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PROTESTING LIBERALIZATION IN INDIA: AN EXAMINATION OF DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES USED BY STREET-VENDORS, SQUATTERS, AND SMALL-RETAILERS TO CREATE AND UNIVERSALIZE RESISTANCE NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in the College of Communication and Information Studies at the
University of Kentucky

By
Rajesh Gaur

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Chike M. Anyaegbunam, Associate Professor of Communication

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The retail sector in India is experiencing a shift from an industry dominated by small grocers serving the needs of local markets to one characterized by chain retailers, both national and international. The liberalization of the retail sector in the last decade has edged the street-vendors, squatters, and small retailers from the prime business spaces to marginalized peripheries, which had led to widespread localized protests by the small retailers all over the country.

The *Aminabad* Market in a metro city in northern India provided a unique opportunity to study ongoing resistance against chain retailing. The retailers of *Aminabad* were at the center of the most vocal protests and organized numerous strikes that led to the government action. Within this setting, this study employed an ethnographic methodology to explore the narratives of resistance by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers in a traditional market in India.

The study further explores the protests that are constituted in 'local' market conditions; and how they can become the basis for universalization of 'local' resistance into the mass-based movements. For this purpose, the theoretical framework utilizing Harvey's conceptualizations of local resistance movements as well as Williams' concept of the "militant particularisms" and narrative storytelling were used in this study. To this purpose, the study examines small retailers' participation, their use of communication strategies to develop resistance narratives, and the techniques used in universalizing the resistance.

The implications of current study suggest that although the typical small retailers maintains a defiant narrative against chain retailing, the social, economic, political differences within prevent the formulation of a unified agenda that represents their diversity. The unresolved ideological, social, and economic particularities within small retailing have a divisive influence on their resistance movement.

The study also discusses the use of "Participatory Action" approach for facilitating a productive participation among the constituents, which can be a way forward for future

research. Participatory Action can actively facilitate the resolution of underlying ironies for reforming and recreating the institutions according to the small retailers' needs and resistance discourse that reflects their collective expression.

KEYWORDS: Street Vendors, Small Retailers, Militant Particularisms, Globalization, Resistance

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Student Signature

  December 17, 2009
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Date

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Dedicated to my favorite companion, Rebecca, whose love,

encouragement, and understanding made this project possible.

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LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter One: Introduction to Study

Aminabad is always full of people: the numbers rise year by year. To an onlooker the market is bursting at seams – the vendors, squatters, shopkeepers, shoppers, one kind of public holiday occasion followed by the other. To a shopper passing through the market nothing looks out of order; chaos is normal here. The same shops and the same people, year after year, have created a veneer of normalcy and continuity in the market.

The *Aminabad* market is also the center of resistance activity by the small retailers against chain retailing in India, which was the compelling reasons to choose this site for the ethnography of small retailers' resistance movement. *Aminabad* is centrally located in Lucknow. The city is the capital of the state of *Uttar Pradesh*, which is the largest state in India. *Aminabad*, in its cosmopolitan character, located in the historical hearts of Lucknow, represents the political, social, or economic diversity in India. The small retailers of *Aminabad* were the first in the state to organize protests against chain retailing. *Aminabad's* front-runner role in the protest movements in words of a union leader is "symbolic of the flame for resistance."

The Lucknow that I had left in1998 was like a different city. It was not yet a place to which people flocked to do business. It had not yet experienced the nightmare of urban meltdown. It was a city trapped at the precipice of its colonial history, which hadn't yet started negotiating its identity in the face of modernity. There were no chain stores or malls; the retailing was limited to the mom and pop stores. Lucknow was still five years away from becoming a center of protest against chain retailing. It was almost a decade since I had visited *Aminabad*, the things appeared unchanged, but it turned out to be an experience very different from any before.

The *Aminabad* market that I encountered, as an ethnographer, was a very different one from my memories. The dynamic in the market place, which looked obvious, then, had started to unravel itself. In the past, I was far enough from it; I knew the rituals, but couldn't put it in perspective, I heard the language, but followed only the simpler text. This investigation bared the things that I had taken for granted. It revealed that simple lives in *Aminabad* negotiate through very complex circumstances. I was near enough to understand their passions, and near enough to contextualize their discourses. I had time to explore their rituals, their relationships, and their everyday interactions. Within this setting I examined the resistance narratives that small retailers create for a collective action against chain retailing and investigated the conditions of resistance that began as local and community experience, and the underlying ironies that prevent it from becoming a nation-wide movement.

Raymond Williams (1982) suggests that ideals forged out of the affirmative resistance experience of solidarities in one place can be generalized and universalized as a working model of a new form of society. The argument for universalization of place-based protest and resistance strategies becomes more plausible, in this era, when neoliberal globalization is breaking down the barriers of trade, culture, commerce, communication, etc., and increasing the integration of the world market in favor of big businesses while adversely affecting the employment in unorganized and informal sectors of economies.

The informal sector, also known as the "grey market", of economy consists largely of small, unregistered enterprises, the street vendors and small retailers. Informal employment comprises one-half to three-fourths of non-agriculture employment in developing countries: 68 % in Asia, 51 % in Latin America, 48 % in North Africa, and 72 % in sub-Saharan Africa (Charmes, 2001). In the case of India, the home-based workers (comprising mostly of mom

and pop retail stores) and the street vendors are two of the largest sub-groups of the informal workforce. According to an ILO (2002) report 97% of retail sales in India are made in more than 15 million tiny mom-and-pop stores, which account for an estimated 10-25% of the non-agricultural workforce. More recent studies regarding women's employment (Kantor, 2009) and the informal workers in Asia (Mehrotra & Biggeri, 2007) report similar estimates.

India's millions of small retailers and street vendors are terrified of the onslaught from organized, large-scale domestic and foreign retailers. This has led to mostly disparate and one-off mass protests against retail investments all over India (Vaswani, 2007). However, in India's largest state of *Uttar Pradesh*, the government, under pressure from protesters has taken the unusual step of temporarily barring all foreign and domestic retail chains from setting up shops in the state, giving some credence to the street vendors' demands. The case of *Uttar Pradesh* in India provided a unique opportunity for studying the localized resistance movements and examining the efficacy of communication techniques in translating the local resistance to the state and national levels.

A Theory of Governmentality and Communicating Resistances

Approaching the current study theoretically from the globalization and resistance perspective, there are three areas of interest: a) "militant particularism" - building "local" resistance narrative; b) communication techniques used for translating "particular" into "universal" resistance; c) neoliberal governmentality.

Raymond Williams'(1989) "militant particularism" argues that all broad-based political movements have their origins in particular struggles in particular places and times. Harvey (1996) lays down that "theoretical practice must be construed as a continuous

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dialectic between the particularism of lived lives, *i.e. place-based,* and a struggle to achieve sufficient critical distance and detachment to formulate global ambitions" (p. 44).

The movement from particularity to universality entails a 'translation' from the concrete to the abstract. Williams (1989) considered this striving to go 'beyond' through communication to be vital: "People recognize some condition and problem they have in common, and make the effort to work together to change or solve it" (p. 249). Developing social movement practices and perspectives from militant particularisms towards more universal political projects entails 'going beyond' the specific and the local. Harvey (1996) argues that without this transition, collective forms of action become impossible.

The local conditions for resistance, however, are very much affected by the global climate. In the context of resistance, neoliberal governmentality provides a viable basis for the understanding of global influence in local contexts as well as the role of government, multi-national corporations (MNC), and non-governmental organizations (NGO). Foucault (1988) argues that the notion of governmentality refers to societies where power is de-centered and its members play an active role in their own self-government, as posited in neoliberalism. However, the self-government, according to Foucault (1988), is elusive and ironically leads to the "retreat of the state," where we observe the appearance of new actors on the scene of government. It is a fundamental transformation in the statehood and a new relationship between the state and civil society actors indicative of the primacy of non-state actors (Spooner, 2004), in Indian context - the MNCs and trade unions' role in the control of governance and resistance respectively.

Background and Significance

The Indian economic liberalization started in earnest in the 1990s. Since then, the changes have gone a long way toward freeing up the domestic economy from state control. State monopoly has been abolished in virtually all sectors, which have been opened for privatization. The eroding small-scale industry reservation and protections persist as the only impediment to economic liberalization (Panagariya, 2001). The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have consistently pointed at the protections accorded to the small-scale industries and the retail sector from foreign direct investments (FDI) as the major cause for economic underperformance of the country.

For overseas companies looking for growth outside their domestic markets, India's retail business is one of the most attractive. Consumer demand is booming as the government's steps to liberalize the economy have produced GDP growth of around 8-9% a year. Retail sales of $250-300 billion now are set to rise to nearly $430 billion by 2010. Modern retailers' share will rise from just 3% now to 16-18% ("Setting up shop in India," 2006). Under relentless pressure from global banks and foreign and local conglomerates, retailing is one of the last big sectors of the Indian economy to open up to FDI.

These structural changes in retail market are more pronounced in India where 98% of India's retail economy is composed of 12 million shopkeepers. Chains and franchise businesses are practically unheard of in India because it hasn't been a part of the Indian business model and, politically, the multinationals have not been allowed to "directly invest" in the Indian market. The entry of multinationals into the Indian market, according to most market analysts, is not a question of "if" but "when" ("Business: Getting cheaper and better -

Indian retailing," 2007). This development has adversely affected the livelihoods of home-based workers, comprising a large majority of mom and pop retail stores and the street vendors, accounting for a quarter of India's non-agricultural workforce in the informal sector (Mehrotra & Biggeri, 2007).

In the last few years, the mass protests have highlighted the plight of small shopkeepers. However, these protests have not resulted in any real inclusion of the small retailers in the economic policy discussions and planning. The dislocation of small retailers from the privileged business spaces and from the business centers to provide places for the retail chains (both Indian and foreign) has not only led to loss of livelihood, and disenfranchisement of the people already at the lower end of class hierarchy but also made the process of organizing resistance even more difficult (Brown, 2006).

The protest and resistance movements take a totally new dimension within the neoliberal competitive market logic and emphasize the smaller government. This has led to a displacement from the welfare-state functions of the government with the appearance of new actors (MNCs, trade unions, etc.) on the scene of government. The fluidity in the nature of governance and the lack of one clear adversary (the state or the corporation) has led the abstraction of resistance movements and the diffusion of protest-organization (Clarke, 2004).

In a country like India that is embracing neoliberal globalization as its economic model, non-governmental bodies and organizations tend to fulfill more and more socioeconomic functions of the government. This has led to an emergence of "the market-place" as a central plank for the organization of social, economic and political life. The trade unions and NGOs in India have been at the forefront for the implementation of government and World Bank directed projects for alleviating poverty and improving life conditions like

education and self-employment (Gupta, et al., 2006). However, the inclusiveness of

participants in the Union-led protests and their role in decision-making needs to be examined

closely, particularly when they are performing more and more government welfare functions.

Specific Aims

Increasing the effectiveness of communication processes and practices of community

empowerment and resistance such as how communities take collective action on issues of

their choosing to make positive changes in their environment, has been a source of

continuing interest because of their potential for a meaningful participatory action. The

question is how can the resistance that began as local and affirmative, as an extension from

its own local and community experience, be extended to a nation-wide movement.

Considering this, a goal of this study was to analyze the creation of local resistance narratives

and how and if they could be universalized by the use of communication strategies and

available information technology.

Discussion and evaluation of space and place also becomes intrinsic in the

examination of resistance strategies employed by the street vendors. The dislocation of small

vendors has led to a large scale discontentment among the poorest (Choudhary, 2007).

Raymond Williams (1989) argues that this dislocation exacerbates the obstacles of realizing a

mass-based resistance movement since most of the solidarities that are rooted in "place" have

to achieve another level of abstraction capable of reaching out across space. This suggests

that the success of a resistance movement is largely dependent upon the communication

practices to bridge the gap between the place and space. The study thus examined the

efficacy of communication strategies – discourse building at the local level and the

universalization of resistance through the use of mass media and other communication strategies and techniques.

The role of the trade unions and NGOs in the local landscape substantially complicates the process as well as understanding of the community empowerment and collective action (Robinson, 2006; Spooner, 2004). The study therefore examined the inclusiveness of marginalized street vendors in the trade unions and NGOs and their role in policy-making, discourse creation, and their level of participation in the context of resistance discourse and social change.

Considering this, the study of communication practices in building resistance becomes significant. A great deal of research has been conducted on the success and strategies for resistance movement, but very few have looked specifically at governmentality and place, space, and how the resistance strategies employed in localities are communicated to state and national levels.

Study Objective

The primary objective of this study was an examination of the narratives and communication strategies employed by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers for the creation of resistance discourse, and their use of mass media and information technology in universalizing the protest movement. The identities adopted by small retailers and street vendors in their sites were observed in order to understand the processes of belonging, exclusion, affiliation, and resistance that are intrinsic part of the uprooted livelihood. In particular, the objective of this study was to explore:

1. The development of resistance narrative as participatory action;
2. The level of participation by small vendors/retailers in structural policymaking;

3. The strategies, narratives, and communication practices adopted by the small vendors/retailers to counter the neoliberal globalization and developmental narrative at local levels;
4. The protestors' use of mass media and other communication strategies and technique in universalizing the resistance; and
5. The "governmentality" as exhibited by the non-government organizations (NGOs) in building and communicating resistances against retail liberalization;

Study Design

Considering that the objective of this study was to examine the resistance discourse creation from the story-telling narratives of the small shopkeepers, a qualitative approach was used throughout the research process. Respondent formal interviews were conducted with small retailers in their shops and the street vendors and squatters on the pavements occupied by them. The union leaders and NGO operatives were interviewed in their offices or in the *Aminabad* market. Several attempts to interview the government functionaries ended in no response. The government's point of view is reported from the government publications and attributed newspaper reports.

Narrative interviews were conducted in informal settings for respondents to recount the events of their lives, and the events of their group in the form of storytelling. An ethnographic methodology where the researcher participates as an observer was more suited for this kind of study because it involved examination of behavioral practices in order to better understand the content of narratives and discourses.

