one speaks of applying to Muslims the "treatment of a younger brother." The metaphor is related to hierarchies within the familial world, also known to Muslims, which connote a more or less severe benevolence towards the younger. These widespread conceptions, set forth also in the columns of *Saamna*, overtly imply the adherence of the minority to the whole (be it India, the nation, the people) for whom one has the perception of being the legitimate representative. Those who are "hostile" or potential traitors are comprised of the vast group, in reality very heterogeneous, of those Muslims culturally articulated around the use of the Urdu. Among them are the numerous inhabitants of the Gangetic Plain who threaten the electoral positions of the Shiv Sena in Mumbai. Finally, the absolute enemies are the more or less fantasized Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, towards whom no concession can be envisioned. The persistent complexity of representations of the Other partially explains why protective attitudes and appeals to fraternize constantly co-exist with the most brutal admonitions. The logic of citizen integration, which occupies an important place for heads of branches, a section of high-level cadres, and a noteworthy fringe of active militants in the workers' milieu as well as employees, aims to deny religion and communitarian differences. Its importance, combined with the "neo-feudal" mentality, is sufficient for Mus-

lims in the Shiv Sena to occupy major functions. S. Sheikh of Kalyan occupies the very important post of minister for housing in the present state government of Maharashtra. Several heads of branches are Muslims. Great insistence is placed on the fact that the Shiv Sena does not "act exclusively" and considers as "Mumbaiite," Maharashtrian, or Indian (this mobility of levels is characteristic) all those who are born there and express positive sentiments towards the territory, the people, and the culture. Integration can open both onto fusional perspectives, associating mass phenomena and the exaltation of individual heroism, as well as positing a "neo-feudal" conception that classifies the new arrivals according to their sub-community and the order of their entry.

The "communitarian perspective" refers to attempts to construct a united Hindu totality, coherent and armed. It is supported by the more or less imaginary existence of a Muslim totality of the same type. Once again, it is rooted in processes that, to a large extent, go beyond the Shiv Sena. The organization continuously subscribes to this perspective in a minor way, subsequently placing it in the forefront during periods of tension. As the Muslim minority — badly organized, with little education or cohesion — rarely resembles the aggressive fantasy of the enemy constructed for reasons of internal mobilization, everything is done from this perspective to give impetus to extremist deviations within that minority (insults, manipulation of symbols, provocations). During these attempts to foment extremism in the Other, discourses within the organization and a succession of rumors continuously shape the legend of the "communitarian conspiracy." The communitarian construction populates the political field with monsters that gradually acquire a degree of autonomy. If the victory of one community over the other is still presented as the highest objective, the communitarian perspective acknowledges in a more or less indirect manner that the Muslims belong to the

social whole, society being seen as a battlefield which could absolutely not exist without an adversary. Protagonists in that society appear closely, although perversely, linked. The communitarian victory is supposed to lead to the allegiance of minorities, or for the most modernist, to their integration. Closely related to the logic of vengeance, the communitarian perspective does not foresee the extermination of the minority. For a long time, one could not do without the close proximity to the Other. The communitarian victory is both a link in the chain of exchanged lives and putting the vanquished in their place. References thereto frequently express the persistence of hierarchic mentalities. However, a recent evolution tends to construct the Muslim as a *separate* Other. In the past an intolerable neighbor, insolent younger brother, or necessary enemy, the Muslim Other now becomes a foreigner. In the ideological and practical context of latent confrontation, he above all tends to become the agent of Evil or the harmful element that threatens the survival of unity, and consequently of all life and civilization. The development of these perspectives, which appears to be in progress, would most likely lead to the demand for expulsion or extermination of minorities were the Shiv Sena to obey a unique logic and a precise political project. This fortunately, is not yet the case.

Recent evolution in this direction has been frequently impeded by the Shiv Sena's own hysteric instability, which induces a permanent tendency towards simplification but also towards a modernization of the situation of relations between communities. It was also at times influenced by the latter. The organization does not stand behind the "dirty war" in Kashmir (1989) or the attempts to screen foreigners at the borders. Civil status is fragmentary. The decennial census (the last was conducted in 1991⁵⁷) is the only means of estimating the total population. Fifteen million residents of the present Indian Union crossed the

border to go to Pakistan between 1947 and 1951. Their families are frequently scattered in several countries. Millions of Nepalis, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis cross the border every year to look for work or stay with their families. Administratively well defined by a legislation which allows naturalization, the concept of foreigners is much more complexly experienced in social practice. The foreigner begins at the frontiers of the family, of the group or the street, of the caste or of the village, according to a diversity that is particularly well provided with criteria for substantiation. Nationality is only a secondary element in the appraisal of identity which, moreover, is not always easy to determine. Hundreds of millions of Indians have no identification papers, and countless millions cross sub-continental borders without procuring any such documents. Their nationality shifts. Some regret this; some are unconcerned; and, a number of others appreciate the fact. In this region of the world, one demands as much from the state as one tends to distance oneself from it. This fluidity is quite welcomed by entrepreneurs who employ many migrants, while it has for a long time been a source of distress for some nationalist elements of the ruling classes and, for a shorter period of time, for the vast urban petty bourgeoisie that lives in direct contact with the shanty towns.

The borders have, however, been more seriously guarded during the last few years, while the state has simultaneously endeavored to impose electoral and identity cards.⁵⁸ Zealous administrators, elected by secular and modernist opinion and by Hindu nationalists (such as T.N. Seshan) energetically attempt to draw concrete borders between foreigner and Indian, between voter and non-voter. The practices of the large national populist parties, above all the Congress Party, which are not loathe to receive the votes of the foreign masses in exchange for a relative protection, strongly characterize the situation. The Shiv Sainiks

demand, first of all, the application of current laws, which would place India on the level of "advanced" nations, although their proposed policies would in this case probably be much more barbarous than the "backward" laxity of the Union. They support administrative and police attempts to regulate outside migrations, proposing to increase the existing legislative arsenal and to transform the borders into impassable walls. The Shiv Sena is obsessed by images of the fortress, which is one of the symbols of Shivaji. It has done much to popularize this symbol among the entire population, and it is also conspicuous in making the Muslim the main category of people defined as "foreigners." Historical justifications ("They came from outside to colonize.") and cultural considerations ("They cannot be assimilated.") are combined to this end. In the context of the present evolution, imperial, "para-feudal," and also popular perspectives of otherness, which allow for a multiplicity of statutes and a great mobility of differences, thus lose ground to rational perspectives which, however, remain inadequately defined or are open to fluctuation. One form or another of citizen integration is sometimes proposed as an alternative to forced departure or categorization as foreigner, but the context is such that the Muslims scarcely believe this. The Shiv Sena is just beginning to take an interest in the legislative aspects of the problem, such as the imposition of a uniform civil code, much later than the members of the RSS and various types of modernists. In the meantime, communitarian tension follows its course. In Mumbai, the 1993 rioting concluded with a campaign of assassination attempts which resulted in more than 300 deaths. In one case this meant the murder of a well-off Muslim family which had sought refuge in Dubai. Revenge appears to take hold, and hate-filled rhetoric against "foreigners" is exacerbated.

