8 Movements of flats and citizens

Notes on spatial politics in Mumbai

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Middle-class citizens and urban development

“Basically, I would say the citizen’s movement in Bombay is more or less born out of garbage.” As this activist points out, the control and cleanliness of public space are major sources of controversy in urban India. Conflict over congested and filthy public spaces has been prominent since at least the colonial era (Anjaria 2016). Spatial conflict and negotiation are, therefore, embedded in the ongoing formation and development of the Indian city, especially Bombay/Mumbai. This chapter focuses on Mumbai’s middle-class citizen movements that engage in such spatial politics. Drawing on the literature and my own fieldwork with Mumbai activists, I suggest a perspective for considering different ways of being diverse and coexisting with the “other.”

Although this is a familiar problem, citizen participation has again gained renewed importance in the realm of urban governance since the 2000s. Contemporary public–private partnerships are characterized by an emphasis on “depoliticization” and market-oriented reforms (Coelho, Kamath, and Vijayabaskar 2013). This tendency reflects the tension between “political society” and “civil society”; in other words, the popular politics of the governed/subalterns (Chatterjee 2004) are seemingly being taken over by the claims of autonomous and property-owning individual-citizens. In this context, the urban middle classes, self-representing as the proper members of “civil society,” accuses “political society” of being fundamentally corrupt and nepotistic. Such “civil society” upholds instead the logic of the free market and promotes its own positions as “apolitical.” As this chapter examines, the practices and effects of these avowedly “apolitical” politics of citizens are closely related to their recognition of urban space and personhood.

This renewed conception of citizen participation should be located within broader middle-class activism in contemporary India, exemplified by the recent anti-corruption movement and various clean-up campaigns. Contrary to pro-poor social movements, this trend has been criticized as a “new middle-class” activism that facilitates increased control over the city’s public space (e.g., Baviskar and Ray 2011; Chatterjee 2004). It must be noted that, in mass media and literature, “new middle class” as a category is used to address a certain social imaginary rather than a specific class or income group.¹ Members of this category have been identified as consumers and the main beneficiaries of economic liberalization, as well as the body of support for Hindu nationalism (e.g., Fernandes 2006).

The main criticism regarding the new middle class in India, as in other emerging countries in Asia, has been centred on global capital and post-colonial studies. Within the dualism of the “global” (colonialism and predatory capitalism) and the “local” (the resistance and agency of the subaltern), the premises of dominant arguments have been either the “global” controlling the “local” or the “local” taming the “global” (Ong 2011). In this context, the prominent Indian cases, including the gentrification of beaches by excluding the poor in Mumbai (Fernandes 2006) and the demolition of slums by private housing societies in Kolkata and Delhi (Chatterjee 2004; Ghertner 2012), appear to represent the irresistible power of world-class aesthetics and global capital oppressing the local subalterns.

We cannot underestimate the influence of world-class aesthetics and citizens’ increasing control over public space based on such aesthetics. However, as already noted, spatial conflicts had existed before the current waves of globalization and the rise of the new middle class (Anjaria 2016).² Moreover, when examined closely, practices of civic activism in Mumbai do not quite fit the dichotomy of global power versus local resistance. Other than the logic of global capitalism, local logics on space and personhood play significant roles in Mumbai activism. Therefore, instead of assuming that a singular neoliberalism encompasses everything everywhere, this chapter investigates how concepts and practices are negotiated when different realms of power and control are entangled. I do this by focusing on Mumbai citizens’ groups called Advanced Locality Management (ALM) and by analysing how this new type of urban development was informed by the (“global” or “Western”) notion of the public and private, in relation to the (“local” or “Indian”) notion of the inside and the outside, and how this new participation practice is intervening in urban space as well as activists’ selves.