Research Questions

Q1 What resistance narratives do the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers create against retail sector liberalization?

Q2.1 What is the level of participation by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers in the development of resistance narratives?

Q2.2 What is the level of participation by women informal workers in the development of resistance narratives?

Q2.3 What is the level of participation by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers in the governmental policy making?

Q3 What communication strategies do the small vendors, squatters and small retailers use in universalizing their resistance to create a broader resistance movement?

Q4.1 What role do the NGOs play in facilitating the resistances by street vendors, squatters, and small retailers against the liberalization in retail sector?

Q4.2 What role do the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers play in the institutional decision-making processes performed at the NGOs?

Chapter Two: Literature Review

There is presently a significant lack of literature regarding the street vendors,

squatters, and small retailers in India. Scholarly literature that exists on the non-agricultural

labor and the informal sector of employment, which includes the street vendors, squatters,

and small retailers, is scarce. More importantly it doesn't incorporate recent developments in

the changing socio-economic conditions of this group in the face of fast-paced neoliberal

economic reforms. Although the literature on the informal sector has captured very important

characteristics of the informal market, it depicts informal economy as a "homogeneous"

entity disregarding the peculiarities and different dynamics within it (Mehrotra & Biggeri,

2007).

This undifferentiated characterization has rendered the street vendors and small

retailers almost "invisible" in the research literature. This invisibility and non-inclusion

extends to economic policy-making. This is the case even when the street vendors, squatters,

and small retailers are the most ubiquitous economic unit in any part of India. The recency of

policy changes has also contributed to the scarcity of research literature on the current socio-

economic conditions of the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers.

The Economic Reforms

In India, a severe macroeconomic crisis emerged in 1991 characterized by high

inflation, large public and current account deficits, and a huge domestic and foreign debt.

This situation set in motion economic reforms under the guidance of the World Bank and the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) to put the economy on a higher growth path and raise

living standards. The short-to-medium-term measures of the reform process included

stringent reversals of fiscal (cuts in public expenditure) and monetary (sharp income

deflation, devaluation, removal of protection on trade) policies (Corbridge & Harriss, 2002;

Joshi & Little, 1996).

By dismantling the elaborate structure of licenses, controls and regulations that had

evolved during the six decades of independence, it was hoped that not only would production

increase, but that prices would decline due to an increase in efficiency and demand (Ray,

2008). At the suggestion of the IMF and the World Bank, import restrictions were relaxed

and the Indian Rupee was devalued and made partially convertible. This included targets for

concrete steps toward the liberalization of foreign trade and investments, a severe reduction

in custom duties, an increase in the pace of privatization and a progressively increasing

bundle of incentives and policy changes to attract foreign capital (Joshi & Little, 1996;

Kumar, 2006).

These changes heralded a virtual explosion in the import of capital goods with three

main consequences: a widening of the gap between imports and exports; a crisis in the capital

goods industry in the public sector; and a more rapid export of primary resources. (Gupta, et

al., 2006). The following six years saw most of the imports and fresh investments in the

productive economy oriented not toward meeting the basic needs of a majority, but primarily

toward satisfying the consumption patterns of the growing middle class, which led to a

further deterioration in the living standards of millions of people (Fernandes, 2006; Gupta, et

al., 2006).

Behind the symbols of consumption and development, however, lies a story of

increasing disparities: a rise in unemployment, a deterioration in the livelihoods of a majority

of the population, an increase in critical poverty, a decline in the membership of trade unions,

and a phenomenal increase in the number of workers in the informal sector of the economy and in the extent of the irregular employment (Corbridge, 2005; S. Kothari, 1997).

Informal Workers – the Small Retailers, Street Vendors and Squatters

Ninety eight percent of India's retail economy is composed of 12 million shopkeepers. Chains and franchise businesses are practically unheard of in India because it hasn't been a part of the Indian business model and, politically, the multinationals have not been allowed to "directly invest" in the Indian market ("Setting up shop in India," 2006).

According to the International Conference of Labor Statisticians (ICLS), in terms of size, informal employment comprises one-half to three-fourths of non-agricultural employment in developing countries. In these countries the inclusion of informal employment in agriculture increases remarkably the share of informal employment: from 83% of non-agricultural employment to 93% of total employment in India (ICLS 1993). In fact, the home-based workers (in case of India comprising a large majority of mom and pop retail stores), street vendors, and squatters are few of the largest sub-groups of the informal workforce. Taken together they account for an estimated 10-25% of the non-agricultural workforce (ILO, 2002).

Informal employment has grown in most Asian countries. According to a meta-analysis of the existing data, the non-agricultural informal employment in India was 84.5% (86 female and 83 male) between 1994 to 2000 (Charmes, 2001). A national sample survey (NSSO, 2001) in India showed that home-based workers represented 35.9% of all non-agricultural informal employment. The street vendors, squatters, small retailers, and artisans constitute a majority of the home-based workforce.

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The informal sector is often an unrecognized and unpaid employment for women in developing countries (Mehra & Gammage, 1999). The limited data available points to the importance of women in home-based work, backroom support for retailing, and street vending. ILO (2002) estimates that in developing countries 30-90% of street vendors and squatters are supported by women, who spend a substantial time helping their men-folk run the vending stall. The incorporation of women into home-based work, industrial outworkers who work at home and behind the doors, partly reflects the inequalities arising from globalization and the gender segregation in the labor market (Mehrotra & Biggeri, 2007; Raijman, Schammah-Gesser, & Kemp, 2003; Rani & Unni, 2009).

Carr, Chen, and Tate (2000) argue that there is evidence that informalization of the labor force has grown in recent decades. This trend, argue Mehrotra and Biggeri (2007), can work "as a constraint on the human development and the capabilities of household members" (p. 13), as well as, in terms of social protection, leave the workers vulnerable to market shocks due to the lack of social security mechanisms (Choudhary, 2007).

Retail Sector Liberalization

The Indian retail grocery is shifting from an industry dominated by small grocers serving the needs of the local markets to one characterized by large retailers, both national and international (Butler, 2005). This is similar to the changes that US retail grocery underwent since the late 1980s, which has seen a steady exodus of small retailers, large retailers emerging via acquisitions and mergers, increased market concentration, and the emergence of new national retailers (Fishman, 2006).

According to an Asian Development Bank report (2001) on Indian economy, the reforms of the last 10 years have gone a long way toward freeing up the domestic economy

from state control. The reservation and protections for retail sector still persist as the last impediment to economic liberalization (Panagariya, 2001). The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization (WTO), and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have consistently attacked the protections accorded to the small-scale industries and the retail sectors from foreign direct investments (FDI) for economic underperformance of the country (Choudhary, 2007).

Under relentless pressure from global banks and foreign and local conglomerates, retailing is one of the last big sectors of the Indian economy to open up to FDI. Previous attempts by foreign retailers to start businesses were blocked by successive governments. In the 1990s, opposition from traders and local shopkeepers was enough to convince politicians (Corbridge & Harriss, 2002). The current government as of now has no hope of allowing FDI into general retailing by the end of 2007, but side-door entries are permissible. "We need a model that doesn't replace existing retailers," says Kamal Nath, India's minister of commerce and industry ("Setting up shop in India," 2006).

For overseas companies looking for growth outside sluggish domestic markets, India's retail business is one of the most attractive. Consumer demand is booming as the government's steps to liberalize the economy have produced GDP growth of around 8-9% a year. Retail sales of $250-300 billion now are set to rise to nearly $430 billion by 2010. Modern retailers' share will rise from just 3% now to 16-18% ("Setting up shop in India," 2006). Under the current policy, Western brands from Reebok and Cartier to Marks & Spencer have set up franchise stores with locals. The locals own and run the shops, and the foreigners run the sourcing and wholesale part. The coffee-shop chain Starbucks is expected to open soon as a similar franchise. Earlier in 2007 the franchise policy was relaxed, so that

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foreign firms can now take 51% equity stakes in shops that sell just their own brand. Retailers like Wal-Mart that provide merchandise made by different manufacturers are still banned, but Indian retailers expect that to change, despite the opposition of local shops. Broader wholesale businesses selling to registered retailers have also been allowed, though Metro of Germany and Wal-Mart in association with Bharti Enterprises are the only ones until now (Brown, 2006).

However, the limitations on FDI are not applied to the Indian business conglomerates, which have announced major investments in the retail sector. The convenience stores being opened across India by Reliance Industries, an oil, petrochemicals and textiles group, are among the first approximations to a supermarket in India, which has over a billion people and virtually no organized retailing. Reliance intends to have 5,000 shops across India within five years. There will be 2,000-5,000-square-foot convenience-food stores of the sort now being opened in Hyderabad, and also bigger, 25,000-50,000-square-foot supermarkets. Local businessmen have started smaller chains in the southern part of India. Reliance intends to open 100 stores in Delhi alone by April. In India as a whole it plans to invest 250 billion rupees ($5.7 billion) in 5,000 shops, including larger hypermarkets. By 2010, the group hopes to have annual sales of $25 billion ("Business: Getting cheaper and better - Indian retailing," 2007). According to Bloomberg Market Reports (2006), Indian retailers are frantically expanding - opening more stores and experimenting with new formats - in an effort to gain a substantial lead before foreign competitors are allowed to enter the market.

The Wal-Martization of India

Could the Wal-Martization (monopolization) of the American retail sector occur in India? Could the Indian bazaars and outdoor food stands — women and men carting around

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produce, the norm of the moment — be marginalized by multinationals? In the U.S., when a Wal-Mart opens, it receives 84% of its business from the existing stores in the area. What would that mean for the local Indian economy? These are the questions plaguing the millions of street vendors, squatters, and small retailers (Butler, 2005).

Wal-Mart completed a joint venture in early 2007 with the Bharti Group to build as many as 15 large wholesale outlets over the next seven years. Most Indians will not be able to shop directly in the new stores, but many are taking to street protests in larger numbers, fearing that Wal-Mart could eventually undermine the small retailers that dominate the Indian market (Gentleman, 2007). India does not allow multi-brand foreign retailers to sell directly to consumers, but such businesses can open wholesale operations. Wal-Mart's initiative is the largest push by a Western supermarket group into the Indian market, and analysts see it as the first stage in a long campaign to begin selling directly to Indian shoppers ("Setting up shop in India," 2006).

With total revenues of $404 billion in 2009, Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is the largest corporation in the world. The chain employs 2,1 million workers and operates 8,100 units under 53 different banners in 15 countries ("Wal-Mart Corporate Factsheets," 2009). Because of its size, purchasing power, and technological sophistication, the chain is revolutionizing not only the industrial organization of local retail trade, but also the entire wholesale, transportation, and logistics sector (Goetz & Swaminathan, 2006). The phenomenon *Business Week* (Bianco, et al., 2003)) described as the ''Wal-Mart effect'' in a cover story referring to the corporation's cost efficiency that has contributed to economy-wide productivity gains and reduced the annual rate of inflation by about one percentage point, has been extensively covered in popular press (Etter, 2005) and academic journals (Fishman, 2006; Hicks, 2006).

Otherwise, oftentimes Wal-Mart has been blamed for the loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs and the demise of mom-and-pop-type retailers (Kabra, 2006).

Popular press articles on the "Wal-Mart effect" mostly focus on the company's non-unionization policy, low wages and benefits, along with impacts on the environment, globalization, and monopolistic practices. Academic literature on this issue is mostly limited to retail restructuring with considerable focus on loss of retail employment, decreases in the number of establishments, and decline of downtown shopping areas (Franklin, 2001; Huang, Epperson, Cude, & Woo, 2002; Stone, 1997).

Neoliberal Development Policy

The justification for market liberalization is predominantly based on the developmental ideology and neoliberal globalization narrative, which promotes structural changes in the market that favor MNCs. This mostly precludes the participation of marginalized populations from development; they become an abstraction in the economic models that follow top-bottom approach. Success or failure of a policy regarding economic development, poverty, inflation, infrastructural development etc., which form the mainstay of socio-economic policies for most of the developing countries under the aegis of IMF and World Bank, is generally determined by the rise in GDP. This way of determining the health of society or economy is too simplistic. The statistics consistently show that the benefits normally don't percolate down to the lower levels of the society (S. Kothari, 1997).

C.H. Hanumantha Rao (1995), as chairperson of the National Commission on Rural Labor, gathered extensive evidence on conditions in rural India and unambiguously made the linkage between liberalization and the deterioration of livelihoods of labor. In fact, market liberalization adversely affects the wages and earnings of the unskilled labor in lower

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economic strata (Rubiana, 2006). A wide range of empirical evidence, surveyed in Marjit and

Acharyya (2006), suggests that the wage gap between the skilled and unskilled workers has

been on the rise both in the North and in the South. According to Rao (1995), liberalization

affects labor through the reduction of public investment in both agriculture and social sectors,

including primary education, health care and drinking water. Since state revenues basically

finance investments in agriculture, rural development, irrigation and social sectors, these

have become the first victims of the new economic measures.

Vakulabharanam (2005), like Rao (1995), agues that in spite of witnessing significant

growth in real agricultural output over the last 15 years, there have been significant welfare

declines not only for the marginal farmers and landless labor, but for the informal workers as

well. Vakulabharanam (2005) further argues that "during the liberalization period, that is,

post 1990, agricultural growth and increased distress have become mutually intertwined" (p.

971). This has led to a widespread migration from the villages and contributed to the swelling

of urban slums in the metro cities (Robinson, 2006).

Globalization and Neoliberal Governmentality

Globalization has dominated the development discourse as a narrative framework that

determines to varying degrees the public consciousness of the early twenty-first century

(Bauman, 1998). The globalizing discourse of neoliberalism tries to obscure or deny any

connection between economic globalization and the destruction of the political and social

structures and natural environments that nurture social life within its myriad communities

(Lloyd, 2000). A globalized world in the neoliberal narrative is a borderless world in which

there is total freedom of movement of capital, goods, and services, the withering away of the

notion of nation-states as welfare agents to be replaced by the global markets and

corporations where the market dynamics will ensure greater freedom and equality through competition (Held, 1999).