It is in the framework of the communitarian perspective, in which the Shiv Sena avails of a minimal

margin of autonomy and a maximum capacity of intervention, that the "enemy" presents his most typical characteristics, or one might say, the most "cultural ones." In this context the enemy plays a central role, indispensable for the identitarian reconstitution of the Shiv Sainiks, of its supporters, and of its fellow travelers. As an organization or as a movement, the Shiv Sena brings nothing essential to the proliferation of the "communitarian" discourse, rooted in very old fears and expressed in a variable manner around slowly evolving systems of clichés and a fluctuating ensemble of rumors. In the Mumbai of 1995, the whole situation increasingly called to mind the sinister stock of imaginary tendencies and rationalist rhetoric, aggravated by hygienic and utilitarian representations, which characterized European anti-Semitism at the end of the 19th century. Comparable processes, but specific to the "modernization" of perceptions and practices, come to light in the context of the "massification" of processes of identification and the aggressive simplification of cultures. Some theses — like that of the virile and warlike strength of the minority and its fantasized propensity to cut flesh and the links of communities — certainly delineate common anti-Semitic obsessions of the European past, whereas the role of monopolistic usurer, the basis of popular anti-Semitism, falls rather to the Marwaris, who are affirmed Hindus and are often sympathetic to the BJP.⁵⁹ The Shiv Sena does not openly parody anti-Semitism, notwithstanding the remarkable provocations of Thakre in this respect.⁶⁰ Although they seem to express his deep conviction, they generally do not represent the spirit of the militants. The organization intervenes, however, at a parallel level by providing a framework, as structured as possible, in what remains a magmatic collection of clichés, fears, and fantasies. It also intervenes to generalize and aggravate the perception of the minority in the context of internal tensions. Finally, it makes use of distrust, which pro-

vokes the minorities to promote processes of very specific identitarian reconstruction.

There is a propensity to view Muslims as a unified aggregate. This tendency would not be in sharp contrast with the totality of "communitarian" practice at work nearly everywhere for a century, if the minority were not reconstructed in an always-changing manner as "modern" or as a "modernized" reality. The Shiv Sainiks, in fact, abandon more quickly than the general population the images of "old goats" which have served for decades to belittle Muslims, so as to systematize and aggravate representations of the latter as criminals, terrorists, or troublesome elements engaged on a world-wide scale in parallel economy and drug trafficking. Of course, traditional insults are not forgotten, as Thakre regularly refers to the Muslims as "the circumcised," a highly disparaging term taken from the working-class world. Contemporary discourse, however, readily tends to make of all Muslims in the world young bearded men clutching assault rifles at the expense of traditional images of old men seated at the entrances to mosques. The latter are described as depots for arms (the example of the golden Temple in Amritsar is in all memories),⁶¹ as general quarters where subversive conspiracies are plotted, and as fortified bastions where the minority prepares the conquest of the city's quarters. The reconstruction of the minority around the theme of action thus characterizes this part of the scene of representation, Muslims being systematically considered as negative or diabolic competitors of the Shiv Sainiks. Even though the most recent tendencies would make minorities out to be ceaselessly active promoters of harmful deeds through the evocation of their parasitic immobility (a theme that resonates with moderno-progressive ideology and which relates to the aforementioned concerns about social hygiene), these degrading images are manifested at the same time without contradictions along with a more favorable

previous discourse. This alternative, parallel discourse gives rise to reflection or causes its participants to take a calculated distance from the minority issue, both of which are extremely rare elements in the world of hate. It is apparently a question of the renewal of an old layer of prejudice, sharpened by the competition on the labor market. Muslims are thus described as those who stand in the way of action. They are the "backward," whose low literacy rate, or the cultural propensity to stagnate, are causes of the nation's failures on the path to progress and development. They hinder charitable activities and hold up production and work. They are those who "churn out children," their offspring representing an obstacle in the quest for national strength. The image of the *Muslim traitor of his country*, which appears in almost all the local representations of nationalism, occupies an intermediary position in the aggregate of characterizations of the Other. In that aggregate, internationalized, modernistic perceptions and denunciations of "backwardness" are combined with obsessions with loyalty and attachment to the land. The editors of *Saamna* frequently denounce those who "mobilize their forces, their money, and their international alliances against the nation." They are "conspirators" who place the virtues of the organization in the service of evil. They are, finally, "criminals" who are talented when it comes to slashing bodies and dividing societies. At the end of this circuit of exacerbation of heterophobic themes, they are malevolent. The Shiv Sainiks use in this respect few animal metaphors (cows, monkeys, rats, and other "dirty animals" of the European world nearly all of which have something sacred about them in the Indian context), but Thakre employs ad nauseam the expression "the green snakes." These absolutizing perceptions co-exist increasingly poorly with more nuanced and positive considerations which we have previously viewed, but they are persistently combined with recognized contradictions, such as appeals to

integration and sometimes to fraternity with the Muslims, or at least with certain Muslims, foremost when the electoral campaign gets underway.

The united minority, constructed as utterly aggressive, is quite unrelated to real Muslims. This point must be stressed, because it is not from Islam, or from the concrete aggregate of Muslims in India, or even in Pakistan, but from a bogey that bears these designations that the Shiv Sena derives characteristics for purposes of internal mobilization.⁶² One constructs from this perspective disturbing images to rationalize the organization's own extremist tendencies. This fantasy of the terrible Other plays a considerable role for the Shiv Sainiks, above all for those who are menaced by diverse forms of identitarian distress. The fantasized Muslims assume, first of all, the function of lightning rods. The Shiv Sainiks accuse them of everything, and repeatedly of that in which they themselves indulge (trafficking, racketeering, violence) and from which they derive no particular glory. The Shiv Sainiks' ideology of the warlike and virile does not suffice, then, for enemies of mediocre quality. The Muslims must be terrible for the militants to derive pride from their battles, regardless of how miserable a lot of them really may be. One frequently rationalizes one's own pitiable ventures, looting of shops, massacres with ten against one, or humiliating collective meetings, asserting that the power of the state is on the side of the minorities. The present logic of the relations between the state and the populations would often have communitarian confrontations become street fights with the police, above all in the workers' quarters. The Shiv Sainiks in the working-class districts and shanty towns regularly take comfort in clashes with authority, while their ideologues are distressed that the national state has become the plaything of the "green snakes." In this context, Muslims would not only be adversaries of caliber, indispensable for the more or less grotesque survival of kshatriya

values in the large city, but also sources of particularly dangerous and effective power, which the Shiv Sainiks must in turn capture.