Generating inside/outside

Thinking based on a comparison between “global/Western” and “local/Indian” frameworks is commonly observed not only in scholarly discourses but also in everyday conversation among middle-class Indians. The conception of “inner/outer” or “inside/outside”—through interaction with “public/private”—depicts this type of lateral comparison.³ The concept of inside/outside, originating from the Bengali middle-class spatial category of “*ghar/bāhar*” (home/outside), was superimposed onto the moral distinction between India and the West during the colonial era. As a result, this framework, which is neither fundamentally traditional nor a colonial construction, has become widespread across India, and, in turn, has influenced contemporary citizens’ movements. In other words, inside/outside was shifted from a *local* folk framework to a *local* academic framework, and it is now generating its own reality by being applied to architectural styles and activism. The following sections therefore illustrate the lateral movements between the empirical and the conceptual.

Contact with public and private

The vivid contrast of the clean inside and the dirty outside in Indian cities has struck many visitors, who have described it in travelogues, essays, and novels

(Chakrabarty 1992). This has been also a major source of concern for generations of Indian middle classes. Activists especially often blame this problem on Indian people's alleged lack of "civic sense." Against this account, however, South Asianist scholars have explored other "local" points of view by theorizing the inside and the outside.

Partha Chatterjee (1989) notably argues that Indian nationalists discursively reorganized the Indian cultural realm into "inner" and "outer," representing the "spiritual" and the "material"; namely, while the West is advanced in the outer-material realm—including in science and technology and the institutions of nation states—India is superior in the inner-spiritual realm. The image of inner and outer was based on the socio-spatial division of "*ghar/bāhar*," or the home and the world. The world was considered the men's realm, where material benefits were pursued, but the home was considered the women's realm, which was more important for Indian national values and identity and which has to be protected from the outside. This dichotomy was undeniably influenced by colonial discourses, but it also created different values which couldn't be completely subsumed by them.

Sudipta Kaviraj (1997) also pays attention to the inside and the outside, taking inside/outside or *ghare/baire* more literally as "inside the house/outside" (93). Kaviraj argues that inside/outside has partly incorporated the norms of public/private: the private as the realm of the nuclear family was not accepted, but the inside as the realm of the large joint family was reinforced. Moreover, the inside had to be kept clean to reinforce its superiority. Cleanliness does not mean merely hygienic but also auspicious and safe. Meanwhile, the outside was considered dirty and dangerous because there are unknown people from different communities with various substances that threaten one's well-being (Chakrabarty 1992; Kaviraj 1997). In colonial Calcutta, the parks, reflecting the British sense of "public space," were also placed in this realm of outside. However, this "public" was considered by the poor as the opposite of inside, as no one's property. As a result, parks crowded with vendors and homeless people became filled with "filth." Kaviraj (1997) describes this process as plebeianization, or democratization, and suggests that this is the resistance of the poor in Indian modernity.

Delineating the entangled relations of inside–outside and the public–private helps us to better grasp the logic and spatial recognition of contemporary activism. In Delhi, more than a million slum residents were displaced in the last decade due to the demands of private property owners (Ghertner 2012). To explain the reasoning of the housing society activists in Delhi, Asher Ghertner, drawing on Chatterjee (2004) and Kaviraj (1997), elaborates the intersections between the "private" and the "inside." For the Indian middle class, the inside was a secured domain of family and caste/class groups. Yet, when it overlapped with the private, the boundary of the inside gained the connotation of private property and legal rights. Meanwhile, as Kaviraj noted, the plebeianization of the outside proceeded, the poor expanding the space for their livelihood. Thus, as the safe and stable inside for the middle-class shrank, the middle class is now trying to expand it beyond their home to their neighbourhood and even to the city itself. Thus, Ghertner (2012) argues, urban middle-class activism aims to extend

the renewed inside, or “public space”; yet in their logic, their former inside had been “encroached” on by the poor, so now they have to act to “reclaim” their “inside-public space.”

Moreover, this “inside-public space” is imbued with not only middle-class aesthetics but also a sense of the personhood that is inseparable from one’s surroundings. By using this concept as an analytical tool, it becomes possible to see contemporary activists’ reformation of “public space” not as the privatization of the given public space but instead as the expansion of a fluid and person-centric “inside.”