Harvey (1989) argues that the space-time compression has led to a transformation of the spatial structures of world-spanning exchange and culture. Thus, technology makes possible for the activities to stretch beyond the traditional frontiers constructed by geographical and political structures. The globalization of technology calls into question those frontiers and weakens the spatial determination of activities (Lloyd, 2000).

Watts (2000) defines neoliberalism in the *Dictionary of human geography* as "a congeries of ideas and theories associated with the rise of the New Right in the North Atlantic economies during the 1980s and with the desirability of the market as a central plank for the organization of social, economic and political life" (pp. 547-548).

Across the social sciences, neoliberalism has become an increasingly omnipresent umbrella term for the diverse ideologies, policies and practices associated with liberalizing global markets and expanding entrepreneurial practices and capitalist power relations into whole new areas of social, political and biophysical life. From free trade, privatization, and financial deregulation, to fiscal austerity, welfare reform, and punitive policing, to the enforcement of structural adjustment, to the expansion of entrepreneurial models of identity and action in institutions of scientific innovation, education and entertainment, the neoliberal print of socio-economic policies is more visible than ever (Corbridge, 2005).

The country-by-country eclipse of central planning, by the entrenchment of neoliberal ideas as policy, have led the believers at the IMF, World Bank, and WTO to advocate the policies of free trade, privatization, fiscal austerity, the deregulation of finance as a one-size-fits-all recipe for success everywhere (Peet, et al., 2003). *No Logo*, for example, a film based

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on Naomi Klein's book of the same title (Klein, 2000) connects the economic geography of commodity chains with the political geography of protest against neoliberalism.

The changing nature of the state in an age of globalization is the topic of considerable debate in scholarly circles (Corbridge & Harriss, 2002; Kabra, 2006; S. Kothari, 1997; Panagariya, 2001; Rubiana, 2006). The sharp differences among analysts about shifts in the role and status of the state are closely connected to their perceptions about what the functions of the state should be in these changed circumstances (Gupta, et al., 2006).

Neoliberal Governmentality

The era of globalization is sometimes glossed as one of "neoliberal governmentality." Foucault (1991) argues that governmentality characterizes advanced liberal democracies. This notion of government is used to investigate the relations between technologies of the self and technologies of domination. For Foucault (1988), the notion of governmentality refers to societies where power is de-centered and its members play an active role in their own self-government, e.g. as posited in neoliberalism. Because of its active role, individuals need to be regulated from 'inside'. A certain form of knowledge characterizes a particular form of governmentality. In the case of neoliberal governmentality, a kind of governmentality based on the predominance of market mechanisms and of the restriction of the action of the state, the knowledge produced allows the construction of auto-regulated or auto-correcting selves (Dean, 1999)

Foucault's (1991) discussion of neo-liberal governmentality shows that the so-called "retreat of the state" is in fact a prolongation of government; neo-liberalism is not the end but a transformation of politics that restructures the power relations in society. What we observe today is not a diminishment or a reduction of state sovereignty and planning capacities but a

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displacement from formal to informal techniques of government and the appearance of new actors on the scene of government (In this instance, MNCs and the trade unions) that indicate fundamental transformations in statehood and a new relation between state and civil society actors. This encompasses on the one hand the displacement of forms of practices that were formerly defined in terms of nation state to supranational levels, and on the other hand the development of forms of sub-politics "beneath" politics in its traditional meaning (Dean, 1999).

Governmentality offers a way of approaching how rule is consolidated and power is exercised in society through social relations, institutions, and bodies that do not automatically fit under the rubric of "the state." Neoliberal governmentality is characterized by competitive market logic and a focus on smaller government that operates from a distance. Neoliberalism works by multiplying sites for regulation and domination through the creation of autonomous entities of government that are not part of the formal state apparatus and are guided by enterprise logic. This government-at-a-distance involves social institutions such as nongovernmental organizations, schools, communities, and even individuals that are not part of any centralized state apparatus and are made responsible for activities formerly carried out by state agencies. Neoliberalism thus represents a shift in the rationality of government and in the shape and nature of state (Corbridge, 2005).

The concept of governmentality also proves to be useful in correcting the diagnosis of neo-liberalism as an expansion of economy in politics, that takes for granted the separation of state and market. In his work, Foucault (1977) shows that the "art of government" is not limited to the field of politics as separated from the economy; instead the constitution of a

conceptually and practically distinguished space, governed by autonomous laws and a proper

rationality is itself an element of "economic" government.

The Indian Context

The market-friendly reforms implemented by the Indian government in 1991 are

widely interpreted as having opened up the Indian economy to the forces of globalization. It

has ushered in an era of intensification of economic, political, social, and cultural relations

across international boundaries. It is principally aimed at the transcendental homogenization

of political and socio-economic theory across the globe. In the Indian case, the

implementation of neoliberal policies corresponds to widespread public perception of the

origins of globalization, shadowed by its colonized past. (Gupta, et al., 2006).

To accommodate the realities of global economy and its eventual effect, the state

needs to be situated within a transnational frame. The study of state needs to be disentangled

from the territoriality of the nation-state (Clarke, 2004). The mobility of capital and

communications in this era of globalization is challenging the territorial sovereignty of

nation-states. States have adopted new strategies for a post-territorial concept of sovereignty

and a post-sovereign version of territoriality. The effort to include in the nation - people who

no longer reside within the territorial boundaries of the state, is being played out in different

ways in India (Gupta, et al., 2006). The Indian government has invented the category of the

Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), who enjoys many of the privileges of citizenship while

not residing within the territorial borders of the (India, 2005).

Sovereignty is being disentangled from the nation-state and mapped onto

supranational regulatory institutions and nongovernmental organizations like the World

Trade Organization and OXFAM. Such state-like institutions supervise the conduct of

national states and economies and manage the welfare of people living in different territories (Gupta, et al., 2006).

In this way, transnational governance is apparent in the large and rapidly growing number of global agreements. For Indian finance ministers, while trying to resolve the imbalance between high economic growth and rising inequality in India, globalization is a panacea for all economic ills. Hence, questions about socioeconomic inequality have been left for the market to resolve, which has mostly been apathetic to the demands of the capital-starved poorest (Gupta, et al., 2006).

Thus, the erosion of government functions in a welfare state and the shifting of these functions to the market and non-government bodies have been to the detriment of the poor in general. Specifically, the liberalization of economy has done nothing to facilitate capital for the lowest caste and classes; rather it has helped uproot their livelihoods, acquisitioned their lands for industry and infrastructure projects with state support, and imposed an alarming immigration on urban areas that are already failing to supply basic amenity to its residents (Butler, 2005; Corbridge, 2005).

Resisting Globalization

India has about 340 million people as its labor force, of which only about 30 million are organized. Which leaves over 300 million in the unorganized sector, the bulk of which is agricultural labor (Mehrotra & Biggeri, 2007). The trade union movement has, therefore, been unable to reach out to the majority of Indian labor. A large proportion of the unorganized labor comprises *Dalits* (lower caste), women, and *adivasis (tribal people).* Traditionally, their public expression has been channeled through the *Dalit* social-movements and local trade unions, which are tightly controlled by the *Dalit* political parties.

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For the unorganized informal labor, even when they share similar problems and aspirations across the national landscape, their resistances mostly end up being local expressions and dependent on the support of a political party, union, or NGO. Mehrotra and Biggeri (2007) argue that excessive "unionization can also be an important source of the vulnerability to home workers' families" (p. 15). While there is some evidence of successful cooperation between informal workers, trade unions, and the NGOs, major problems, fears, suspicions, and at times hostilities remain between them (Spooner, 2004).

Raymond Williams'(1989) "militant particularism" provides a viable framework on how these local struggles can translate into national global movements. These struggles and the militant particularisms constituted in 'localities' form the basis of Raymond Williams and David Harvey's engagements.

Militant Particularism

A resistance movement "represents a shift in the forms of political agency, beyond the politics of identity and difference, and towards new forms of collective political identity and agency" (Gill, 2000, p. 138). One way to further explore this movement towards new forms of political agency is to follow Harvey's development of Raymond William's concept of 'militant particularism' (Harvey, 2001b). Williams coined the term militant particularism when writing about socialism to help him explore the manner in which "working-class self-organization has tried to connect particular struggles to a general struggle" (quoted in Harvey, 2001b, p. 172). This means moving beyond tangible, localized solidarities to more abstract conceptions, which reach out across space, so that ideals forged out of the affirmative experiences of solidarities in one place get generalized and universalized (Harvey, 2001a, p. 172).

The alliances and solidarities that shape the movement, then, should not be seen as a means towards the creation of small, harmonious communities. Nor should they be seen as merely building blocks for the formation of a few key global demands remote from place-located political activity. These intersections and alliances should be celebrated as integral to the alternative political identities and practices (militant particularisms) that are being shaped through counter-globalization struggles (Williams, 1989).

These intersections are important because they can produce transformation of identities; and they can oppose neoliberals' supports to globalization. This position opens up some modest possibilities. The protest activities speak of a politics of forging new identities as part of an ongoing contestation of unequal geographies of power. However, drawing on these same multiple histories and geographies of resistance, collective experiments and identities, which exceed and oppose the restrictive, limiting tenets of neoliberalism will continue to be generated (Linebaugh & Rediker, 2000).

Harvey points to both the limitations and the potentialities embedded within the notion of militant particularism and grass-root activism (2001b). He argues that fragmented and heterogeneous grass-roots movements need a common language, with more universal impact (2001b, p. 197), and that:

> Universality always exists *in relation* to particularity: neither can be separated from the other even though they are distinctive moments within our conceptual operations and practical engagements. The notion of social justice, for example, acquires universality through a process of abstraction from particular instances and circumstances, but, once established as a generally accepted principle or norm, becomes particular again as it is actualized through particular actions in particular circumstances. (Harvey, 2001b, p. 194)

This involves a threefold process:

1. Evoking universal principles;

2. Giving tangible meaning to these abstractions in particular settings – such as environmental or social justice, human rights, liberty, compassion; and in doing so,

3. Reaffirming the significance and power of such universal principles. (Harvey, 2001b, p. 199)

Developing social movement practices and perspectives from militant particularisms towards more universal political projects entails 'going beyond' the specific and the local. Anchored in the assumption that local conflicts will tend to represent specific mediations of global conflict processes, Williams argues that local struggles can form a basis for national and global resistance . This is what Harvey refers to as 'the labor of translation' and 'abstraction.' The movement from particularity to universality entails a 'translation' from the concrete to the abstract. Since violence attaches to abstraction, a tension always exists between particularity and universality in politics. This can be viewed either as a creative tension or, more often, as a destructive and immobilizing force in which inflexible mediating institutions … claim rights over individuals and communities in the name of some universal principle (Harvey, 2000)

Raymond Williams, who first coined the term 'militant particularism,' considered this striving to go 'beyond' through communication to be vital. Williams considered it to be a defining feature of the workers' movement and further argues that the unique and extraordinary character of working class self-organization has been that it has tried to connect particular struggles to a general struggle in one quite special way. It has set out, as a movement, to make real what is at first sight the extraordinary claim that the defense and advancement of certain particular interests, properly brought together, are in fact the general interest (Williams, 1989).

However, under the global developmental narrative, the possibility of exercising violence upon the marginalized arises in the local movement practices. In this abstraction

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(the idea of development), a project is pursued 'from above' (e.g. by a centralized

organization existing prior to and beyond specific struggles) instead of as an evolution of an

internal process of self-development 'from below' – or where a project initially developed

'from below' in one context is transplanted to another without real awareness of the need for

effective and appropriate translation. The next section is devoted to the quest of creating a

discourse that can lead to participatory action 'from below.'

An Alternative to Global Developmental Narrative – Participatory Action

   Modernization in India

   The British colonial apparatus significantly shaped the post-independence Indian

development regime. With exceptions such as the 'village-republic' ideology of Mahatma

Gandhi (Srinivas-Aiyangar, 1952), the Indian nationalists who led the drive for independence

in 1947, and who afterwards shaped the formation of the development state adopted the

colonialist teleology of modernity (Singh, 1986). This included the attendant notion of

unidirectional social and environmental evolution, irreversible progress, and affirmation of

the centralized nation-state's authority (Gupta, 1998).

   Development's purported ability to control and transform both cultural and material

environments guided post-independence interventions. The most prominent of these was the

'Green Revolution' beginning in the 1950s, involving the intensification of Indian agriculture

through high yielding seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and mechanization (Baker &

Jewitt, 2007). Yet, the development interventions do not uniformly structure, but, as Moore

(2000) argues, "are refracted, reworked and sometimes subverted in particular localities …

particular interventions articulate with deeper histories of government attempts to regulate

and discipline landscapes and livelihoods" (p. 165).

Modernization and dependency paradigms

For neoliberal development research, social scientists have mainly adopted two paradigms: modernization and dependency. In the modernization paradigm the basis of development in society is based on the move toward rationality. Weber's (1949) ideal type is an exemplar of this modernization paradigm where the "formal legal rationality" (Weber, 1978, pp. 25-26) is the basis of all modernization. Modernization is reached as an evolutionary process toward ideal rationality from simple to complex, from an attributive to achieved status. In this paradigm, the advanced societies provide a model for underdeveloped societies. Rogers' (1962) diffusion of innovation, theorizes the idea of unidirectional diffusion from the advanced to developing societies as development model. The basis of this developmental approach is reaching a stage of rationality by giving up the traditional ways and adopting non-superstitious and rational ways to achieve modernization. Here the developmental strategies are largely technical and value-neutral (Wildemeersch, 1999).