The representations of powerlessness occupy an enormous place in the vocabulary and rhetoric of the Shiv Sena. They play on sexual and political registers, associating the capacity of evocation and ambiguity. The political "powerlessness" of Gandhian representations, "chastised" by their references to non-violence; the "powerlessness" of the constantly exploited and scorned popular milieu; the "powerlessness" of the nation, which descends in the levels of world ranking and renounces the use of atomic weapons: the list of powerlessness — castration, effemination — which the Shiv Sainiks discern in their environment and which they constantly attempt to exorcise is a long one indeed. The successive disasters with which indigenous cultures are confronted and the attempts at national assertion based on culture in the face of the threat posed by English-medium education and Americanized mass sub-cultures disturb intellectuals in the organization such as P. Navalkar. It is very much a minority tendency. The massive eruption of new models of consumption combined with the generalized valorization of inaccessible goods and the introduction of aggressive consumer behavior deeply distresses above all the petty bourgeois milieu. The collapse of old modes of sexual regulation and behavior, the assertion of women's rights through work, and female higher education in the cities upset the self-perception of a section of young men, while mass culture (cinema) at the same time exacerbates the culturally rooted obsession of hyper-virile heroes. The focus of the Shiv Sena on adolescent models, of which the still (angry) young man, Thakre,⁶³ is a typical representation, belongs to a general dynamic simplifying social representations, which tends to make of the powerlessness and the will to get out at all costs a burden shared by all.

The walls of the popular quarters of Indian towns are covered with posters advertising pills against impotence, while the dispensaries of sexologists of various traditions are never empty. The collapse of systems of valorization through work, the obsolescence of hierarchic regulation, the absence of satisfying employment opportunities, and the increasingly longer deferment of the marriage age — linked with unemployment and housing difficulties — have aggravated the scene, notably in somewhat stabilized popular milieux and the lower fringes of the “petty bourgeoisie.” These threatened social milieux are precisely the priority areas of Shiv Sena recruitment. In the context of the perpetual shifting from one domain to the other, the discourses on political powerlessness thus always find attentive listeners, ready for any adventure in order to forget the distress gnawing away at them. The image constructed around the real subject that is the aggregate of Indian Muslims is more and more deliberately rooted in metaphors of sexual force and virile capacities. It is also that which is to be wrested from the Muslims by defying them. What is evidently not available in Mumbai or other places where the Shiv Sena has influence, i.e. the capacity of military intervention and massive destruction, is transferred to Pakistan. According to statements of militants most concerned with distress of this type, the endeavors of identitarian reconstitution by the Shiv Sainiks very often introduce a phase in which the young militant recognizes his powerlessness. He often even goes to the extent of wallowing in it, beginning to drink, harboring provocative attitudes, or living as a parasite. The organization and its battle, which can only make sense when faced with a considerable and repeatedly re-activated threat, thus intervene to produce a “reaction” in the course of which the powerless and depraved militant constructs an identitarian armor and asserts himself through heroic acts. Any enemy can serve for these terrible games in the reconstruction of destabi-

lized personalities, and the history of the Shiv Sena is good proof of this. And, the Muslim occupies the center of this scene, in an increasingly obsessional manner.

It is a question of general dynamics. The evolution on the subcontinent and throughout the world of symbolic fields and strategic interest impels the Shiv Sainiks in this direction. The Muslims, such as they let themselves be invented, today actually structure the vision of young Shiv Sainiks according to the classic mode of the bipolarity of opposed elements. One sees, in addition, the manifestation of a remarkable accommodating attitude of the victim at this level. Quite a number of young Muslims in Mumbai adopt the discourse of the Shiv Sena pertaining to their community to describe themselves, sometimes exaggerating in terms of aggressiveness. This appropriation of the Shiv Sena’s rhetoric by its intended victims represents the ultimate victory of the neurotic representations and the field of hysteria-generating relations. The evolution of a section of the Muslim popular milieu in Mumbai toward criminality — both large- and small-scale — is, moreover, an old phenomenon which the actual circumstances only serve to reinforce.

The West is not forgotten in this context, but only relativized. In India today, the West is a symbolic referent and an imaginary construction of great importance, but its treatment is never simple. The “Westerners,” that is to say, often those who need to invent the West in Europe and the United States, have participated, and continue to do so, in the construction of more or less simplified images of civilizational coherence, which they valorize or render absolute. India and, above all, Mumbai are very open to outside cultural influences and, as of the last 15 years, most of all to mass representations of Americanized culture. The latter are, however, almost always subjected to a local re-interpretation, to diverse interpolations and

practices of more or less effective integration into Indian and Hindu relational worlds. On the pavements of Mumbai or of Raipur the "Western" representations, conveyed by mass media and the film sub-culture consequently appear both particularly brutal, very simplistic (Mumbai cinema regularly borrows aggressive themes from Western representations), and susceptible to manipulation and appropriation. The aspects of the "Western" fetish, as different from the actuality of Europe and the United States as the Muslims in the Shiv Sena imagination are from the actual Muslims of India, thus vary sharply according to milieu and times. It is in the face of this cliché-ridden and ambiguous dimension in the perception of roles and symbols of classification that the Shiv Sena must daily make up its mind as pertains to the West. Fragments of symbolic configurations and schemas of thought issuing from Christian colleges (to which a number of cadres send their children) are also present in the atmosphere. The Shiv Sainiks often make use of them unknowingly. The Shiv Sena, contrary to the RSS cadres, generally has no judgment to make regarding the philosophy of Aristotle, the constitutional principles inherited from the Lumières,⁶⁴ or the ethical problems raised by genetic manipulation. "Western modernity" appears to them in a terrible starkness, nearly deprived of its "noble" and elaborated cultural dimensions, a situation in which the Shiv Sainiks are on equal footing with innumerable contemporary movements in the Third World.

Generally, the Shiv Sena has no clear position regarding the West, not even concerning the West as constructed with universal metaphors, symbols, and classifications which are here of interest. This is not only due to the destructive ambiguity of symbols of Westernization that drift along the broken pavements of Mumbai. The vagueness also conceals contradictions and uncertainties related to the multiplicity of social milieux and political sensibilities which are

found within the Shiv Sena. References to the nationalism of Savarkar among the most convinced cadres, but more often variants of the Congress notion, are readily Western. The West is seen therein as a whole, possessing an identity and coherence. In this context, one attempts to copy and appropriate "Western" elements for oneself and, at the same time, to distance oneself from them. Indian problematics regarding nativism and the Western "model" are very complicated, and the cadres of the Shiv Sena have explored them with twists and turns, apparently without ever having developed a comprehensive view. One need only note such disparate and often irreconcilable views as claims of "modernity" and of an antiquity older and more effective than the European version; claims of "Indo-European" affinity; attempts of self-assertion as the primordial race or "species" (*jati*); assertion of freedom and power; appeals to draw inspiration from what is good in the West while rejecting the rest; self-flagellation and self-deprecation in the face of the "success of the West;" scorn regarding a world held to be basely materialist and making few ethical demands; acceptance without discussion of all that comes from the USA; etc.