Inside as mine/self

The writer Suketu Mehta (2004), describing the familiar distinction of inside/outside (i.e., clean flats and dirty public spaces in Mumbai), states that “the boundary of the space you keep clean is marked at the end of the space you call your own” (128). This is another important connotation of inside/outside as “mine, self/not-mine, not-self” (Kaviraj 1997: 93). In this conception, Kaviraj (1997) explains, “the street was the outside, the space for which one did not have responsibility, or which was not one’s own, and it therefore lacked any association with obligation” and it was “merely a conceptually insignificant negative of the inside” (98). Additionally, this distinction of inside/outside as mine/not-mine has to be understood in relational terms; the boundary changes depending on the context, such as the self/not-self, the home/outside, and the village/outside. Here, personhood as self-inside is continuously shaped and reshaped through interaction with outside substances and the environment (Daniel 1984).

This aspect of inside/outside is commonly observed in contemporary Mumbai. At local railway stations in the Mumbai, this announcement emphasized this for me:

The station is your property.⁴ Please help us keep the station and coaches clean. Please do not throw wrappers and foods, etcetera, on the platform or inside the train.

A familiar scene on Mumbai trains is passengers eating snacks and then littering waste underneath the benches or, for those who want to keep their immediate surroundings cleaner, out the windows. Against this behaviour, the announcement asks them to consider the station “your property” and thus keep it clean. In other words, it tries to persuade people to consider the station as their home, or inside.

Tokyo Metro’s similar campaigns provide a good contrast with this reasoning. For example, in 2008 and 2009, Tokyo Metro designed a series of posters depicting passengers eating and drinking, applying make-up, or using cell phones on the train along with this message: “Please do it at home” (*Ie de yarō*).⁵ This highlights the very different perceptions of public space. In Japan, the public manners emphasize that the trains are outside and thus one shouldn’t behave as if at home/inside. Yet in India, the announcements ask people to “do it as if at home.”

This type of logic is commonly used by civic activists as well. For example, at a workshop on the right to information I attended in Mumbai, an activist and lecturer explained, “When you are on a bus and you find a hole in the seat, have you ever poked it, picked out the sponge from there and played with it? I have done it as a kid. But why do we do that? This is because we think “*Yeh to sarkār kā hai, merā nahīm*” (This is owned by the government; it’s not mine). You should think it’s yours.”

The framework of “mine” and “not-mine” is also used in the practices of activists to employ a concept of “public space.” Saaf Aangan, or clean courtyard, is a concept that a citizens’ organization and Mumbai’s municipality started using around 2006. In one municipality’s leaflet, they define *aangan* as “the public place in front of, or adjacent to any premises, extending to the kerb side and including the footpath kerb and water table.” The shopkeepers or workers who are considered not keeping a saaf aangan are fined by municipal workers named “nuisance detectives” and “clean-up marshals.”

The use of aangan, an architectural metaphor, evokes an image of inside, which helps people conceptualize public space as an extension of their house. One activist explained the saaf aangan concept to me this way: “We are asking the shopkeepers and street vendors to treat the street as yours.” In this system, even if a street vendor himself is not littering, for example, if someone passing by his chai shop on a footpath throws garbage in front of his shop and he doesn’t clean it up, then the vendor will be held responsible. In one case, a paan vendor was scolded by an activist and a marshal for not cleaning up the garbage in front of his shop. The vendor first collected the garbage with two pieces of wood plates and dumped it in a roadside ditch. But then the activist demanded that he pick up the garbage from the ditch. The vendor then collected the garbage again and put it into the dustbin. So, in this case, the vendor first thought the ditch was outside of aangan, and there was no shared understanding of what aangan was. In another case, a vendor showed his frustration and asked the activist, “Who are you? Is this street yours? Or your fathers?” to which the activist replied, “It’s not mine, but is it yours?”