The dependency paradigm argues the value neutrality of the modernization paradigm and accuses that the modernization paradigm reproduces and reinforces the inequalities as a consequence of the power exerted by the advanced societies. This approach is expounded by Bowles and Gintis (2002) in "correspondence theory" when exploring the discipline of development education. They argue that achievement in school and a pupil's life chances are determined to a great extent by their family background - their class. Schooling takes place in the form it does in order to effectively prepare pupils for their future role as workers under capitalism.

However, the problem with dependency paradigm is that it is explained in terms of external economic variables while not paying due attention to internal economic, political

and cultural variables. Both modernistic and dependency paradigms have this same shortcoming. A participatory approach attempts to address these abstractions.

   Particiapatory Approach.

   Participatory approach (PA) works on the premise that ordinary people have the knowledge and ability to reflect on their situation and change it. Unlike neoliberal developmental approach, PA is not based on abstraction but reality as known to participants; not hypothetical situations but ground-reality; not macro-strategies but microcosms; not "experts" but commoners; not on validity but authenticity. In a nutshell, the aim of PA is inclusion of the excluded participant, empowerment and conscientization, self-awareness and egalitarianism, collective definition, analysis, and action to solve the problem (Deetz, 1999).

   Participation is about diminishing the power differential that exists in society. In the stratified societies a power differential is legitimized by the perceived legal-rationality of hierarchy, hence the oppressed believe in their own subordination while they are systematically prevented from participating in decisions about their own fate. Freire (1972) emphasizes the primacy of conscientization, because unless there is a consciousness, there cannot be participation. This consciousness enables the marginalized to change their situation by making them active participants in contrast to the patron-client participation.

   The PA also moves away from deductive theory building process and hypothesis testing. The theory building exercise in its search of reality, truth, or empirical fact obfuscates relativity (Whyte, Greenwood, & Lazes, 1989). In PA the truth is related to the standpoint that one takes, e.g. due to power differentials men and women may have totally different positoins on representative democracy, as it is relative to where it is being seen from and how acutely one or the other group is closer to the center of power (Campbell, 2002).

Thus, theoretical conceptions that are useful to one group may be detrimental to other groups, depending on the power differential - the theories indeed are a response to one's own issues (Deetz, 1999).

Participation as 'dialogical understanding'.

Participation is a constant process of codetermination and negotiation to create discursive realities, which is attempted through the process of communication. Foucault (1972) and Habermas (1981) stress on the fact that a domination-free dialogue happens where there can be discussion about the subject matter rather than perspectives of participants, which, in turn, can lead to mutual understanding. Bakhtin (1981) believes that an empathic understanding can be achieved through discourses. He calls it, a dialogical understanding, which can be achieved through dialogue, the relation of one discourse to another discourse. This discourse involves three related categories in self-formation: self – how my self looks and feels to my own consciousness; outsideness – how my self appears to those outside it; and otherness – how outside appears to my self.

Dialogism, also referred as intertexuality, is the term Bakhtin (1981) uses to designate the relation of one discourse to other discourses. In such sense, dialogism is not mere dialogue but is the context, which informs discourse (Ewald, 1993). "Every word smells of the context and contexts in which it has lived its intense social life" (Todarov, 1984 as cited in Ewald, 1993, p. 226). Bakhtin (1981) claims that language is unitary only in grammar books or traditional linguistic theory. Outside of this abstract realm, language is a plethora of intersecting social-linguistic points of view or the languages of heteroglossia (Evans, 2000).

The heteroglossia created accordingly is not the negation of dominant voices, or the revivalism at the cost of current situation, but multiple voices heard and imbibed in a way

that locals or the marginalized can have their own voices and the voices that can serve in empowering them, which is a part of their tradition that is not looked down upon but serve as culturally identifying. Bakhtin (1981) is against any kind of hegemony, neither traditional nor modern.

> At any moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth, all given a bodily form. These "languages" of heteroglossia intersect with each other in a variety of ways, forming new socially typifying languages (p. 291).

The new realities of today cannot be revived per se, but have to develop according to the contextual realities, as they exist. This notion of dialogism is not limited to language but also applies to our being. In fact, consciousness is in itself multiple. The presence of many voices in such a setting is not only due to the internalization of the dominant ideology but also to the cultural factors surrounding the discourse. The voices from the margins are still present and can be heard (Kehde, 1991).

The neoliberal ideology prefers a consensus-discourse, in Foucault's (1972) terminology - the metanarrative, about development to the multiplicity of resistance narratives. In dialogism, the polyglot or the multiplicity of dialogue, the discord, contested positions, and lack of centralization and hierarchization facilitate individual creativity and more representative collective-action. A lack of "unified language" within this apparatus ensures subversion and dis-unification of the officially sanctioned language or the metanarrative. Bakhtin views the dialogic communicative sphere as the terrain of a ceaseless battle between the forces of stasis and fixity on one hand, and movement, change and diversification on the other (Gardiner, 1992).

The scholars from Latin America particularly Freire, like Bakhtin, placed a strong emphasis on dialogue as consisting of both praxis-reflection and action. One of the most important concepts in Freire's (1972) early works is conscientization (consciousness-raising or critical awareness), the ability to critically perceive the causes of reality. Freire (1972) claims that reacting to the world cannot be separated from reading the world, but acknowledges that the possibilities of conscientization are limited. Although a transition from a naive to a critical consciousness is key in the process of liberation, it should not be assumed that a critical consciousness leads automatically to a process of transformation. This means that a critical consciousness is a necessary but insufficient condition for collective change. While in his earlier works Freire (1994) takes a subjectivist stand, assuming that the unveiling of reality would translate into transformative action, in further writings he revisited his position and recognized that a more critical understanding of oppressive situations, although a step in the right direction, does not yet liberate the oppressed.

For Foucault (1972), a unified metanarrative of neoliberalism, created through the objectification and the individualizing techniques in the modern day structures, is the biggest impediment to the struggles of the oppressed. This in turn creates docile bodies through the processes of disciplining and normalization, which is indispensable in the development of capitalism. In this context, Foucault distinguishes between three types of struggles: against forms of exploitation; against forms of domination; against modern forms of subjection. It is also of importance to analyze the specificity of power as well as the oppressed groups on whom power is exercised. There is a manifold manifestation of structure of power, and must be responded with a multiplicity of localized resistances.

In a nutshell, it is the subject matter and the context that should define the course of communication to reach mutual understanding. A theory of participation drawn from the discussions above stresses - that communication is unproductive when there is a discursive closure. This happens when the conflict is suppressed. So, for a communication to be productive there is a need for the dialectically opposite voices to be heard - not mere unity, the tension of difference is preferred in attempts to achieve a dialogic understanding. While the ruling stratum tries to posit a single discourse as exemplary, the subaltern classes are inclined to subvert this *monologic* closure. The lack of one authoritative language and the acceptance of varied forms of speech give precedence to dialogic discourse over the monologic (Narayan, 1997).

Communicating 'Local Resistances'

Drawing from the discussions above, Foucault's (1991) postulations on governmentality provide a viable theoretical basis for conceptualizing local resistances amidst the rise of non-state policy makers (MNCs, NGOs, and trade unions) in the neoliberal global economy. A dialogic approach (Bakhtin, 1981) for narrative creation at the grass-root levels provides a credible foil to the 'metanarrative' in formulating 'local' resistances. Williams (1989) argues that these 'militant particularisms' help in conceptualizing the universalization of these 'local' resistances. The neoliberal nature of contemporary globalization has provided a common language to multiple militant particularisms and has thus produced a universalizing dynamic. However, how we communicate resistances in the current technological age is still a major question.

New Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are changing the ways in which activists communicate, collaborate and demonstrate. Not only are new media facilitators of accelerated globalization (Barker, 1999), but they have also acted as the "connective tissue" of other anti-globalization movements, including social activists representing the broad spectrum of social development, environmentalism, health and human rights (Moore, 2000). However, the global reach of ICTs in communicating resistances and bringing about social changes should not be overestimated and the danger of technological determinism should be avoided (Castells, 2000).

Examining how certain social movements use the information technologies, one might get an understanding of how they form part of the forces that constitute global ICTs. Although taking place under very specific circumstances, the communication facilitated by new media might be subject to similar power relations, political processes and discourses that

are seen elsewhere in society. The access to ICTs is not universally available to all the sections of society – a large digital divide exists in developing countries (Khaled, 2009; Qureshi, 2008).

In the context of 'the digital divide' in India, Keniston and Kumar (2004) introduce further divides, three of which are in-country divides while the fourth is a divide between regions of the world. In-country divides are described in terms of disparities in income and education, language divides between English-speaking and non-English speaking peoples, and divides between those who are able to use and participate in information technology and those who are not. The divide between regions of the world is described in terms of information rich and information poor peoples.

Under these circumstances of limited participation in mass media and the ICT, the study of alternative media becomes more important. Here the audiences are both creators and users and there is no central organization for creation and dissemination of media. The role of the media in a democracy should not end with disseminating information that people need to make informed decisions and choices. J. S. Mill (1978) in his essay "On Liberty" argues that media should also act as a part of the public sphere in which citizens connect with each other, express their opinions on all subjects, regardless of whether these opinions are practical or speculative. In other words, mass media in a democracy should enable citizens to freely express themselves and create alternative narratives, which may at times be juxtaposed against the mainstream meta-narratives.

As audiences and creators of alternative media, global justice activists and protesters use media content which is rich in ideology and power issues, most contemporary theories about the performances of mainstream media audience place issues of power and ideology in

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the background. However, the issues of power and ideology must be addressed if communication scholars are to properly assess the nature of activists as audiences and creators of alternative media. Atkinson (2005) argues that:

> The communication scholars must view alternative media as a place for critical reflection, i.e., alternative media as a place to discuss oppressive practices and for audiences to share collective experiences; and (2) communication scholars must view audience performances as performances of power, i.e., performance of the dominant ideology, or performance of a resistance to the dominant ideology. (p. 154)

Thus, the alternative media are essentially about "offering the means for democratic communication to people who are normally excluded from media production" (Atton, 2002, p. 4). While Atton (2002) acknowledges that there is a lack of consensus on what actually constitutes the alternative media, he suggests that the range and diversity of forms of alternative media can be considered as a Foucauldian "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (p. 9). The alternative media encourage multiplicity and diversity and seek to challenge dominant definitions and positions, not adhere to them.

The research on the use of alternate media in India by the marginalized groups suggests that it is at a very rudimentary level, mostly limited to community newspapers. A UNESCO report (Ninan & Anbarasan, 2000) points out the lack of development of alternative media in India since independence. The report concludes that India is completely devoid of the tradition of community radio stations with very few other forms of alternative media. The Indian government is "not interested in allowing community radio stations because it is worried that secessionist groups and some non-governmental organizations could use them to spread subversive propaganda (Ninan & Anbarasan, 2000, p. 34)". In India

use of the Internet is less diverse than in the West. E-commerce, Internet magazines and Internet-based news sources have yet to become as popular as they are in the developed world (Saeed, 2009). The entry of global media conglomerates and the growth of centralized distribution systems have not only undermined local expressions but are also proclaiming its sole legitimacy and relevance in media ("Community media: Local is focal," 2007). This study aims to evaluate the level of use of alternative media by the retailers of different socio-economic conditions in building their resistance against chain retailing.

Study Research Questions

Narrative creation at the grass-root level provides a credible foil to the 'metanarrative' in formulating 'local' resistances (Harvey, 1996). The narratives that constitute the localized resistances are no single account that represents a person, but multiple explications of an event recounted in multiple self-stories (Bochner, 2002). Hence, this research question is posited:

Q1 What resistance narratives do the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers create against retail sector liberalization?

Participation is a constant process of codetermination and negotiation to create discursive realities. Inclusion of excluded participant, empowerment and conscientization, self-awareness and egalitarianism, collective definition, analysis, and action to solve the problem, are the key factors in realizing resistance (Deetz, 1999). Hence, this research question is posited:

Q2.1 What is the level of participation by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers in the development of resistance narratives?

There is compelling evidence that despite the feminization of informal labor force (Carr, et al., 2000), the participation of women, is still limited to home-based and street-vending work (Mehrotra & Biggeri, 2007). Women labor issues and voices have been largely invisible in policy-making, and mostly anemic in academic literature, in spite of constituting up to 80 of street vendors (ILO, 2002) in some states of India. The women, more than any other marginalized group, have often been excluded from decisions about their own wellbeing (Narayan, 1997). Hence, this research question is posited:

Q2.2 What is the level of participation by women informal workers in the development of resistance narratives?

Despite a rhetorical emphasis on 'national' development and a 'peoples' struggle, systemic processes operate through a variety of scales, and are mutually implicated with the remote or local (Beck, 2002). This is especially true of a conflict involving transnational lenders and activists, national managers and lawyers, village-level tribes, and bureaucrats, all contesting the essential meaning and realization of development. However, the marginalized are often left out of the decision-making processes that determine their fate, which leads us to an examination of the level of participation by small vendors/retailers in structural policymaking. Hence, this research question is posited:

Q2.3 What is the level of participation by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers in the governmental policy making?

The movement from particularity to universality entails a 'translation' from the concrete to the abstract. Williams (1989) considered this striving to go 'beyond' through communication to be vital: "People recognize some condition and problem they have in common, and make the effort to work together to change or solve it" (p. 249). Developing

social movement practices and perspectives from militant particularisms towards more universal political projects entails 'going beyond' the specific and local. Hence, this research question is posited:

Q3 What communication strategies do the small vendors, squatters and small retailers use in universalizing their resistance to create a broader resistance movement?

The erosion of government functions in a welfare state has led to the shifting of these functions to the trade unions and non-government bodies. The role of NGOs in the local landscape substantially complicates the process as well as understanding of community empowerment and collective action. NGOs in India have been at the forefront of the implementation of government and World Bank directed projects for alleviating poverty, literacy, self-employment, and improvement of life conditions (Gupta, et al., 2006). Research studies have questioned the inclusiveness of the trade unions in the practice of resistance (Pravin Sinha, 2004). To understand governmentality (Foucault, 1991) in the context of resistance movements in India, its imperative to examine the participation in policy-making by the street vendors, squatters and small retailers with regard to the trade union and NGO programs. Hence, these research question are posited:

Q4.1 What role do the NGOs play in facilitating the resistances by street vendors, squatters, and small retailers against the liberalization in retail sector?