All of these themes and reflexes⁶⁵ are found in the course of conversations with militants, at least those who have taken the time to stop and stand aloof from the exigencies of daily struggle. The relation of the Shiv Sainiks to "modernity," the other side of the symbolic metaphor, comprised of outright appropriation mixed with vexation in a tense atmosphere, partially explains why "Western" references, very often presented as intrinsically "modern," can be encapsulated or eluded by certain discourses and practices. The mass of contemporary young Shiv Sainiks is, in effect, directly influenced by a rhetoric of modernity, reappropriated and reinterpreted according to their needs and cultures, but which is still perfectly recognizable with the label "Western" attached to it. The Thakre

family, in unison with educated youth, follows very closely what happens in the USA on the cultural and strategic planes, those realms which count in their appraisal of the world. Although the Shiv Sena attempts successfully to impose its festivals and its rhythms on the population of Mumbai, it makes no pretension of "braking" the march of time and does not allude to another era, as the cadres of the RSS do.⁶⁶ Its young leaders dream of participating in the mastery of the world according to "Western" norms, as turbulent students no doubt, but still as loyal subjects. In this context, their condemnations of "Muslim backwardness," of polygamy and "the mediaeval"⁶⁷ bear an astonishing similarity to those read in the columns of *Saamna* and heard in the symposia of certain of the "modern secularists" brandishing the banner of the West. The fight against privileges for minorities (separate civil laws and uncontrolled educational and religious institutions) appears to them, finally, as something which can be conducted in the name of a democracy which they otherwise repudiate. The mobility of referents is characteristic of recent periods and of the most educated milieu.

Anti-Communist rhetoric, attempts to curb the organized expression of class struggles, or other more diverse manifestations of national pride and local chauvinism, on the other hand, contain a strong dose of anti-Westernism. They are not only a product of opportunistic practices linked with short-term political objectives. There clearly exists a deep-seated, but sector-based, opposition, also among the cadres and high-level leaders, to what is constructed and interpreted within and without the Shiv Sena as Western influence. Thakre's proclaimed indifference towards the outside poorly conceals the desire to provoke the foreigner in order to gain recognition. A stance of asserted outwardness is combined with a logic of seduction, but most of the cadres and militants are less shrewd and above all less likely to make use of such

dialectics in the context of their social and political practice. The refusal of democracy, or at least of the actual parliamentary system, belongs to the expression of an "anti-Westernism" which is not always mentioned by name. Certainly, the American and European systems rarely give rise to the contempt and hate which the idea of Indian "political powerlessness" calls forth. Opposition to the political culture of the Congress is particularly strong and brings tension, as all parties coming to power seem more or less unwillingly to integrate congressional methods of managing the electorate. Some cadres criticize the "colonial model" and Western values more generally, of which Congress would be the primary inheritor.

Secularism undergoes a somewhat different treatment. For the nationalist cadres, it is frequently viewed as unacceptable because imposed from the outside, but it is a matter of symbols and vocabulary. The exacerbation of the Shiv Sainiks ideas in this respect does not conceive of a religious state, such as Nepal with an absolute monarch.⁶⁸ The Shiv Sena advocates instead a type of industrialized authoritarian regime in which the reference to the saffron flag would proceed but which would matter little when compared with the uniform civil code or the refusal to recognize the role of castes on the political stage. Some young Shiv Sainik cadres have even gone to the extent of changing names, calling themselves "India" or "Hindu" so that their caste origin would no longer be recognizable. Rank-and-file militants from popular milieux often assume quite opposite positions. They have no objection to the secular idea, but they do not envisage concretizing it, other than attributing a primordial place to religion.

The economic issues, challenged by the massive and recent implantation of multi-nationals in sectors that were heretofore considered as strategic, provide, on the other hand, the sporadic appearance of anti-Western rhetoric strongly inspired by nationalism. The

affair of the "Enron" power station in Ratnagiri, the contract for which was canceled by the new Maharashtra government, illustrates this dimension whereby one must take into account a simple consideration of regional interest. The cultural particularities of Western influence are, however, frequently spared from attacks by an organization imbued with disco music which has insisted, generally without success, that its young militants learn English — and today data processing — and which has no alternative educational model to propose. The ambiguity of positions vis-à-vis the West is embodied also in strategic dimensions. The main enemy and foundation of identity is more than ever the Islamo-Pakistani neighbor. It is, first of all, associated with the Western metaphor, or with the Western world, because of its alliance with the USA. The most nationalistic ideologues, a minority inspired by V. D. Savarkar and S. C. Bose, often view the Muslims as types of "Westerners" in this context. Is not Mecca west of Mumbai? The West and Islam thus are alternative terms in an historical conspiracy against the nation and the integrity of the land, the British and the Americans allying themselves with the Muslims to provoke and uphold the "vivisection of the national soil" (i.e. the 1947 Partition), all would-be colonizers, aggressors, and rapists.

From another point of view, the same ideologues and a growing section of intermediary cadres increasingly see themselves as participants in a worldwide battle against Islam. The Shiv Sainiks, contrary to RSS members, are not well-informed as regards recent developments of Westernism in the face of Islamism, an infernal pair which tends to overshadow everything else, as socialism and capitalism had once done. They do know enough, however, to understand that it is possible and potentially profitable to play on the distant enemy, whom they often admire and who more and more influences their imaginations, as opposed to what appears to constitute the most terrible,

because it is the nearest, threat. This passage to the geo-political dimension supposes that they take a distance from merely local perceptions of culture and vengeance and that they repudiate all that would represent a concrete attachment to Muslim influence, from Urdu and the poetry of the dargahs to political conceptions. It is no longer a pathetic epic of young Maharashtrians from the popular quarter of Mumbai against their neighbors,⁶⁹ but one of global perspectives. This process of evolution remains hesitant, but the denunciation of Islam occupies a rapidly growing place in certain milieux. As of the last few years, the ideas, clichés, and symbolic systems in this regard would appear to have been curiously universalized. The difference between the symposia at which Samuel Huntington⁷⁰ lectures and the small cobbled-together premises of *shakhas* in shantytowns becomes at times quite tenuous. The Shiv Sainiks thus voluntarily take a stand for "civilization" against the "barbarism" which the symbolic and strategic West seems to want to set against the "green peril." Some of them speak of the new *Reconquista* with regards to their fight (and the Ayodhya battle), signifying that their street fights are indeed equivalent to the historical Crusades. There is no doubting that high-level cadres like R. Thakre find in "Western" globalization's own preoccupations and fears new sources for radicalization and exacerbation of their own anti-Muslim sentiments. Russia's erring ways are also closely followed, notably the outrages of the ultra-nationalist leader Zhirinovskiy. J.-M. Penn and the more cultivated tendencies of French secularism are, on the other hand, entirely unknown.⁷¹

This context becomes complicated because of the presence of China, an autonomous power that is xenophobic and bureaucratic. The anti-Chinese hostility belongs to the beginnings of the Shiv Sena's rationalism. It is expressed in dehumanizing metaphors concerning the Chinese, who are frequently consid-

ered in popular stereotypes as cannibals devoid of all humanity. This hostility has recently been aggravated by the petty bourgeoisie, involved through the diffusion of programs televised from Hong Kong and Singapore. The representation of a better "developed" and more powerful East Asian world causes great annoyance. The comparison, unfavorable to India, of the economic results of the two giant Asian nations belongs, furthermore, to the polemical arsenal of the Shiv Sainiks, who also find in this evocation motifs to condemn democracy and other sources of political powerlessness. The sentiment of solidarity of the South against the North and the poor against the affluent is, finally, certainly not unknown in the Shiv Sena, notably in the popular milieu influenced by the Communist Party of India (CPI) but also among the "Savarkarist" cadres who are impressed by the thesis of the "proletarian nation." On the contrary, it can be manifest at any time. During the Gulf War (January-March 1991) a number of young Shiv Sainiks felt themselves to be on the side of Saddam Hussein and the Iraqis. The attitude of the Mumbai Muslims, who wrote on the walls "Saddam Hussein is our leader," soon moved them to change their opinion.