In this way, activists’ evocation of “public space” is very ambiguous. As is shown in the second case, aangan is after all not owned by anyone. It stays outside. But the campaign tries to make it temporarily inside for the vendors and attributes the responsibility to clean the area to them. Meanwhile, the activists care about the cleanliness of the area because they also see it partly as inside themselves. These cases show that the activists and municipality tell people to take “public space” as “inside,” and by doing so, they try to reallocate property-owning subjectivity and transform spatial distinctions. The campaign intervenes in the inside as the fluid boundary centres on particular persons.

History of Bombay flats

The dynamics of inside/outside are not only conceptual but also related to architectural styles and physical living spaces. The development of Bombay flats, first built for Europeans in the reclaimed island city in the 1910s, exemplify this interaction.

Indian migrants creatively reorganized their new living spaces in colonial Bombay. In the process, the former inside not only shrank with the Western notion of private property but also expanded and incorporated things that used to belong to the outside, both in terms of the building structure and the sense of community.

The historian Nikhil Rao (2013) argues that the lifestyles and identities of Mumbai's middle class are closely related to the flat buildings. The flat here means "self-contained" flats with attached toilets inside, which appeared in Bombay in the early twentieth century. In terms of the changing inside/outside, the gradual inward movement of toilets is especially interesting. Bombay Development Directorate, established in 1919 when Bombay was rapidly developing, started building *chawls* (one room tenements) to accommodate migrant workers. In those days, toilets in India, both in cities and villages, were located outside the house. In chawls too, the washing area (or *nahānī*, used for bathing, using the toilet, and washing dishes) was not located inside the rooms but shared among people in the same building (Rao 2013: 109–111).

Yet this chawl design was considered unsuitable for the emerging urban middle-class families, and some of these chawls gradually transformed into distinctive self-contained flats. In the early 1930s, these newly designed flats had an attached toilet for each house, but it was kept in a separate block or accessed through a veranda. By the 1940s, houses with inside toilets had become common. This was not only because of the improvement of infrastructure but also due to the enlightenment mission of Indian engineers and architects who tried to educate people to discard their conservative and religious beliefs and accept the logic of modern western hygiene. Still, even inside the house, the toilet's position was controversial. For example, Brahmins' houses often had two entrances: one for family members and another for servants to go directly to the toilet without passing through the family's residential area (Rao 2013: 122–132).

Meanwhile, various ambiguous realms were created around the flats. For example, underneath the stairs and stair landings, being inside the building and outside the flats, were often also used for servants' and their families' accommodation. The compound, located around the flat building surrounded by the wall, is another example of intermediate space. Children were told to play inside the compound, not in the street, and women could come down to the compound to buy vegetables in their home dress, or "maxi" (Rao 2013: 163–166).

Moreover, a new conception of "community" in the urban context was forged by cooperative societies, which also made possible the building of flats itself. In the 1910s, the colonial states promoted cooperatives by offering reasonable loans to building societies. In this system, family members of a cooperative society purchase shares, which serve as security against which the society borrows money to buy land and build the buildings. One characteristic of colonial Indian cooperative societies was that membership based on "community," or caste, was allowed by the state. Early cooperative societies had strict membership politics, such as the case of the Saraswat Brahmins; however, the definition of community gradually expanded. Cooperative societies created metacaste identities, grouping castes, religions, or areas, including "Zoroastrian" (a fusion of Parsi and Irani), "Catholics" (East Indians, Goans, and Mangaloreans), and, more broadly, "South

Indians.” On the other hand, housing styles and areas created new boundaries as well, as the lower-caste and labouring classes in slums were not considered a part of the “South Indians” living in flats (Rao 2013: 171–197).

The development of Bombay flats as the living space of the middle class shaped inside/outside particular to the city. While toilets moved inside, a new intermediate realm such as the compound was generated. Flat ownership was made possible by cooperative societies, which created new communities and a realm of inside that shares a house as one’s property. It is unsurprising, then, that flats as spatial-personal units play an important role in contemporary Mumbai activism.