Q4.2 What role do the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers play in the institutional decision-making processes performed at the NGOs?

Chapter Three: Methods

The method for conducting research is primarily determined by the research questions that are being asked. The methodological choices are not determined by the types of research instruments available to the researcher, but by conceptual, theoretical and epistemological assumptions behind the research. The choice of a particular methodology should always be guided by "the nature of the topic chosen and the research question/hypothesis posed" (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p. 13).

The primary goal of this study is to understand and explore the creation of local resistance narratives in specific places and how and if they are universalized. This involved examining the resistance sites of street vendors, squatters and small retailers, their dislocation from prime market spaces (privileged spaces) to the peripheries of urban centers (marginalized spaces), and their use of alternative and mass media in universalizing protests. The methodological devices used for a research study are determined by the question itself (Lane, 2004) which, in this case, entails interpretation rather than quantification.

Every epistemology, as Christians (2000) indicates, implies an ethical-moral stance toward the world and the self of the researchers. Ontology raises basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of the human beings in the world. Ontological considerations in most cases are rooted in epistemological foundations as well as overall purpose of study, which leads to a methodology that focuses on the best means for gaining knowledge about the world.

In this study, the ontology entailed an examination of discursive strategies that the street vendor/small retailers employ to protest against the liberalization of retail market, to negotiate with governmentality exhibited by the unions and MNCs, and to create and use the

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alternative media, often times, in opposition to the mainstream media. This line of inquiry made ethnography an appropriate tool for methodological inquiry to undertake this research study. This entailed an examination of behavioral practices and the content of narratives and discourses within the social and historical context. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) argue that ethnographic research seeks to explore the realities within the context of social phenomenon, without losing sight of either historical or institutional context.

This research study was an attempt to place specific encounters, events, and understandings into a fuller, more meaningful context. Tedlock (2000) describes ethnography as a combination of "research design, fieldwork, and various methods of inquiry to produce historically, politically, and personally situated accounts, descriptions, interpretations, and representation of human lives" (p. 455).

To plan out and carry out specific investigations, two issues needed to be addressed: "research design and choice of strategy of inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 367).

Design of the study

The research design, Cheek (2000) notes, situates the investigator in experiencing and interpreting the field of experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) consider five basic questions that structure the issue of design:

> (a) How will the design connect to the paradigm or perspective being used in question? That is, how will empirical materials be informed by and interact with the paradigm in question? (b) How will these materials allow the researcher to speak to the problems of praxis and change? (c) Who or what will be studied?
> (d) What strategies of inquiry will be used? (e) What methods or research tools will be used for collecting and analyzing empirical material? (p. 368)

Healy and Perry (2000) point out that the quality of a research design should be judged by its own paradigm. In interpretive research, a priori commitment to the rigid design elements may be detrimental in introducing new understandings. Denzin and Lincoln (2000)

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argue that "although qualitative researchers may design procedures beforehand, designs should always have built-in flexibility to allow for discoveries of new and unexpected empirical material and growing sophistication" (p. 368).

Janesick (2000) observes that the essence of a qualitative research design, requires the use of a set of procedures that are at once open-ended and rigorous. Before an ethnographic field study can be undertaken, several conceptual positions regarding this methodology must be resolved.

The data in this ethnography was derived from gestures, speech, and interaction with the street vendors, squatters and retailers. The social action was studied within specific social settings, which in this study were determined by what "space" the participants were occupying – place of work (in this case mobile or fixed business establishments that street vendors, squatters, and small retailers use), public spaces for protests (the designated area of protest and strikes), and private meeting places (union offices). The researcher collected the data through formal interviews with the participants in the market setting. The interviews with the small retailers were mostly conducted at their shops, and in case of street vendors and squatters the ubiquitous tea and cigarette stalls served the purpose. All the formal interviews were tape-recorded. The informal interviews, which often were 10-15 minute chats at the tea and tobacco stalls were conducted with a number of squatters and street vendors, who either didn't have time or inclination to be formally interviewed.

Lindlof and Taylor (2002) note that the 'relational' effects of investigator's presence/intervention should also be taken into consideration. Accordingly, the presence as well as intervention of the researcher in these social settings was also taken into consideration. The researcher spent an average of 7-8 hours a day in the market for a period

of six months to understand the market dynamics, and observe the relationships between various levels of retailers in *Aminabad.* Spending time in the market helped in getting acquainted with the participants who were reluctant to talk in the earlier stages of research. The informal chats with the shopkeepers at the tea and tobacco stalls familiarized the researcher with the local customs and resulted in introductions to some key union leaders.

The presence of researcher in the site observing and his engagement with the participants on the issues under investigation was kept in account. The researcher maintained honesty with the participants by declaring an intention to do research for the academic purposes. Every participant in the study formally consented to be a part of this study. To mitigate the researcher-effect, many of the shopkeepers were visited more than one time for follow-up questions. The researcher kept in touch with the union insiders and informants on weekly and sometimes daily basis. It was hoped that the regular visits would help sensitize the shopkeepers to the researcher's novel presence in the market.

Site for Study

Deciding on the site for the study was the first task. The definition of site may involve a family, a subgroup, a peer group, or a community. Determining the site for study can be a tedious task in any circumstance and often shape how data is collected and interpretation done. The first thing that needs to be accomplished in an ethnographic study is to conceptualize audience as a site for study so that researcher can engage the participants within that site. Anthropological researchers like Malinowski (1922) and Lévi-Strauss (1973) have argued that a prolonged period of time in the site is of paramount importance to comprehend the 'true' nature of circumstances surrounding any event or group. Ability to conceptualize the "field" in ethnographic research and its departure from the artificial

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settings and toward a more naturalistic and habitational realm (as demonstrated by

Conquergood's (1994) study of Hispanic gang members in Chicago) are the hardest task that

a researcher has to accomplish.

The primary site of study was the *Aminabad* market where the street vendors,

squatters and small retailers spend most of their time. To effectively collect data, the

researcher observed the settings where the discourses occurred and deciphered the discourse

being generated about identity in various social settings where members congregated. The

places of work were the primary place of resistance. Most protest activity happened within

the market.

The place.

The *Aminabad* market had compelling reasons to be the chosen site for this study. It

is centrally located in Lucknow. The city is the capital of the state of *Uttar Pradesh*, which is

the largest state in India. *Aminabad*, in its cosmopolitan character, located in the historical

hearts of Lucknow, represents the political, social, or economic diversity in India. The

retailers of *Aminabad* were the first in the state to organize protests against chain retailing.

Aminabad's front-runner role in the protest movements in words of a union leader is

"symbolic of the flame for resistance." Other things that worked in favor of choosing

Aminabad are as follows:

   a. In *Uttar Pradesh*, the government under the pressure from protesters became the only
      state in India to temporarily ban the retail chains from setting up more shops in the
      state. The retailers of *Aminabad* were at the center of the most vocal protests with a
      statewide rally in Lucknow and numerous strikes that led to the government action.
      ("Uttar Pradesh orders Reliance retail stores to close," 2007).
   b. *Uttar Pradesh* is not only the largest state in the Republic of India but it also has this
      immense political clout with seven out of the 13 prime ministers coming from India's
      largest state. A former Prime Minister, who represents the constituency of Lucknow
      in the Parliament, was a guest speaker at the statewide rally.

c. The researcher has linguistic (Hindi and Urdu) and geographical (went to school in Lucknow) familiarity with the location.

The organization.

Unlike unionized labor that have leaders, hierarchical structures, and communication departments, the informal labor usually is less organized (Mehrotra & Biggeri, 2007). In Indian context, the NGOs and growing number of squatters and street vendors associations, play a crucial role in the organization and communication of protests (Spooner, 2004). In *Aminabad* the small retailers, both affluent and shoestring, are organized through various trade-specific unions that collectively elect office bearers of the Lucknow Traders Union. All the members of the Union have permanent structures and requisite licenses to run their business.

On the other side of the economic and spatial divide: the organization is less formal among the street vendors and squatters, very few have authorization to vend, and is partly organized by a *Dalit* political party. They also have many associations, called unions by locals, are unregistered and without any permanent places to meet and organize. Their unions are dependent on the *Dalit* political party for financial and structural support. The party has great control over the apparatus of resistance. In *Aminabad*, a considerable majority of street vendors and squatters belong to the *Dalit* (backward) castes and are often *Dalit* party members.

The NGOs were absent from the *Aminabad* Market. In India, the NGOs are involved in all sorts of development work (Sheth & Sethi, 1991). In Lucknow itself there are hundreds of NGOs ("NGOs in Uttar Pradesh," 2008). A number of the NGOs work with the squatters and vendors in the other areas of the city. In *Aminabad* area the NGOs are involved in literacy, child health, and sanitation efforts. However, the researcher could not find a single

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NGO that was involved with the protest movement. The mantle for protest every time falls on the trade unions.

Since the observation settings vary and require presence of the researcher in various informal settings where the interaction is more 'natural,' getting merely a formal entry into the meetings will not serve the purpose of study. The informal relationship of the researcher with the activist leaders facilitated entry into a few smaller and informal settings. The union leaders let the researcher peruse the archives of protest material, as well as, literature about the ongoing and future campaigns.

Participant as Observer

In ethnographic inquiry, researchers should look at both *emic* and *etic* view. In *emic* view the researcher sees the scene through the meanings that actors attach to their own actions. In *etic* view, the researcher relies on purposeful observations on the nature of a phenomenon from an outsider's perspective. In *etic* view the researcher is a purposeful observer not a participant. *Emic* approaches have been the basis of methodological approaches that employ participant observation (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The participant observation allowed the researcher to use personal subjectivities to understand and interpret the collective whole that is under examination. To achieve this understanding the researcher spent five months, January to June 2008, in the site conducting interviews and observing the market place interactions and dynamics. The schedule involved spending 7-8 hours a day in the marketplace, excluding Thursdays, when the market is closed.

The researcher would begin the day with a visit to the informants when the *Aminabad* market opened at 11 AM. The interviews were mostly conducted during the afternoon hours.

The hot summer provided a lull during an otherwise a very crowded market and an opportune time for conducting formal interviews. During the evening hours when the shopkeepers were busy, the researcher spent time at the tea and tobacco stalls, which always provided an opportunity for small chat with the retailers taking a break for refreshments. The tea and tobacco stall owners were a great resource in introducing the retailers that visited their shop and often provided very timely and accurate information.

Participant as observer or observant participation for this study offered a more desired form of methodology. This participation invariably involved a degree of deception about the purpose, goals, and scope of study. The role of the researcher was negotiated with the gatekeepers, which made the presence of researcher less obvious. A regular presence in the market may also have helped the researcher in diluting some uniqueness of his presence in an alien setting. The researcher also realized that his involvement with the group during this time involved adjustments in the levels of participation. The initially reluctant participants were more open during the follow-up interviews and informal chats.

Sampling and selection issues.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000) contend that "many qualitative researchers employ theoretical or purposive, and not random, sampling models" (p. 370). This process involves seeking out "groups, settings, and individuals where and for whom the processes being studied are most likely to occur" (p. 370). Lindlof and Taylor (2002) contend that "most sampling decisions in qualitative inquiry are not based on procedures of random probability" (p. 122), but are guided by purposeful sampling, where the "field of research is carried out according to criteria of selections that flow from the objectives of the project" (pp. 122-123).

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This research project principally followed purposeful sampling, supplemented by snowball sampling to reach the population, where referrals were almost an imperative for an interview. The theory required a study of cross section of population and their protest activities. Effort was made to interview participants from all the concerned groups. Interviews were done with the leaders and a cross section of general members of small retailing and vending community. The retailers from all the prominent trades were interviewed to provide a balanced narrative.

The first job as a researcher was to make contact with the retailers, street vendors and squatters. In *Aminabad,* the street corner tea and tobacco stall and the union offices serve as meeting places for activist leaders in the community. The community leaders serve as "gatekeepers." This was particularly true with the leaders among the street vendors and squatters. The street vendors are mobile and the squatters' location in the market depends upon the whims of shopkeepers in vicinity, which made it hard to set appointments, re-locate, or maintain a regular contact with them. The formal interviews with this group were limited to a few "gatekeepers." The informal interviews and conversations at the tea and tobacco stalls with a number of street vendors and squatters, however, provided very valuable information.

The "gatekeepers" and key insiders.

Netaji (*neta* literally means 'leader'; *ji* is added as honorific to address the leaders respectfully), whom the researcher had met through *Rakesh,* a tobacco vendor, was a local leader of the vendors and squatters in *Aminabad* area. During our many meetings, he provided the researcher with in-depth insights on the workings of the resistance and the union activity. *Bhaiyaji,* a fruit and vegetable vendor, provided the researcher an excellent window

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to the daily social lives of the street people. *Rakesh* owned a tiny tobacco stall at one corner

of busy *Aminabad Chauraha*. Here the researcher would stop every day. *Rakesh* almost

knows everybody in near vicinity. His acquaintance with the street vendors and squatters and

the central location of his ship provided the researcher with an excellent opportunity for

informal 15-20 minute conversations with many street vendors and squatters. *Munna*, a

peddler of leather bags, and *Kallu*, the shoe shiner, were the other regular contacts for the

researcher. Informal interactions with a few street vendors happened everyday at *Rakesh's*

tobacco stall. As for others, they live their lives on the streets, which the researcher observed

for almost five months, eight hours a day in the *Aminabad* market.

It was much easier to forge relationships and conduct interviews with the

shopkeepers. The process started with an old family acquaintance, Mr. Kumar, who has been

a "fixture" in the *Aminabad* market for last three decades. He was the current president of the

Aminabad Pharmacists Union, and an executive member of the Lucknow Traders Union. Mr.