Specific and Exemplary

The tumultuous passage of the Shiv Sena appears as a revealing ambivalence caused by the contradictions that impel it to progress and the ambiguities that paralyze its members. The passage is, first of all, specific. It includes, among other things, the avatars of an epic which has become an edifying piece of history, the failings of the attempted cultural reconstruction of nationalism, the consequences of colonization, the tensions of a political system torn between paternalism and populism, the hazards of the construction of the Union which must contend with regionalist sentiments, and the consequences of such traumas as the Partition and the Kashmir conflict. These experiences

or processes are not reducible, or sometimes not even comparable, to any other. The Shiv Sena is thus the complicated product of a complex history of which we have unfortunately had to leave out numerous aspects only understandable by referring seriously and continually to the movements which have borne it and to the society from which it has emerged.

By being the first to uphold a culture and a religion, the Shiv Sainiks do everything they can in making use of their own categories to make it appear as if their actions are unique and irreplaceable, they are the embodiment of a people, or that their organization has been forged as the result of heroic acts. However, one cannot leave it at that. The appearance and development of the Shiv Sena have a deep significance for all of South Asia. The current is integrated at several levels in an aggregate of young, aggressive movements concerned with the coherency within their incoherence. Its evolution marks, furthermore, the entire political countryside of the Indian Republic, giving rise to important reactions in the bordering countries. Even if the future of the organization would appear to be very uncertain despite the brilliant prospects opened up since the assumption of regional power by a few euphoric leaders, the future of the Shiv Sena's relational models (highly tense dipoles, the tendency to cannibalize the adversary by way of integration, etc.), its "imaginaro-practical" images, and the unique configuration of rumor, clichés and reflexes which it has introduced into the social scene, foremost among the youth, seems more certain if more ominous.

The importance of a simplistic economism, very vital among Indian intellectuals, is often combined with increasingly pathological paternalistic practices in politics to prevent the dimensions of contemporary reality from being centrally and seriously taken into account. However, it would appear to be due time to try to understand the dynamics at work in contemporary politico-religious movements, freeing oneself from the

sterile framework of mechanistic materialism and post-Victorian moralism. We must recognize that the contemporary politico-religious problematics can never be reduced to manipulation, camouflage or epiphenomena if we wish to explain the specific manner in which the imagination and systems of representation interfere with political fields and social practices. To take an example, the lifetime of rumors, which play an enormous and very specific role in communitarian tensions, proves to be remarkably long. In 1993 in Mumbai, malicious gossip about Muslims, which had spread at the end of the 19th century, was still alive and could be instrumentalized. Creations of the Shiv Sena are frequently of this type. Although they often are seen to be more contradictory than the rumors structuring the fears of the popular milieu, they are like the latter largely immaterial. They do, however, affect even structures of social relations and identitarian systems. Certainly, the movement was only able to obtain this audience and massively diffuse what one would like to term "far-reaching symbolic objects" because the societies in which it operates are receptive, although certain very concrete and material traumatic processes were not directly behind the support given to its "national Hinduism." It seems, however, that its influence will be lasting and that it will increase in size by orientating its reference points and its symbols towards a greater "fugitive strike force." It is a product of an era that associates the stark power of modern tendencies with the lasting evocative capacity of popular clichés. The evolution of some political organizations towards the privileged use of dangerous fantasies and tactless symbols makes less significant the difference between those that succeed and those that collapse. This development, the clear result of current trends, will continue to move affected societies towards an increasingly destructive instability. This evolution deserves to be seen in parallel with the recent world evolution of capitalism and industry towards the "hy-

per-real virtuality" which is becoming continually more charged with power and the destabilizing capacities of (financial) markets. However, these questions exist on another level of debate and analysis, and we must be wary of reducing one reality to another.

The European observer, assailed by formal demands, condemnations, and disparaging images relating to an "Islamic fundamentalism" presented as the universal danger because of its backwardness and aggressiveness, is able to find ample matter for reflection in the understanding of this violent Hindu organization, which is very innovative as when it comes to dehumanization. The Shiv Sena embodies a small, narrow-minded world in which one has long ago seized upon the manipulation of images, symbols, and perspectives of classification. The observer could also reflect upon an evolution which associates the most depolarized and most complex religious world with the sudden appearance and subsequent radicalization of particularly brutal and rudimentary movements. He or she might ask him/herself why a religious group which works to destroy with increasing intensity the culture and religion that served it as public image finds itself in the process of defending certain aspects of secularity — secularity as symbol and criterion of classification. One must also ask why it adopts "Western" clichés while at the same time as distrusting the West. He or she could ask about the sinister revival of European anti-Semitism which appears to have emerged from behind a certain anti-Muslim hysteria in India and Europe. Finally, the European observer could consider the hunting down of foreigners to which the Shiv Sainiks have committed themselves. The heads of the Shiv Sena, despite the cynicism of the leadership and the growing extremism of their supporters, have not yet taken legislative, administrative, or police measures against migrants which would be equal in brutality to those implemented by contemporary (1995) French authorities, to take but one of numerous Euro-

pean examples.

The enterprise of the Shiv Sena, from the chauvinism of the street to the claim to power in the second largest nation of the world,⁷² is, moreover, a remarkable occasion to pose questions concerning the modern nation and the problematics of integration. If a mobile and complex world is always concealed behind the invocation of both the modern nation and integration, a horrible simplicity might be found at their culmination, both in this concrete case and in the era to come. The destruction of social milieu and ways of life, the questioning of work as a basis of dignity and identity, unemployment and self-disdain, and the accelerated destruction of dominated cultures are not only part of the Mumbai scene, where they sustain each day the Shiv Sena and yet other tendencies which are less well-trained. One should not, therefore, be surprised to find certain Shiv Sainik-like obsessions, with but few nuances, in the suburbs of Europe — notably in Austria, France, Belgium, Sweden, Denmark, and Portugal — with nearly the same enemies, the same problematics, and the same logic of exacerbation. Do we have before us the results of a forced liberalization of exchanges and financial flows, along with the brutal politics of urban cleansing, or are we observing the manifestation of forms of resistance, or the return to traditional and hierarchic cultures? The two types of phenomena manifest themselves concurrently. The manner in which the Shiv Sena manipulates symbolic dimensions and imaginary levels is located at the crossroads of this remarkable conjunction. If the evolution of the Shiv Sena illustrates something global, it is indeed the progressive shifting, often brought about reluctantly or unconsciously, of the second problematic towards the first, without various combinations, synergy, and “turns backwards” being at any time excluded. The eminent place assumed by symbolic dimensions and the imagination in a political field devastated by the prac-

tices of the Congress Party, means that the lack of distance respective of its own normative productions can combine, in the framework of the Shiv Sena, with the fluctuating play of desire. Does one not observe in the Shiv Sena and elsewhere the self-assertion of a generation of frustrated youth without scope in a world in which there is no dearth of intelligence? And can one also discern in these movements an ability to manipulate images-forces regarding the norms appropriate to symbols and imaginary worlds, but inducing in the latter processes of simplification and perpetual hardening which allow for increasingly more and increasingly dangerous potential configurations of intervention in reality? The lesson is terrible; and it appears to be universal, the bearer of the global *Zeitgeist*.