Expanding inside? ALM and the civic realm

Advanced Locality Management

Today, another inside is materializing as housing cooperative societies are reshaped anew under the framework of civil society. ALM, initiated by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), specifically its Solid Waste Management Department, is a project to promote partnership between Mumbai’s municipality and its citizens.⁶ This might imply the “public” nature of their project, but here, too, various forms of “inside” infiltrate. The cover of the ALM brochure⁷ advises, “Treat City as your Home” (*ghar*), in English and in Marathi, reflecting the familiar logic of asking people to regard “public space” as “inside,” an extension of their house, and thus their own property. Particularly, in this project, citizens are invited “inside” the municipality to engage in a negotiation between inside and outside.

Isa Baud and Navtaj Nainan argue that the neoliberal model of urban governance, popular in the 1990s, assumed that the private sector could provide urban services more efficiently and effectively than government, but recently, there has more appreciation of the importance of the government’s role independent from the market demand. Organizing “invited spaces” is a renewed attempt of local governments to work together with its citizens (Baud and Nainan 2008). This is a part of gentrification in Indian cities, promoting the idea of being “world-class” and incorporating the middle-class citizens into the institutional “invited space” while excluding the poor. This is another move towards “depoliticization” in the sense that the citizens are invited to talk directly with local bureaucrats, skipping the elected councils. That is, the municipality has created another privileged channel for “civil society” parallel to electoral democracy and especially in contrast to reservation systems, which have been one of the important realms of “political society” for the poor to demand their rights and their share (Singh 2012; see also Ghertner 2011).

In Mumbai, the municipality began the ALM project in 1996 to tackle the city’s garbage issues. The city’s brochure states that they “recognized the need for greater public participation for good governance and better delivery of civic services,” and they expect an “active Citizenry” to identify “pressing problems and possible methods of redressal and thereafter, voluntarily come forward as a body to assist MCGM [BMC] in improving infrastructure services.” They also expect citizens to suggest “simpler and more transparent procedures.” The messages

recall the ideology of the European post-welfare states, where the states demand citizens' voluntary participation to cover their costs (cf. Giddens 1998). This can be problematic in Europe because the state incorporates civil society and thus undermines its critical role; however, in India, where city services have not been sufficiently provided to begin with, only the idea of the post-welfare state was imported into this different context.

Since the late 1990s, already-existing housing cooperative societies and residential associations responded to the municipality and registered themselves as ALMs, and in 1998, all of Mumbai's 24 wards had ALMs. Although the data was being updated, about 700 ALMs had reportedly been registered in 2013. I mainly worked with one ALM formed in 2007 as "citizens' federation" of pre-existing societies in a Mumbai suburb. About 50 residents were registered as members, but active members who paid the membership fee and attended the meetings numbered about 15 people. Their main activity was the monthly ward meeting, where a dozen group members and the ward officers would meet and discuss cleanliness and the beautification of the area. Mostly the citizens complained about street hawkers, footpaths, and garbage and requested the ward officers to work on these issues. Before each ward meeting, the core members met at one of the activist's houses and discussed what they should bring up at the upcoming ward meeting.⁸

Inside as invited space

The citizens who are "invited" into the conversation with the municipality are involved in various forms of the "inside." Their activities are limited in this realm and their effects often uncertain, but they work to make sense of the situation. For example, a Parsi lady in the ALM started sorting household waste into "wet" and "dry" waste following the BMC's guidance from 1999, and she persuaded other residents in her flat-building to do likewise. As a result, she told me, 80% of the residents followed the rule on one occasion, yet only one type of garbage truck came, and it recombined this sorted waste when it collected it. The residents eventually stopped sorting, and she was one of the few people who still sorted their waste. When I asked her why she continued with the ALM activities and joining the meetings, she explained:

I continue going because it gives us at least one opening. At one time we had no access to any officers. Now at least if you go regularly, you build up a little, you have a good relationship with some of the officers and really sometimes, there are nice people and they will help you if they can.