Kumar introduced the researcher to various Union functionaries and the retailers in the area.

Mr. Prakash, an amateur historian and bookstore owner, Shivesh Gupta, a garment retailer

and the President of *Pratap Market* Retailers Association, Mr. Ranjan, an electrical appliance

retailer, Atul a fabric retailer, Mr. Mitra a *Chikan* garment retailer, Vivek, an owner of

upscale clothing showroom, and Mr. Agrawal, the vice President of the Lucknow Traders

Union provided many opportunities for the researcher to interact, clarify, and do follow up

interviews. They also introduced the researcher to most of the retailers who contributed their

time to this study.

The hardest part of this study was accessing the women who helped their husbands in

retail activity. Their women folks often help the street vendors and the squatters, but among

the small retailers women are almost totally absent. The researcher, to no avail, made several attempts to interview the women who helped their husbands. In this male dominated market, the women were veiled behind their husbands, fathers, and sons. A couple of interviews were conducted with the husbands of women, who work as artisans at home and serve the garment stores in *Aminabad.* The husbands performed the role of agent between the retailers and their wives.

Interviews.

Interview methodology was used to enable the researcher to record things that cannot be observed directly by other means. This provided the researcher an understanding of a social actor's own perspective and an opportunity to explain their behaviors, with their own stories and narratives.

The research interview mirrors the rest of social life with language forming the major cultural resource that participants draw on jointly to create meaning. According to Riessman and Quinney (2005), the process of reconstruction or narrative re-telling in interviews is a vivid instance of this process. The narrator convinces the researcher, who wasn't present when certain events `happened', that these happenings had credence for the narrator. A particular narrative self is constituted through the narrative, occasioned by the presence of a listener who brings their own set of historically and theoretically framed questions and comments to the encounter.

Informant interviews were conducted with the a few insiders and union leaders, who provided invaluable information about the both significant and non-significant aspects of scene. The informant interviews elicited information about the socio-economic conditions of

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the markets and retailers. At a more practical level these informants introduced the researcher to the other members of their group.

In respondent interviews, questions are guided by a conceptual framework situated in theory (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The questions for interview in this study were designed to understand the interpretations that people attribute to their motivations to act. The researcher encouraged the participants to recount the events of their lives, real life examples and the events of their group in the form of storytelling. Forty-five participants were formally interviewed, many with follow-up sessions, to understand their role in the protest movement, and dynamics of their lives within it, in their own narratives and on their own terms. The union leaders, the gatekeepers, and the common street vendors, squatters and small retailers were included in this group. Other members were added to this list when the researcher got more acquainted with the group and its social processes.

Formal face-to-face individual interviews lasting between 90 and 180 minutes were conducted in a flexible, semi-structured format of general open-ended questions with probes that were used following the guidelines of the Interview Guide (Appendix A). The Interview Guide was constructed to gain the participants' stories using questions based on a chronology of past-to-present-to-future informal and formal experiences. The researcher facilitated the participant's telling of the stories and spent the majority of the time listening, only asking and/or clarifying answers from time to time.

The researcher repeated at the outset of the interview that participants' identities would remain confidential and all data would remain confidential. At the beginning of the interview, the researcher repeated the purpose of the study and reviewed each participant's

rights. Interview guide questions were prepared to elicit stories of the participant's life story experiences of education and learning and were used for all participants.

Participants were constantly encouraged to elaborate on experiences, stories, or thoughts. They often times addressed or revealed issues of concern previously unconsidered or unknown to the researchers. The researcher then followed up with the interviews on the subject of interests as well. Eventually, however, participants' comments became redundant, and the interviews became repetitive, at which point the researcher decided that new data was not emerging and would likely not emerge.

The retailers in *Aminabad* predominantly speak Hindi. Words from English are often interspersed, but the structure and nature of language is Hindi. The interviews were conducted in Hindi and *Avadhi,* a local dialect of Hindi commonly used by the street vendors and squatters. The interviews were audio taped on all the occasions, except a few times when the shopkeepers did not want to be audio recorded. The street vendors and squatters generally were not in favor of recording the interviews or conversations.

Field notes.

To get the detailed knowledge of social life of participants and the discourses generated during these scenes extensive field notes were taken. This helped in contextualizing the information gathered as well as in interpreting the symbolic qualities of social interaction. Descriptive notes from observations of processes as well as from the interviews were taken. The researcher audio tape all the formal interviews done during this process, however there were times when note taking was the only recourse left if the member was uncomfortable with the tape recorder.

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The informal conversational interviews were a major part of this study. A number of street vendors and squatters were uncomfortable with the idea of formal interview and the encounters often times were limited to 10-15 minutes at a tea or tobacco stall. The informality under these circumstances provided a more spontaneous response and situational cues to the researcher. Since these interviews always occurred in a naturalistic setting, it provided for contextuality that is sometimes lacking in formal interviews.

Field notes were written and/or transcribed immediately after the session to maintain the fidelity of account. These notes were also kept in chronological order maintaining the important details of all the phases of social life of the group. The field notes also recorded the researcher's positionality over a period of time. This helped keep in perspective the researcher's thoughts and positions as the settings, scenes, and situations evolved during the course of study.

The street vendors and squatters were generally wary of the tape recorder use. In these cases notes were taken by hand and the researcher tape-recorded the summary of the interaction immediately after. During the translation and transcription, a special attention was paid to contextualizing participants' metaphors and idioms with what they meant and inferred, rather than literal translation. However, in every other case, the participants' discourses were translated with integrity and an occasional help from experts.

Data Analysis

The next step in this process, Lindlof and Taylor's (2002) explain, is the data analysis, which involve data management, data reduction, and conceptual development. The conceptual framework for this study was based on governmentality, militant particularism

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and its translation into universalized resistance. The data management here involved coding discourses as an application of existing categories, which were derived from theory.

Coding

Coding is the heart and soul of textual analysis, which forces the researchers to make judgments about the meanings of contiguous blocks of text. "The fundamental tasks associated with coding are sampling, identifying themes, building codebooks, marking texts, constructing models (relationship among codes), and testing these models against empirical data" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 780).

The primary units of analysis, within the text, were the responses to the open-ended questions recorded during interviews. First, the themes were determined after comparing the narratives across the text. Other unit of analysis were the texts that reflected a single theme, what Krippendorf (1980, p. 62) calls "thematic units".

"Themes are abstract constructs that investigators identify before, during, and after data collection… more often than not, however, researchers induce themes from text itself" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 780). The coding design was prepared to mark the units of text (the responses in the open ended questions), as they related meaningfully to the themes.

Smith and Borgatti (1998) argue that thematic analysis aims to illustrate underlying themes in each respondent's discourse by examining the transcripts and looking for common themes in the language used. In order to achieve this, the transcripts and comments were read and re-read, and the key themes that tended to re-occur were noted. This initial coding led to a determination the themes. Then in the formal analysis the narratives were organized under various themes that illustrated the theoretical propositions.

The researcher was able to discover six themes in the resistance narrative, three themes about their level of participation, seven themes on communicating resistance, and two major themes for the organization of resistance. The thematic stories are discussed in the findings sections with headings related to the research questions on the retailers' resistance narrative, their level of participation in building resistance discourse, level of participation in policy-making, the communication strategies employed in disseminating resistance, and the organization of resistance.

Data Interpretation

Coding the data in some meaningful theme helped in retrieving data, but it still needed to be re-contextualized to make logical inferences. Interpretation of data was next step and involved an in-depth understanding of concept and exploration of *emic* meanings. The analysis was constructed on *emic* meanings by looking at symbolic links and relationships to understand the data from the participant's perspective.

Exemplars emerging out of data were used in developing inferences. Exemplars also served the purpose of making persuasive interpretive claims. The exemplars consisted of experiences, segments of interviews, illustrations, scenes, occurrences, etc. that provided richness of experience.

In this study, metaphorical comparison was the most appropriate strategy to examine exemplars and other texts. The informants' use of metaphors and commonalities in their speech provided a basis for participants' evaluation of various situations they encounter. The analysis of metaphors helped in putting interpretive claims in the form of themes. Quinn (1997) contends that this helps to "exploit clues in ordinary discourse for what they tell us about their shared cognition - to glean what people must have in mind in order to say the

things they do" (p. 140). For the purpose of interpretation, meaning of metaphors was not the only important thing for holistic understanding; metaphors' relation to situations and their contextuality were also taken into consideration.

Reliability and Validity Issues

Qualitative studies are generally not concerned with reliability as a design factor. Golafshani (2003) argues that in quantitative research embodied in reliability "is the idea of replicability or repeatability of results or observations (p. 598)." The qualitative scholars, however, believe that a single occurrence/event/interpretation is expected to be individual and interpretive in nature (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002).

The idea that realities are neither static nor singular negates the notion of research design replication in qualitative research. Stenbacka (2001) argues that since the reliability issue concerns measurements, it has less relevance in qualitative research and shouldn't be considered as essential in judging the quality of qualitative research.

Validity in positivist research looks at the soundness of constructs (operationalization) as well as the generalizability of study. In quantitative arena both of these validities are designed to set up criterion for accurate measurement. Janesick (2000) argues that validity in qualitative research is about description and explanation within the context and "whether or not the explanation fits the description. In other words, is the explanation credible? … There is no one 'correct' interpretation (p. 393). Lindlof (1999) argues that since, " the interpreter operates reflexively as a participant, it is doubtful whether the usual way of conceiving internal validity has much relevance (p. 238)." In this ethnography where construction of themes as well as metaphor analysis are based on

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interpretations of the researcher without making any claim to truth or right interpretation of data, validity as seen in objectivist research is not a factor.

Quality, thoroughness, and methodical interpretations of data, as well as making semiotic connections between discourses and scenes carry more weight in ethnographic research than reliability and validity considerations. Ethnographers study groups over a period of time to comprehend the particulars of group/culture through observer immersion into the culture or group. The main goal of ethnography is to identify, define, and interrelate variables within a particular context to provide detailed accounts. Lindlof (1999) argues that there are multiple interpretations possible in any scenario, but "we stand a better chance of arriving at very plausible interpretations if we can evaluate the competing ones incisively (p. 238)."

In order to achieve this, the data was collected through direct observation of the site, examination of the texts and symbols used in resistance, evaluation of media narratives and both formal and informal interviews. Although this is not a pure case of triangulation (using multiple methods), use of observation and textual and semiotic analysis helped in contextualizing the information collected from formal interviews and informal conversations. This approach helped in providing a detailed description of human behavior within a particular environment.

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Chapter Four: The Socio-Economics of the People and Place

The Marketplace

Aminabad is a crowd. At any time, it seems like some kind of sluice gate have been opened, a torrent of people, bicycles, vendors, rickshaws, handcarts, automobiles, have swept across the road. *Aminabad* continues to define itself in the form of shops on either side of the streets, withered buildings draped in vinyl billboards and bright signs at upper levels; made invisible by squatters and the crowd at the pavement level. The shops, even when small, even when dingy, have bright signboards, colorful and inventive, written in both English and Hindi. Nothing remains vacant here; the ubiquitous tiny *dhabas* (eateries), tea stalls, and tobacco shops crowd the pavements, sidewalks, and street corners.

'Old' Lucknow district is made up of three distinct retailing sections. *Aminabad* is located in the center of downtown Lucknow. The section to the West is centered on the *Chowk* wholesale market, and the relatively newer retailing district in the East is organized around the *Hazaratganj* shopping district. *Aminabad* is the largest retailing district and hardest to define in terms of boundaries, where residential areas are clustered around the retail market and the boundaries between businesses and residences are often sketchy. The *Aminabad* market covers an area of almost 2-3 square miles. The residential area ranges from *hawelis* (mansions) to middle class neighborhood enclaves to crowded slums and squatter settlements on Western and Northern fringes of the market.

Many immigrants to the city contribute to the swelling ranks of squatter settlements in *Aminabad*, which serves as vending venues during daytime and as sleeping-shacks after nightfall. Many of them live their lives openly on the street. They also live in slums in the alleyways, adjacent to the vegetable market, in back-to back and side-to-side stalls and

shelters. The view was overwhelming: narrow ragged lanes curved out of view; then a side of road was dug up, then more garbage, then black swamp and sewage; it's a hellish visage. Collectively, they are referred to as the 'encroachers' - unauthorized settlers, and were often a target of police heavy-handedness and retailers' antipathy.

Street vending, squatter trade, residential traffic, and a lack of enough parking facilities in *Aminabad* make access to the market impossible for vehicles during busy evening hours and it is not much better during other times. The slums, unauthorized businesses, and unregulated traffic all contributed to choke *Aminabad* during busy hours.

The New Lucknow, locally referred as the tran*s-Gomati*, is the area to the Northeast of the *Gomati* River, which bisects the city North-South. This section of the city has been the focus of most development in the last decade. Currently, Lucknow is expanding much further to the north in the commercial and residential areas such as *Gomatinagar*, *Indiranagar*, and *Aliganj*. This is the part of Lucknow where the new chain retailing outlets and malls are mushrooming. The trans-*Gomati* area is organized neatly into residential and business enclaves, with wide roads, parking facilities, parks, entertainment centers, etc., and bears no resemblance to the chaotic retail districts in the old Lucknow. Here, the 'encroachers' are conspicuously absent and most of the population is partly upper class and mostly middle class Hindus.

For the middle and lower class, *Aminabad,* despite all its infrastructural bottlenecks, is the largest and most preferred shopping place in downtown Lucknow. It is literally packed with all kinds of shops and trading centers and provides a unique one-stop shopping facility in the city. As Amit Gupta, a hardware retailer on *Aminabad* Road explained, "There is nothing that you cannot find in *Aminabad*. From cradle to grave, you will find all your

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shopping needs fulfilled in one place. You can get all you want in one place. Even if you are preparing for a wedding tomorrow, you can do all the shopping here in one day." The "cradle to grave" theme is pretty popular among the retailers and is often used to underscore the importance of their market.