There does indeed appear to be a worldwide wave of movements, carried by their internal contradictions and brought forth by the pressures of social milieux to manipulate dangerous symbols, copying and caricaturing Western constructions.⁷³ Some aspects of Islamic radicalism are evidently involved, along with numerous Third World movements, and war fronts in the former Yugoslavia.⁷⁴ In this regard, the cultural roots displayed on standards frequently become secondary. This assertion places in question the optimistic analyses of researchers, such as F. Burgat, whose work concerns Islamism, according to which contemporary politico-religious movements would have constituted for peoples in the South a way of re-appropriating the political and institutional domain, passing through a phase of cultural and symbolic assertion.⁷⁵ Tendencies of this nature, seen in the case of several Islamist movements, are not deniable in the case of the Shiv Sena. The organization has favored certain social developments. It has enabled thousands of persons to assert a dignity that had gone adrift. Members from popular milieux have been able to participate in the political game and in social action, after

leaving behind infantile relations, thanks to the organization's provocations and owing to the fear which it awakens in the less sophisticated sections of the ruling classes. In a number of cases, its presence would also appear to have curbed criminal and anomic tendencies. This being the case, optimism in the mid-term would, however, appear to be out of place. It is first advisable to place these movements in the general context of an absence of alternatives or freedom of maneuverability imposed by the North on the South and the entire world by the advocates of the neo-liberal course. The concrete result is that all these movements which carry strong alternative hopes are caught between criminalization and the search for bogeys.

The disguises employed by identitarian thrusts seeking cultural unity can be taken as simply caprices or be considered positively as an "accession to the universal" — an inordinate turgidity of more or less crass ethnocentricity — when there is an underlying power and they are supported by a favorable situation. This is the case as regards the actual "construction of the West" which issues from American and European coteries significantly connected with the media complex. Third World movements, particularly those in the suburbs of the inhumane cities of South Asia, avail of neither one nor the other. Rooted in a weakness for which the call to the masses compensates with growing inadequacy the makeshift of mythic history and populist verbiage; the apparently growing propensity of this type of organization to question any concrete realization including its own; and its tendency to break up all cultural configurations including the most valorized and transform them into strong, simplistic, and autonomous symbols all cast a disturbing light on the global and local scene. This dark picture is certainly not, as of yet, monopolized by the Shiv Sena. It is also still foreseeable that the responsibility of power, as well as its recent experience

with the electoral campaigns, may subdue the Shiv Sena of Maharashtra. It is perhaps ready to become a pole of racketeering, combining a tamed chauvinism with an authoritarian populism, adopting to the point of caricature the "Congress model" from which it had so wanted to distance itself. Other movements and other currents are, however, ready to appear in its midst and on its fringes to denounce the "traitors" and the "powerless." The increasingly deep involvement of the Shiv Sainiks in big crime and daily trafficking, the continual exacerbation of their populist practices, the continual increase in demands, and the progressive simplification of their identitarian construction call into question the hopes for cultural re-affirmation and stabilization of political world. To assert culture is one thing; to sustain it in ravaged milieux is quite another.

Notes

¹ Thakre is the transliteration from the Marathi script. The name is usually written "Thackeray," after the Victorian writer.

² G. Heuzé, "Bombay en flammes," *Les temps modernes*, no. 563, June 1993.

³ W.K. Andersen and S.D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron* (New Delhi: Vistar Publications, 1987); C. Jaffrelot, *Les nationalistes hindous* (Paris: Presses de la FNSP, 1993).

⁴ This conflict has not yet ended. There remains the judicial sequel, and the Muslim parties have still not accepted the *fait accompli* of the demolition.

⁵ Concerning this controversy and the Ayodhya affair: G. Heuzé, *Où va l'Inde moderne?* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1993).

⁶ Jaffrelot, *op. cit.*

⁷ G. Heuzé, "Les anthropologues dans la tourmente. La controverse sur les quotas d'embauche en Inde," *Journal des anthropologues*, no. 43-44, May 1991; "Troubled Anthropologists. The Controversy about Employment Quotas in India," *Anthropology Today*, VII, 6.

⁸ The work of the Maharashtrian Tilak is one of the pillars supporting the theoretical edifice of Hindu nationalism. Tilak's nationalist, thus ambiguous, traditionalism interacted with diverse themes of cultural unity. He strongly opposed Gandhi. He introduced the Shivaji festival at Pune in 1893.

⁹ S.P. Desai, *The Shivaji Commemoration Movement* (Bombay: Government Central Press, 1983); J. Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times* (Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1992).