The ALM's "invited space" is obviously not an open-to-all public space because BMC invites only flat-residents/middle-class citizens into the "inside" to work on specific issues. ALM members sometimes regret that the areas of activity are limited, but acquainting themselves with the officers and directly negotiating their particular concerns are key advantages. Maintaining access to this special space is one reason why ALM members attend the meetings even when the results of the activities do not seem successful.

The particularities and limitations of ALMs also reorganize the activists' sense of space and their everyday life interests. The active members of the ALM I observed devoted themselves fully to the beautification of their immediate neighbourhood: their flat compounds, the streets in front of their buildings, the nearest parks, and so on. For example, when Mr. A, another ALM member, gets information about road construction in his area, he goes to the site to observe. One day, he was at the construction site both in the morning and from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m. He came across it when he was walking in the morning, so he watched the construction workers. He then asked the workers about the night-shift timing and went back then. Usually roads get potholes after a few months, but his roads are nice even after several years. He says that you have to make the centre of the road a little higher so that water drains down to the ditches on both sides. Also, you have to use cement in the connecting parts of asphalt roads and tiled streets to preserve the shape. The municipality's engineers do not bother to supervise themselves, but leave it to the contractors, so Mr. A has to ensure himself the jobs are done nicely.

Care primarily for their own backyard is also due to the specific forms required by BMC. For instance, if a citizen complains about something at the ward meeting, the officers ask him to submit "proofs," namely, a letter and photographs. If he couldn't submit these, the complaint is considered false. Thus, the activities have to remain within their eyeshot. Moreover, just like the segregated waste collected together, when they prepare these letters and pictures, they are often just sent from one office to another. This situation appears to encourage the activists to focus on internal issues such as gaining "satisfaction." Within the given issues in which intervention is possible, another "inside" increases its importance.

Inside as self and negotiation with the outside

The activities of ALM have special significance for the activists to perform their duty as citizen-educators, a mission inherited from colonial elites and adapted into the neoliberal form (Chatterjee 2004; Taguchi 2013). Mr. A, now in his mid-60s, took an early voluntary retirement from a big company at the age of 44 and since then has been devoting his time to social service. He now focuses on the local ALM because it gives him "satisfaction." He started explaining the ideas of "success and satisfaction" when I asked him why he was doing this kind of work.

This is serious and you need to know. I was talking about "success and satisfaction." ... Gandhiji had said, there is enough and sufficient for everybody's needs but not for everybody's greed ... What I mean to say is "success and satisfaction." You can be satisfied if you have your needs fulfilled ...

Contrary to "success," corresponding to "greed," "satisfaction" is achieved when your "need" is met. He further relates "satisfaction" to "serving others":

When you go on further in age, you will realize the reason why people are born is not for themselves; it is for serving others. The greatest satisfaction

is in serving others in the process of doing something good ... money, this, that, you are not interested in all that. You are interested in your satisfaction.

In his explanation, “serving others” and gaining one’s “satisfaction” are seamlessly connected. The concept of “service” in India often connotes the Hindu concept *seva*—understood as “selfless service” to a deity or a community, which since the colonial era, has been used for the country, political parties, and civic associations (Watt 2005). When I asked other members if they think of their activities as *seva*, however, many people expressed some reservations. They say *seva* means something grander, reserved for more serious work such as helping poor people. Meanwhile, their work, focused on “my area” and their “backyard,” is their obvious duty or responsibility, or it is a natural demand on them as taxpayers.

Their explanation implies that *seva* and civic activism are contradictory, yet they are apparently in the process of conceptual and practical reconfiguration. I asked another member of the ALM, Mr. B, if his work was *seva*, and he also stated that it was not *seva* but satisfaction. He added that he hates the word *seva* and continued:

No, no, no social worker. I am no worker. No, no, no. I don’t get dictated by anybody, number one. Number two, when I myself have my own time going around, and whatever thing I find not proper, I think it is my duty to bring it to the notice of whichever authority.