The shopping district is centered on a roundabout called the *Aminabad Chauraha.* The crowded market near the *Chauraha* serves as a central location for trading activity. This place is within walking distance of the legislative, executive, and judicial edifices of the State, which also makes it a focal point for the demonstrations, rallies and protests. The main bus station, a mile to the South and the Central Railway station a mile to the North of the *Chauraha,* conveniently connect it to the other districts and serve as an amorphous boundary for Aminabad.

The *Ayur* Pharmacy occupies the East corner of the *Aminabad Chauraha.* It served as a convenient meeting place for union activities for the local retailers. I spent a substantial time interacting with the retailers at this corner. Mr. Kumar, the owner of *Ayur* Pharmacy was also my earliest and most resourceful contact within the community.

The West end of the *Chauraha* is the home to *Pratap* Market, one of the largest garment-retailing centers in the State. Fair-sized and affluent showrooms selling jewelry, books, wedding supplies, pharmaceuticals, travel supplies, etc, cluster around its north-south thoroughfare. There are also scores of small electronic appliance, furniture, and stationery shops in this area.

The Mohan Market to the North of *Chauraha* adjacent to landmark *Hanuman* Temple is a large center for handicraft and *Chikan* garment retailing. *Chikan* is a style of exquisite hand-embroidered clothing for which the *Aminabad* market is the largest retailing outlet in

India. The *Chikan* shops extended for miles in labyrinthine alleyways behind the larger showrooms. Many of these shops, which serve as small manufacturing and repair units, are sometimes as small as 25 square feet, but rarely larger than 100 square feet.

The *Swadeshi* Market, also called the Refugee market, across from the Hanuman Temple is a collection of small shops around 100-200 square feet big. The market primarily consists of shoe, clothing, handicraft, and convenience stores. "Rural folks came here from all over because of our lower prices compared to other markets in Lucknow," according to Mr. Sabbarwal, who owns a small shoe shop, whose "family had migrated here from Lahore after the partition." He added that, "this market was established by the *Punjabi* Hindu refugees who escaped from Pakistan after the partition of British India in 1947. My family was the first few to settle here."

For a few blocks to the east is an avenue that houses mostly the bookstores, and an occasional watchmaker, spice shop, or some other light commercial enterprise. The cross streets in this area are almost entirely occupied by small shoe shops, but one also finds here and there, a corner grocery, laundry, or pharmacy.

To the southeast of the *Chauraha* is a large maze-like market called the *Gadbadjhala*, which is often described as the "woman's market." Owner of a tiny artificial jewelry store in a corner of this market, Alok Bist insisted that, "when a woman comes to the *Gadbadjhala*, she finds everything she needs. We sell a large variety of hosiery items, bangles, cosmetics, jewelry, and anything that a woman may need. I can guarantee that she will leave satisfied."

Walking further southwest from the *Chauraha* toward the Railway station on the *Aminabad* Road, for a few bocks one would come across an array of jewelry shops continued by hardware and paint retail stores for almost a mile. The cross streets, here, mostly serve the

convenience retailers, with an occasional beauty parlor, wedding shop, beer joint, or barbershop.

On the farther eastside of the *Chauraha* is a two-mile long north south thoroughfare, called *Gautam Buddha Marg*. It serves as the main artery for traffic movement in and out of the *Aminabad* market. On the North edge of this road is the largest market for fresh fruits and vegetables in the city, called the *Kaisarbagh* vegetable market. The vegetable market that extends into the meat shops was made up of blocks of small stalls mildewed and grimed; swamps, drains; unpaved stretches of serpentine streets; and the shacks and rag-roofed shelters. These daytime shops and encroached pavements were commonly used as sleeping shacks during the night.

A mile south along this road is the largest retail market in the state for machinery, hardware, and home improvement. The shops here are big and the retailers are affluent. Further along is a retail market for electrical and electronic appliances. It stretches for a mile with a few multiplexes and showrooms along the way.

Even when the *Aminabad* market is mostly "divided geographically on the basis of trade/merchandise, the division is not really neat," according to Mr. Kumar. One will find an assortment of small businesses, such as grocery shops, convenience stores, jewelers, barbershops, an occasional liquor store, launderettes, and a number of street vendors in any part of the market. The street vendors, tea stalls and *Pan* Shops (small vendors in the semi-permanent structures selling lose cigarettes, betel, and sweets) are ever-present on every street corner in *Aminabad*. A large complex network of independently owned retailers and distributors characterizes the trading in market. The small retailers mostly sell local or regional brands.

By various estimates, there were no official figure available, including the guesses by

various trade union leaders, there are believed to be "approximately 10,000 retail outlets in

Aminabad" according to Mr. Agrawal, the Vice President of the Lucknow Traders Union.

Most of these retail shops were fairly small measuring approximately 100 square feet or less.

Not all the shops, however, were small or owned by poor retailers. There was a smattering of

large multiplex showrooms, exclusive, and prosperous rising above the squalor around. The

size of the shops, very much an indicative of relative prosperity, covers a wide spectrum: at

one end is a 20 square feet open stall, where the retailer barely met ends; at the other end is

an immaculate, plush 20,000 sq. ft. showroom, a replica of its competitors – the mall stores,

in merchandize and store design. The range was great but heavily weighted toward the small,

overcrowded, dilapidated end of the scale.

The People of Aminabad

> This is the opening ceremony. You have to refer to the *panchang* (Hindu astrological charts) and find a name for your shop. When you move into a new shop, you have to exorcise the spirits that are there. The new place should be pure. To achieve that you have to go through quite an elaborate *puja*, which is of course hours of chanting by the priest. After that you have festivities. You share food with your friends and family.

> That was the kind of thing you do "if you wanted your business to be successful,"

according to Jatin, who was opening a big departmental store in the center of *Aminabad,*

across from the *Hanuman Mandir.* He added, "these are tough times, we need to have an

auspicious start for our business." He stressed that the rituals were "what made you Hindu.

There are rituals for birth, when a child is eight there is a thread ceremony, then there is a

Wedding, and of course there are rituals at death." In Hindu tradition these rituals are strictly

the domains of the upper castes. These rituals that connect people of one caste also segregate

them from the other castes (Srinivas, 1962). At Jatin's opening ceremony almost all the

guests were upper caste, which included his family, friends, other upper caste shopkeepers from *Aminabad,* and few government bureaucrats. Conspicuously, missing from this impressive spectacle were the neighboring street vendors, the squatters, and the hawkers.

The caste based social segregation is not limited to the business community, this separation is a part of caste based Hindu society (Srinivas, 1962) and these traditions have survived and the rituals have become more elaborate regardless of modernization (Singh, 1986). The shopkeepers in *Aminabad* reflect the same realities, which, according to the scholars, exist in other aspects of social life.

According to the *Vedic* traditions, the caste determines the hierarchical social structure. "The *Vedas* postulate four levels of *varnas* or castes. From highest to lowest social status, the four castes are *Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya,* and *Shudra/Dalit*. These are further divided into sub-castes known as *Jatis,* as a form of occupational refinement," elaborated Mr. Prakash, owner of a bookstore in the market, "it's all explained clearly in *Gita*."

The *Bhagvat Gita* (18.44), one of the holiest Hindu texts, postulates that, "farming, cow protection, and trading are the natural work for the *Vaishya*, and for the *Sudra* there is labor and service to others". *Vaishya*, one of the three upper castes, are referred to as the caste of merchants, craftsmen, traders, bankers, etc. "They are the producers of the society," added Mr. Prakash. The *Dalit's*, on the other hand, have a pariah status derives its strength and justification from religious texts. In the *Manusmriti,* the *Dalit* is described as "polluted." The *Dalit* is "unclean" from birth. He violates, by his very existence, the brahminical obsession with hygiene. The *Dalit* can never escape his status: he is perpetually filthy (Dumont, 1980).

The *Dalits* are a group traditionally assigned the status of outcastes in the Hindu caste system. They were formerly called the 'untouchables' or *Harijans* (children of God), but they

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decided that "the former title was derogatory and the latter patronizing and so rejected both and adopted the name *Dalit*," according to Rakesh, the owner of a tobacco stall near the *Chauraha*. '*Dalit*' to him meant, "Oppressed, crushed, broken." It was also an indicative of the visible state of the street vendors and squatters, who predominantly belong to the *Dalit* caste.

In *Aminabad,* the *Dalits* street vendors and squatters commonly occupy the streets and sidewalks in their tiny "stalls in the market and its outskirts, mostly selling vegetables, fruits, and other cheap items," Munna, a peddler of cheap leather belts and wallets, explained, "the low paying and low status services are the only option left for us. One will not find a single butcher, barber, shoe smith, or a janitor who is not a *Dalit."*

The shopkeepers in *Aminabad* are mostly Hindus; the artisans are Muslims. The artisans work from their home or in the warehouses for the retailers. The artisans did some complicated work. They beat ribbons of silver into very thin, half-crumbling silver leaf or silver foil. They make cheap shoes; they do a local kind of embroidery called *Chikan*; they do bead embroidery. They are the invisible people of *Aminabad;* they sell their goods or services to other retailers.

In *Aminabad,* based on their current economic and social conditions, the retailer groups can be characterized as: a) the adaptive retailers at the top of chain; b) the shoestring retailers, who have permanent structures but lack the capital to effect changes in their stores; c) the street vendors, who ply their wares in mobile structures; and d) the squatters, also called 'encroachers' – who occupy the pavements, the shop fronts, and practically any empty space, were at the bottom of small retailing in the *Aminabad* market.

The Adaptive Retailer

Vivek, a 28-year-old manager of a prestigious garment-retailing store his family owned in *Aminabad*, invited me to breakfast one Monday morning, at his house. "The shops didn't' open before 11," Vivek said. The reason was, though they "didn't live far from their work, the shopkeepers didn't go home for lunch. Once they went to their shop, they were there for the whole working day."

Vivek was a rarity in the business world of *Aminabad.* He has a degree in Management from a prestigious institution in Bombay. His retail store is an anomaly in the crowded, dilapidated world of *Aminabad.* The newly remodeled showroom according to him was designed "on the western model, with the old world charm." His 20,000 square feet, four story glass-front showroom was serving as a model for a few other aspirant fellow adaptive traders in *Aminabad.* Worried by the rapid expansion of big businesses and encouraged by their creditors, adaptive small retailers have begun to "adopt the methods of their corporate competitors," said Vivek.

This invitation to breakfast had a touch of corporate flair. Vivek, according to himself, "is the new face of retailer in India," and clearly preferred the idea of using corporate management knowledge he learned in the business school to move ahead of his competition. He said,

> Modernizing the store layouts and adopting departmental management techniques is crucial to our growth. We have developed closer relationship with the chains as their suppliers. At the same time we are opening more outlets in the trans-*Gomati* area to hedge any losses in *Aminabad*. The people who are trying to do business with ancient models are going to perish. The chains are here to stay and the quicker we adapt the better.

A vast majority of adaptive retailers, like Vivek, are *Vaishya*; the other upper caste merchants are very few in number. In *Aminabad* the sub-castes of *Vaishya* most prevalent are the *Khatri, Sindhi, Marwari, Chopra* and *Bhatia*. The *Marwaris,* originally from rural trading *Jatis* in the state of Rajasthan (Srinivas, 1962), are politically and economically the most dominant trading group in *Aminabad.* Among all small retailers the "*Marwaris* rank highest in prior management experience, initial capital, and capital support from family members" according to Mr. Kapil Sharma, who owns a large clothing showroom near the *Aminabad* Park. A *Brahmin* himself, he added, "I am a first generation shopkeeper. Very few *Brahmins* are involved in business activity and rarely as an intergenerational family business. One of my brothers is a University professor and the other one is scientist. My son is attending a MBA school in New York."

Retailers in the same class as Vivek and Mr. Sharma had a certain belief in development and were not shying from using the techniques employed by the chains. In fact, developing their own chain of stores is the goal that they have envisioned in the hopes of staying above the curve and the market competition.

The Shoestring Retailer

Shoestring retailers are a sizable majority of shopkeepers in *Aminabad,* They have modernized to a degree, especially "in terms of the stocks" they carry and how their "storefronts look," according to Mr. Sehgal. A clothing retailer for more than half a century in this market, Mr. Sehgal was a refugee who had migrated with his extended family as a 5 year old from Pakistan in the aftermath of partition in 1947. He and his two sons own a 200 sq. ft. shop, where they have been "selling *Chikan* garments for the last 60 years. Lucky to have a shop in *Aminabad* we have prospered enough to sustain three generations of the

family" told Mr. Sehgal. However, the last decade has broken this "idyllic existence" for them. Mr. Sehgal expressed a deep pessimism and frustration when trying to compete with the chains as well as the other big retailers in *Aminabad*,

> The problem starts with the lack of credit and having a small shop doesn't help. I am trying to spruce this store by raising money from friends and family. I am also trying to adjust my stocks and do the things by copying others. I know I can survive, but now without help. The artisans we have bought from for ages now want advance payments. Chain retailers' use of advance credit has put us in very tight economic spot. I am able to survive because of my personal relationships with the artisans. Worst, however, is the loss of upper end clientele to the bigger retailers. We want to be a part of modernization, but for the most part we have remained outside the mainstream of development and we don't have capital to do it on our own.
>
> The shoestring small retailer of today was not this hard pressed in the past. They are

taking the brunt of the changing economic structures. "We used to have a rolling credit system with the suppliers and in turn we provided credit for our customers, but now the dynamics of wholesale market has changed. These days, it is almost impossible to get credit from either the suppliers or the banks. We have been forced to cut down on the stocks and the profit margins have vanished. We all operate on a day-to-day basis with shoestring budgets, and the situation is only getting worse," explained Mr. Ranjan, the proprietor of a small electrical appliances shop.