- ¹⁰ Vide G. Omvedt, *Cultural Revolt in a Colonial Society* (Bombay: Scientific Education Trust, 1976). Phule wrote in 1869 a *Ballad to Shivaji* which made the latter a sudra (low caste) king.
- ¹¹ V. D. Savarkar, *Hindu Pad Padashahi* (New Delhi: Bharti Sahitya Sadan, 1971).
- ¹² M. Katzenstein-Fainsod, "Ethnicity and Equality," *The Shiv Sena Party and Preferential Politics in Bombay* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1979).
- ¹³ D. Gupta, *Nativism in the Metropolis: The Shiv Sena in Bombay* (New Delhi: Pramesh Jain for Manohar Publications, 1992).
- ¹⁴ Thakre made assertions to this effect on 7 and 8 December 1992, while the site at Ayodhya remained in the hands of the Hindu nationalists. He subsequently retracted such statements, as is his wont.
- ¹⁵ See regarding the Shiv Sena in Chhattisgarh, G. Heuzé. "Les Shiv Senas, des bureaux de chômage au national-hindouisme," *Annales*, July-October 1992 and "Shiv Sena and National Hinduism," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. xxvii, no. 40-41, pp. 2189-2199; 2253-2262.
- ¹⁶ There were at least that many victims. The official balances of rioting and repression are the object of what would appear to be justified contention.
- ¹⁷ Ekta Samiti, *Bombay's Shame* (Bombay, 1993); D. Padgaonkar, *When Bombay Burned* (New Delhi: UPS Publishers, 1993); Lokashit Hakk Sanghatans & CPDR, *The Bombay Riots; Myths and Realities* (Bombay, 1993).
- ¹⁸ This analysis, which obviously is partial and limited, is the result of several years of field study of the organization (1991-1995), placing importance on socio-anthropological themes and methods. The initial problematic was to link unemployment-politico-religious activism, but it soon proved necessary to evolve from that starting point. The cadres, militants, and supporters of the organization were questioned in the course of several interviews, life in the popular quarters and milieu in which the organization was integrated forming the object of specific approaches. The result of this work will be comprehensively treated in a forthcoming book.
- ¹⁹ Under the term "community" will be included what concerns rank in the collective estimation of honor and shared symbols of blood, as well as looser groups and movements derived from particular cultures or sub-cultures and, finally, administrative categories. The definition of, and inquiry into, the term "communitarian" in the context of Indian situations could fill entire volumes.
- ²⁰ These themes will be considered in a forthcoming work which deals with "fundamentalism and modernity."
- ²¹ Since 1989, B. Thakre has been the proponent of a definitive solution of the problem of the poorly housed of Bombay, promoting the idea of the construction of one million lodgings (to house four million persons), accompanied by the closing of the city to the influx of migrants. The latter proposition is unconstitutional.
- ²² The threat that spread Hindu nationalism through the country was treated in the same undifferentiated manner by a number of authorized medias until the Shiv Sena became a regional power.
- ²³ These camps are organizational manifestations during which sympathetic doctors, or those paid in one or another manner by the party, provide free consultations. Numerous camps of this type are held each year.
- ²⁴ Such repression was illustrated, for example, regarding the insurrections of sailors in 1946, the rioting during Partition, four general textile strikes (since 1946), agitations around prices rises, several movements of wage-earners in the public sector, the Samyukt Maharashtra, the movement against the cession of Belgaum to Karnataka, as well as on the occasion of innumerable local causes, involving a quarter or a street.
- ²⁵ R. Bakshi, *The Long Haul* (Bombay: BUILD, 1989); G. Heuzé, *La grève du siècle* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989); H. Van Versch, *Bombay Textile Strike, 1982-1983* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992).
- ²⁶ G. Shah, *Protest Movements in two Indian States. A Study of the Gujarat and Bihar Movements* (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1981).
- ²⁷ Here the Shiv Sainiks were in opposition to the Dalits and the Marathas to the Mahars. The conflict had a resurgence in 1994.
- ²⁸ This refers to economic liberalism and to ideologies of world markets and is not related to political liberal tradition such as described in the USA.
- ²⁹ The "large hotel" has, as of the last 20 years, become one of the most visible symbols of the tendency of cities towards a world of inequality, power, and violence. It is not surprising that it is inscribed, on both real and symbolic planes, in the enterprise of the Shiv Sena. Several cadres from the upper echelons have interest in this type of real estate.
- ³⁰ There are countless monthly papers consecrated to Hindu astrology that are published by more or less traditionalist *pandits*.
- ³¹ "Popular" is an inconstant notion which has always brought confusion and left much unsaid. Faced with an openly and dangerously populist movement, one can refer to it, assigning precise limits.
- ³² Hindu conceptions influence in diverse ways the cultural groups of Muslims and Christians, foremost at the level of daily life in the social milieu. It is, however, a question of clearly distinct religious problematics, contrary to multiform references to destiny.
- ³³ The development of *karma* requires the intercession of upper caste specialists, the castes themselves constituting illustrations of *dharma*. It is this mediation which the popular traditions of the relig-

ion of devotion (*bhakti*) refuse. This refusal is, moreover, the basis of the great popularity of notions of informal destiny in the popular milieu.

³⁴ A periodic return of the gods (the *avatar* is the terrestrial form) so as to restore the socio-cosmic order, sometimes opening a new era.

³⁵ The reference to feudality, even parodic, does not mean that there exists or would have existed in India a feudal society in the European sense. That would appear to be doubtful. There are, however, numerous comparable traits in several types of situations.

³⁶ G. Lapouge, *Les Pirates* (Paris: Payot, 1991).

³⁷ The Shiv Sena has been so often compared to European fascists by the Left in India that this qualification is retained without discussion by numerous authors, the criterion of appraisal apparently being foremost ideological. Those on the Left, who are often quite old, see the organization as fascist, while others are more nuanced in their assessment. It is unfortunate that the theme has never been the object of discussion, because it would be interesting to ask if a category from the European past can legitimately characterize a flagship in the era (ours) of "religious populism" and a movement of the colonized countries of the South, the historical background of which spread notably from the Italy of 1922. For the youth of the present generation in Mumbai, it is certain that the adjective "fascist" designates nothing concrete. Moreover, part of the organization — some individuals in the leadership and the most déclassé of its members — would rather place the latter nearer the Nazi movement than to a Fascism obsessed with the state, without it being possible to take the comparison too far. Finally, it remains to be known whether Fascism can serve as a category of political analysis after the intensive — and legitimate, in our thinking — use made of it as a metaphor, insult, or symbol.

³⁸ What has fallen the lowest in the context of ritual hierarchies of the karmic scale can be redeemed by adequate practices centered on devotion to an aspect of the divinity. The central traditions of *bhakti* are not directed against caste hierarchy, but allow for its relativization.

³⁹ Ambedkar's portrait is imposingly located in the Yogeshvari, Govandi and Dharavi shakhas. All of what is noted here is based on direct observation.

⁴⁰ The English term "communalism" is as vague as are French references to community. In Hindi, it is translated by three groups of words which refer to religious fanaticism (*dharmanand*), to caste adherence (*jativad*), and to the propensity to implement discrimination in the social body (*bhedbhav*).

⁴¹ The presence of a communitarian problematic related to that which abounds in India in the earlier possessions and foremost on the fringes of the former Ottoman Empire (Bosnian, the former Yugoslavia) is in this regard illuminating.

⁴² G. Heuzé, "Cultural Populism: The Appeal of the Shiv Sena in Bombay," in *Bombay, Metaphor for a Metropolis*. Edited by S. Patel and A. Thorner (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁴³ Everything begins with singing, the opposite of what occurs in France!

⁴⁴ S. Aggarwal, "In Service of the Poor," *Hindu Vishva*, August 1990.

⁴⁵ See G. Heuzé. "Crime et politique en Inde depuis l'état d'urgence," (forthcoming).

⁴⁶ There is a system of state distribution of basic commodities at subsidized prices which functions on the basis of a system of ration cards issued, in principle, to poor families.

⁴⁷ This form of competition, despite the longevity and cruelty of liberal practices in India since colonization, is not resultant of the influence of only the latter. It is also the form of competition born in the hierarchic worlds, on their fringes, and in all areas in which hierarchic discourse has no practical sanctions. The dissociation of global hierarchic ensembles aggravates the phenomenon, but it seems to have existed for a very long time.

⁴⁸ See G. Heuzé. "L'aggravation du conflit hindou-musulman à Bombay," *Purusartha* (forthcoming).

⁴⁹ This is what emerges from the reports of Amnesty International: *India. Sopore: A Case Study of Extra-judicial Executions in Jammu and Kashmir* (April 1993); *India. An Unnatural Fate: Disappearances and Impunity in the Indian States of Jammu and Punjab* (December 1993); *India: Augmentation in the Number of Deaths in Detention in Delhi* (June 1993); *India: Deaths in Police Custody in Kerala* (March 1994); *India: Deaths in Detention in 1993* (June 1994); *India: Reaction of the Indian Government to the Amnesty International report on the "Disappearances" and Impunity in the States of Jammu and Kashmir and in the Punjab* (July 1994); *Sikkim: Torture of an Opposition Politician* (October 1994).

⁵⁰ "Sweets in the morning, napalm in the afternoon," as was said in the American army during the war in Vietnam. The French troops in Algeria closely associated educational activity or aid in rural development with the repression between 1958 and 1962. All "backward" populations were threatened by this type of treatment, both concrete and symbolic, in the context of the problematics of modernization, until the advent of the presently dominant liberal quasi-theology which is little given to interventionism.