Moreover, Mr. B also mentioned “success and satisfaction”:

There is a term “success and satisfaction.” I would rather go for satisfaction. Success is one which is decided by others ... But satisfaction is you decide. You get satisfaction when you agree with yourself that you have done some good thing. I get immense satisfaction when nothing related to me—now this garden or this footpath I never walk on ... but still when I see one irregularity and if I am able to present it and it gets solved I get tremendous satisfaction.

They emphasize that satisfaction is given only by oneself, and the self does not seek personal reward. I told Mr. B that I had heard “success and satisfaction” elsewhere and asked if he had read it in a book or something. He said he did not remember where he got it but elaborated:

B: Even our religion, there’s Gita, like Bible is for Christian and Quran is for Muslims, we have Gita. Gita says that, in Sanskrit language, *karmanyevādhikāraste mā phalesu kadācana*. They say that you do your job. Don’t bother about the fruits. Whether I will get credit, whether I will get success. No, simply go on doing your job. The God will give you the fruits and the benefits.

Y: So would you call what you are doing as ...

- B: I will tell you last 10 years I have no major illness ... , so in a way God compensates. I am able to walk from here to [neighbouring area] every day. People complain of old age and joint pain. People have this, why should I bother. All these things are none of my business. I pay tax ...
- Y: You call what you are doing as *dharma* or ...?
- B: I told you I get tremendous satisfaction out of it.

Mr. B quotes a verse on karma from the *Bhagavad Gita* and explains that God compensates him for his good karma with health. The Gita, a section of the ancient Indian Sanskrit epic the *Mahabharata*, consists of dialogues between Krishna and Arjuna. Arjuna agonizes over the dilemma of war between kinsmen, but Krishna tells him to do the right thing according to his dharma, which is to fight. The quoted part, verse 47 of Chapter Two, is one of the main themes of the Gita, and it says "Action (karma) alone is the province, never the fruit thereof." (Gandhi 2009: 24, parenthesis added). M. K. Gandhi, who connected the Gita to modern social movements through his translation and interpretation of it, explains this part in his 1926 talk:

The slave-owner tells the slaves, 'Mind your work, but beware lest you pluck a fruit from the garden. Yours is to take what I give.' God has put us under restriction in the same manner. He tells us that we may work if we wish, but that the reward of work is entirely for Him to give.

(2009: 24)

This verse and the Gita more generally are often mentioned or included in activists' documents in today's civic movements. However, when I tried to ask Mr. B if he would call his activities dharma, he repeatedly insisted that it was "satisfaction." He emphasizes the satisfaction he can feel from the action itself rather than from being acknowledged by other people for successful results.

Contrary to prevailing analyses of the consumer middle class controlling the city at large, citizens' activities are quite limited in the realm proscribed by the municipality. The given civic realm can be seen as the expanding "inside," cantering on the activists' houses and spreading to the compound and neighbourhood. Although the concrete effects of their actions are unclear, the activists' explanations reveal that "satisfaction" drives their activities. As Mr. B emphasizes, references to satisfaction seem oriented towards the realm of the private self, independent from others' evaluation. Yet at the same time, he also tells us that even if the results of his activism are unseen, God will provide fruits of the labour in the form of a healthy body. Here, then, is the juxtaposition: a neoliberal form of the individual-citizen, who prioritizes personal "satisfaction," and a form of "selfless service" that acknowledges that the results of actions are beyond one's control. Civic activities and satisfaction are explained using the Gita and karmic logic, revealing one's satisfaction through one's bodily condition.⁹ Thus, actions motivated by satisfaction are not limited to one's private "inside," but are connected to one's surroundings. In this manner, activists' work for the "inside" is not accomplished without intervention in the "outside."

Negotiating inside and outside

Citizen participation, with its “apolitical” appearance, is a field of intricate political practice where the public/private has been connected to inside/outside and thus differently divided and articulated. As discussed in the literature, today’s urban activism has a tendency to expand the middle-class activists’ “inside” by superimposing the sense of “public” onto it. This chapter suggests, however, that this process is not so smooth or straightforward. A final scene from an ALM meeting further illustrates this. When an ALM activist complained about the family living on a footpath in her neighbourhood, a ward officer replied, “We can pick up and clear away things, but we cannot do it to people.” The outside that the activists try to incorporate can thus also be the inside of people who work and live there, and their lives must be protected. This basic sense still appeared to be shared among Mumbai activists.

Because the notion of inside/outside is inseparable from self/not-self, the image of the individual citizen keeps changing its form in practice. The activists are invited to help BMC according to neoliberal citizen participation logic, and they accommodate themselves in this scheme through talk of satisfaction. Nonetheless, their image of self is partly based on the modern developmentalist and educational citizen, and their satisfaction is partly supported by the norm of selfless service. This complex figure of the citizen also generates gaps in their activities. Activists who interfere in the outside can achieve their goal (getting satisfaction) without really succeeding (in terms of actualizing sorted waste collection or eliminating street vendors). Such gaps in effect also prevent the endless expansion of the “inside-public space,” which would exclude the other.

The effect of not making everything “inside” or part of the civic realm may exemplify one aspect of South Asian sociality as the field of negotiation among different and often conflicting values. Mumbai citizens’ political endeavours and dilemmas may thus help us to think about how to coexist with the “outside” or others, in other words, how to reimagine diversity without ignoring real differences and subsuming “them” into “our” realm, a pressing issue in our contemporary world.

Notes

- 1 According to one definition, the top 26 per cent of Indian households are estimated to belong to the middle class (Baviskar and Ray 2011).
- 2 Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria (2016) notes three historical moments that formed contemporary Mumbai’s special contestation: “(1) late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century efforts by the colonial state to contain a landscape of congestion, blockages, and encroachments; (2) late nineteenth-century spatial transformation in the name of public health; and (3) early twentieth-century middle-class civic activism around the condition and appearance public space” (41).
- 3 In contrast to empirical or quantitative comparison, lateral comparison attends to the abstraction, comparison, and translation done by not only the researchers but also by the informants and the subjects of the study. For a discussion of “lateral concepts” in anthropology and in science and technology studies, see Gad and Jensen (2016).
- 4 The announcements are made in Marathi, Hindi, and English—in this order. For the term *property*, they use “*station aaple sampatiya hai*” (Marathi) and “*station appke sampatti hai*” (Hindi).

- 5 Tokyo Metro explains the campaign in its press release (<http://www.tokyo-metro.jp/news/2009/2009-17.html>) this way: "Different from the private space, certain behaviors and actions are unsuitable in the public space. 'Please do it at home' series shows drawings of the situations in which anyone would think 'why don't you do it at home ...' and make people reflect upon their own behaviors."
- 6 Delhi's Bhagidari Scheme, stated in 2000, is a similar project (see Ghertner 2011; Coelho, Kamath, and Vijayabaskar 2013).
- 7 I obtained one from BMC's ALM officer. She did her master's in social work in Mumbai and did a graduate course on governance and democracy in the Netherlands. Isa Baud, whose work I quoted earlier, was her supervisor in the Netherlands.
- 8 As a part of my approximately two-year fieldwork in Greater Mumbai, I joined the ward meeting of this ALM four times and the internal meeting five times from October 2011 to February 2013. I conducted interviews with 11 active members (seven male and four female) from January to March 2013. All of them were born and brought up in Mumbai and were highly educated in English. Although their mother tongues varied (e.g., Gujarati, Tamil, and Kannada), English was the main language at the members' internal meetings, with Hindi and Marathi added.
- 9 Karma (*karmam*) is considered as one of substances to maintain a good balance of persons. Karma is stored in part of the body and comes to fruition when it is ripe (Keyes and Valentine Daniel 1983; Daniel 1984).

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