⁵¹ The members of certain Dalit movements are the only ones to press the sacrilege further in this respect. In 1989 a delegation of Kanshi Ramp's BSP visiting Delhi defecated on the *Samadhi* of Gandhi. The dispute between Gandhi and the former Untouchables is considerable. It is not, however, a matter of official stands taken by Dalit organizations or their leaders.

⁵² Tantrism: a path of ancient religious practice which attributes a

great importance to the feminine energy of the gods (*śhakti*). It would appear that B. Thakre is not insensitive to this practice.

⁵³ Cf. the film *Ankush*, 1989. The universality is spread in the sense understood by 19th-century European theoreticians of universalism, with less forcefulness, greater rage, and many ambiguities.

⁵⁴ One must always ask in this respect if there indeed exist systems of relation and social structures which one can globally qualify as Hindu, French, or Muslim. For the sake of simplicity, we shall assume that this is the case, while insisting on the fact that this problem merits being raised at all levels of the analysis of politico-religious movements. If taken overly seriously, the thesis of cultural homogeneity shows itself to almost always be false or simplifying.

⁵⁵ Identitarian pressures centered on destabilized popular milieu and certain sections of the "middle strata" are at least as disturbing in France as in India. The oldest and most widespread forms of cultural arrogance, rooted in the 19th century of colonial expansion, present themselves in this country as universalism for which the "cannibalization" of the Other constitutes the solution to the problem of its difference. In diverse crises affecting these valorizing representations, linked with an elevated status and a noteworthy power, one sees the development of openly xenophobic ideologies, but also the manifestation of pathological exacerbation of secular (as well as Catholic) fundamentalism which would paradoxically appear to be indissociable therefrom.

⁵⁶ From the rationalist *mimansa* to systems of dualistic thought, Indian philosophy can in no way be reduced to a monist current (unity of creation and creator), but these are variable themes of the latter which appear to be linkable to the relational phenomenon we are describing. These are also the themes which first influenced the Hindu nationalists.

⁵⁷ The percentage of Muslims in the population, especially the proportion of youth, constitutes an issue of such dimensions that it can provoke serious tensions, while nourishing "fantasmo-scientific" polemics, as happens in France. Already in the 1920s, Swami Shradanand denounced the demographic peril, announcing that Hindus would soon be in the minority in their own country (the empire was comprised of up to one-third Muslims). He was assassinated in 1926 by a Muslim. Presently, the Hindu category, the limits of which are subject to contention, represents 82% of the population; Christians comprise 4%. The results of the 1991 census pertaining to communitarian percentages have still not been published, although they belong to the simplest data. It seems that the Muslims would have crossed the 12% barrier, which would be due both to migrations and the slightly higher fecundity of the minority. With this percentage, the Muslim minority, amalgamated in a global entity, is situated at a formidable level: one which cannot be circumvented, but which is associated with an evident weakness. The "Blacks" in

the USA and the Arabs in Israel are in quite comparable situations.

⁵⁸ The development of the situation in Assam, where a Hindu population is apparently in the process of being numerically surpassed by the influx of poor migrants from Bangladesh, is behind this evolution. A strong regionalist and chauvinistic movement with a secular ideology has developed there in the course of the 1980s.

⁵⁹ The hate towards Muslims present in popular milieu integrates, however, a figure of the particularly detested Muslim usurer, the Pathan, native of present-day Pakistan. Although the community has almost disappeared from Mumbai, the stock of clichés pertaining to it is still very much present. The riots of 1929 (140 killed) had these Pathans as targets following the failure of a prolonged general strike by the textile mills.

⁶⁰ The Sena Pramukh suggested in an interview with the American magazine *Time*, in February 1993, that the Muslims in India could well suffer the fate of European Jews, after having asked for it. Some of this pettyfoggery, which also includes episodic positive references to Hitler and an apology of Gandhi's assassin, are provocations addressed to the Indian establishment and to foreigners, which the militants respect as such, without generally approving of the tenor. The banalization of horror continues to gain ground.

⁶¹ The movement of politico-religious revolt of a section of Sikh youth under the direction of Sant Bhindranvale, which began to increase in magnitude in 1983, was marked by two episodes during the course of which the rebels withdrew to the main sanctuary of Sikhism in Amritsar (Punjab). The temple was transformed into an entrenchment camp and propaganda center. The Indian army intervened twice (1984 and 1987) to dislodge the militants, carrying out the first time a veritable massacre in which Bhindranvale was a victim. Bhindranvale appears to a certain extent as a political creation of the Congress and the central state, wanting to break away from the Akali Dal (the moderate Sikh party) and playing on radical excesses.

⁶² The thesis of strategic syncretism, according to which Hindu nationalists would deliberately borrow features of their adversaries, appears to be more appropriate for the RSS than for the Shiv Sena. This thesis is well presented by C. Jaffrelot, *Les Nationalistes hindous* (Paris: Presses de la FNPS, 1993).

⁶³ He dyes his hair and uses makeup for public appearances.

⁶⁴ D. B. Thengadi, "A Peep into Comparative Constitutions." *Organiser*, 30 January 1994.

⁶⁵ Binary reflexes, sensibility of reptiles: elements "switched on" for entry into the cybernetic "third millennium" (of the Christian era). A growing population of Shiv Sainiks are "modern" people, who can at this time actually evoke images of the most disquieting nature.

⁶⁶ The opuscles of the RSS are often dated according to the Era of Vikram, which would situate us (1996) in 2053.

⁶⁷ One only forgot to specify that polygamy is somewhat more widespread among the Hindus (considered as such in the decennial census) than it is among the Muslims in India. In both groups it constitutes a very minority practice (less than five percent of the households).

⁶⁸ Neap, known as reactionary and under-developed, nevertheless constitutes a positive reference for some ideologues in the Shiv Sena, foremost those who derive inspiration from Savarkar and dream of a unified nation of Hindus from throughout the world.

⁶⁹ This image of Islam is constructed as was that of "international Jewry" in European anti-Semitism.

⁷⁰ Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs*. 72,3, 1993.

⁷¹ They call to mind something of the BJP, which condemns the former for extremism and racism, while the most cosmopolitan ideologues find sources of inspiration in the latter.

⁷² Of course, second largest in terms of population. Whatever happens, we shall uphold the assertion, which has become that of a very small minority, which aims at making in all circumstances the individual being the central measure of human reality, and views humanity as the essential basis of nations. It is a question of domains which we want to see restricted, in which scientific discourse recedes in the face of ethical considerations.

⁷³ According to some Europeans commentators, the reference to the cultural coherence of religious populist movements sometimes resembles exorcism. It only inadequately conceals a more or less desperate search for its own coherence.

⁷⁴ One finds almost word for word formulations by Thakre in the interventions of Karadzic, the head of the Bosnian Serbs. What should one think of the "Tigers" of Arkan, the head of the militia, who spontaneously find the symbol which has been so important in the construction of the Shiv Sena, and the movement of which very clearly resembles the movement on the most destabilized, violent, and recent fringes of all the Shiv Senas?

⁷⁵ F. Burgat, *L'islamisme au Maghreb* (Paris: Karthala, 1987); F. Burgat, *L'islamisme en face* (Paris: La Découverte, 1995).