Mr. Ranjan elaborated that, "opening a small retailing outlet in the form of convenience stores, converting the residences into home-front stores, was a very common form of self-employment in *Aminabad*. Almost every old residential building had gone this transformation." This "easy form of self-employment," with very "low capital investment is a norm among the lower middle class *Vaishya,*" he explained. All the male members of household are usually employed in the family enterprise. For a shoestring retailer "it is a subsistence level existence, but still capable of providing a meager living for the whole family. Most of us are always on the brink of collapse, somehow barely managing to

survive," told Atul Bist, who has his two younger brothers working along side in a shop barely 100 square feet.

The "lack of education and training" also precluded the "change of trade or career" for the shoestring retailer. This was in contrast to the more educated and resourceful adaptive retailers. "We are precariously holding on to one-time-prime real estate in the market. We cannot sell it because the prices have fallen dramatically due to a lack of development in the inner city. Now, that most of the infrastructure is being developed in the new suburbs, who would want to come to this congested marketplace?" lamented Swami, a small garment retailer in the narrow streets of *Pratap Market*, whose customers have to "park half a mile away to reach the store. What was once such an affluent market, has reached a stage where stores are empty, the morale low, and there is no concerted effort to rectify this situation."

The advent of chain retailing has also changed the ground realities of taxation and regulations for the small retailers. "These policies have been enacted to streamline the investment by the chains, but have put an excessive burden small shopkeepers." Mr. Kumar, the President of *Aminabad* Pharmacist Association explained,

> Now we have to maintain records about which we don't really have much knowledge or experience. Under WTO pressure, the taxation had been restructured to align it with the US and Europe's. This is done to make it similar to theirs for the ease of Multinationals and to attract investment. Earlier we only had the sales tax, now we have a graded tax structure with different rates for different products. This is not inconvenient for the chains because they do computerized inventory. For a small retailer just keeping the tax records straight will become a full time job. Hiring a tax lawyer leads to almost insurmountable overheads for the smaller stores.

The Street Vendor

The street vendors have no permanent places; they ply their goods in handcarts, covered trolleys, and "can be found in any corner of the market" told *Netaji,* a union leader for the street vendors and squatters, "some of them have the authorization and a license

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number from the City to sell their goods in a specific area." Most of them, however, had "no

authorization" according to Munna, a peddler of leather bags, who over time became one of

my most reliable sources of information. He elaborated,

> We are completely at the mercy of the retailers in permanent structures who think that
> we are the eyesores of the market, a reason for their lost sales, and would go to any
> length to remove us from here. We have to pay regularly to the cops so that we are
> not harassed. The thing is, all that I own is here in this cart and if I were to lose it, I
> will have noting left. Nothing.

Munna's migrant roots reflected in his heavy western *Uttar Pradesh* dialect. He told

that "the street vendors mostly sell cheap hosiery related goods, items of general

convenience, plastic wares etc. The quality of the goods is not as good as the big stores, but

the prices are cheap. The decision to sell something depends on the need to sell, not the profit

margins." Like Munna, many of the street vendors had migrated to Lucknow from all over

the state to make money and remit some to their families still in the villages. Most of the

vendors like Munna "live alone"; and they "sleep under or on top of their carts depending on

the weather conditions." The retailers and the mainstream media often invoked their migrant

status for "criminalizing, persecuting, and expelling them from the market areas," added

Netaji.

The street vendors are a mobile lot. The mobility is "essential to find the best places

to hawk," but also depends on "the antipathy of their surroundings" said Munna. I had to

search for Munna or Pappu for hours in the crowded market every time I needed to get in

touch with them. Most of the residential areas around the city seriously "restrict the

movements of hawkers in the neighborhoods." Munna's cousin, Amin who peddled cheap

sunglasses and leather belts outside a middle class neighborhood without proper

authorization was arrested on the suspicion of theft in the residential area. When I caught up

with him, he had spent two days in the police lockup, with occasional beatingss, and was let

out with a stern warning about not going near the neighborhood again. When asked what he was going to do, he laughed at this "impossible situation"… "Where else can I go? What choices we got? We are in everybody's way"

The suspicion, the precarious hold on livelihood, and the vicious cycle of poverty defined the existence of street vendors. However, they were not the worst off. That distinction belongs to the 'squatters,' generally called the "encroachers."

The Squatter

In the old bazaar area of *Aminabad,* in the center of the market, sitting on the pavement-floor in front of one-room shops, the squatters display their wares on grey-brown plastic blankets or gunnysacks. In the accounts of other retailers, authorities, and general public they are generally considered "the scourge of *Aminabad*." "We are blamed for our own existence," announced a poster at one of their rallies to protest against the persecution by the shopkeepers and police. The shopkeepers go at lengths to remove this "blot" from the market. If the market was over congested, they were the one blamed. If there was a crime unresolved, they were suspected. They conceded in their accounts that it didn't help that most of them "belong to the lowest caste," had "no permanent structures", and were "the migrants from the poorest areas" of the state. They also don't have much to offer in terms of value of merchandise other than "fresh produce, meat, poultry, cheap plastic goods, rejected clothing consignments, and all sort of second hand material," told Pappu. Their clientele is equally deprived, and according Vivek, an affluent retailer, "their presence doesn't help the conditions in the already beleaguered market."

This was also the group that I had hardest time making inroads. They are very visible, and mostly occupy the same spaces as the street vendors. They, however, are less mobile,

which was not an advantage for a squatter, as they were "directly" and almost "always in somebody's way" and that somebody was always "more powerful" than them. "Just to find a place to sell our wares is a constant struggle for us," lamented *Bhaiyaji*, at many occasions. The problem that I encountered was that they didn't want to talk. *Bhaiyaji* suspected it was "because I was an outsider, they were busy and thought the talk was futile and of little value".

Bhaiyaji was my first real contact with a squatter. He is a fruit vendor in the *Kaisarbagh* area of the market. This meeting was more by chance than design, though not due to the lack of attempts. It was facilitated by the lull in the market activity during the afternoon heat of Indian summer and *Bhaiyaji's* desire to escape from the cacophony of his three children all aged below 12, who helped him wash, clean, and pack the fruits.

Everyone called him *Bhaiyaji* (an honorific for brother). He had migrated to Lucknow "two decade earlier". Since then, he has been a squatter in *Aminabad*. His experience, geniality, and consideration as a respected elder by the other squatters had earned him a role of interlocutor, and a leader of sorts in the immediate area. "I have seen things," was his unique way of putting things in perspective. His worldly experience and community leadership were result of ouster from "almost every corner of the market" at some point of time and his status as "troublemaker". He had seen "the number of squatters increasing every year," as well as "ensuing antipathy from the shopkeepers." However, even he was "caught unaware" by the sudden advent of chain retailers.

> I didn't have to compete with the big stores for selling fruits; it was just we who were doing it. My biggest worry used to be finding a place to sell. Now, the big stores are selling fruits and vegetables. They are buying in bulk from the farmers, who don't want to deal with us small buyers anymore. They have also bought most of the big farms around the city. We have survived the natures' will in the past, but how are we supposed to compete with this?

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The street vendors and squatters have more social similarities between them than with the other groups. They almost exclusively come from the lowest caste or *Jatis*. On the other side, the retailers with permanent structures, adaptive as well as shoestring, predominantly belong to the upper castes, mostly *Vaishya.* This separation of caste and trade is also evident in their social or political gatherings. There is almost no interaction between the groups even when all are characterized as small retailers. The distinctions and divisions that exist at the social and political levels manifest and translate into economic stratification in the market. For most the caste is also a determining factor for their class.

The Union and the Organizations

The Adaptive and Shoestring Retailers

The rally to protest against the chain retailing in front of the *Vidhan Sabha* (the

Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh in Lucknow), on April 26, 2008 was both a show of

defiance and show of strength by the retailers' associations from across the state. It was a

festive atmosphere: a show of camaraderie with combative slogan shouting that had brought

the traffic and other activities to a crawl right in the heart of city. By the looks of it the crowd

was large, the banners were abundant and according to an inflated official count by the

rally's organizers, the Lucknow Traders Union, the participation was in excess of half a

million. Mr. Agrawal, a Vice-President of Lucknow Trader's Union (a body that loosely

represents all the retail traders in the city), who had invited me to attend the rally, called it "a

show of unity," a unified front that will force the government to "buckle to their demands."

This call for unity was also one of the main themes in the slogans and banners that stuck,

hung, unfurled, and affected every building and most vehicles around.

The unity that the traders' organizations were boasting, however, unraveled during

my conversations with the traders. The divisions were manifested both in the terms of caste

and class, which very often intersect. The people of higher caste were very often also the

most affluent. The *Vaishyas* and *Dalits* form a formidable divide with almost no social

interaction or the unity of purpose in their agenda or goals. The class-divide as seen in

Aminabad is also in favor of the *Vaishyas*, with the *Dalits* almost always occupying the

bottom slot as street vendors, hawkers, and squatters.

The Lucknow Traders Union is at the head of a loose alliance between various trade-specific unions representing different markets in Lucknow. Mr. Prakash thus explained the organization of union activity,

> Traders' primary membership is in their trade-specific union. For instance, I am a member of the Union of Bookstore Retailers in *Aminabad.* The trade-specific unions represent us at higher levels of union activity. All the trade-specific unions in the market are collectively represented by the *Aminabad* Traders Union. Now, the traders in various markets in Lucknow also have unions based on their specific trades. They in turn elect their pan market union. All the market-unions in the city comprise to form the Lucknow Traders Union. It represents us at the state and national levels.

Mr. Kumar, the President of Aminabad Traders Association, acknowledges the difficulties in coordinating so many associations in the market. He recounted that,

> There are more than 20 small and big trade-specific unions in *Aminabad*. The bigger and powerful associations comprise of trades like garment, pharmaceutical, electrical, hardware, and general merchandise. The smaller associations comprise of the bookstores, jewelers, restaurants, and home improvement stores. The street vendors and squatters unions are separate from us. My job is to coordinate between different trade groups to come up with a unified agenda for the *Aminabad* market, and to act as their representative at the city-level. Thus, we try to create a consensus, a common ground between the various trade-specific unions and provide them with latest information about the developments at city, state and national level.

The union activity until very recently was solely directed toward influencing government for better infrastructure and beneficial taxation for the retailers. Most of this happened at the trade level. "The activism was based on trade, we rarely needed for all of us to come together. The chain retailing has changed the dynamics of our activism. This has affected the whole market, some trades worse than the others, but our unions are still evolving in the face of these new realities. We cannot create a holistic strategy unless the retailers move past their petty differences," explained an activist at Mr. Kumar's office one evening.

In India the Trader Unions are generally divided on political lines. Tietelbaum (2006) contends that the "union activity is continually fragmented and wholly dominated by political

parties (2006, p. 389)." Mr. Prakash, a bookstore owner, reflected similar views about the

politicization of union activity in *Aminabad*:

> The leaders of various trade-specific unions are members of the political parties that
> favor them. Due to this it is almost impossible to reach any unified agenda at the
> Lucknow Traders Union, it becomes a tug-of-war between different political parties
> to control the resistance. The internecine among the political parties further fragments
> the traders body and obfuscates the decision making process. This leaves us with a
> narrow membership divided on political lines and characterized by the centralized
> decision-making, ad hoc management, confrontational approach, and strategies that
> favor the political parties' electoral goals. As a consequence the unions are
> increasingly ignored by the government, marginalized by the media, distrusted by
> their members, and disliked by the community as large.

The Lucknow Traders Union and its constituents only represent the small retailers in

permanent structures. The rally at the Legislative Assembly was primarily a demonstration

by the *Vaishya* small retailers in the state. The *Dalit* street vendors and squatters have no

proper unions, they are almost solely dependent on the political party support for

organization, mobilization, and resistance activity (R. Kothari, 2004).

The Street vendors and squatters

Absent from the traders' unions, the street vendors and squatters are themselves a

formidable number, but not as well represented as their shopkeeper counterparts. Their rallies

go unreported, often broken down with a palpable show of force, and usually vilified in

media as parochial. These people are only remembered during the times of election, as

Bhayaji, the fruit vendor, explained,

> The *Dalit* political parties line up for our votes during the elections. Our large
>
> numbers draw them to us. They make unreasonable promises about improvements in
>
> market conditions and vanish soon after the elections are over. Every election brings
>
> more promises for favorable resettlement, permanent shops, and protection from the

predatory practices of larger retailer. All in all, it comes to nothing. I have seen five general elections and after every election our condition just worsens.

The *Dalit* social movements in India have raised the political awareness and electoral solidarity among the *Dalit* castes. During the elections caste-based rhetoric takes the centre stage in India. The caste solidarities are emphasized by the political parties in pursuit of electoral votes, but this doesn't really favor the majority *Dalit* (R. Kothari, 2004). For the last decade the Chief Minister of the Uttar Pradesh has come from a *Dalit* caste. The *Dalit* political parties have consolidated political power at state level, yet economic and social benefits for the poor *Dalits* have remained elusive. The political power and electoral expressions have not translated into a social change that the *Dalit* movement leaders had promised a decade earlier.

This nature of *Dalit* politics directly affects the organizational capabilities of the *Dalit* street vendors and squatters. The *Dalit* political leaders have usurped the trade union managements for their own electoral purposes. Rampant illiteracy, lack of permanent structures, migrant status, and poverty among the *Dalits* street vendors and squatters has left them utterly dependent upon the political parties for any organizational activity. The *Dalit* street vendors and squatters are left at the mercy of the *Dalit* political parties for the organization of their resistance. Under these conditions the *Dalits* are often unrepresented and disenfranchised (Gorringe, 2005).

Netaji is the leader of a prominent union of squatters and street vendors. His union is loosely affiliated to the ruling *Dalit* political party in the state. *Netaji* considered "the relationship with political parties as very beneficial." He asserted that without the support of the ruling party "we would have no chance."

Netaji, as Bhayaji puts it, "has deep political connections'. *Netaji* literally translates as the leader. Important political leaders are also respectfully referred to as *Netaji*. He is a *Khatik*, numerically the most dominant *Dalit* sub-caste in *Aminabad*. Traditionally they are the traders of vegetables, fruits, and poultry. In the last decade they have branched out to other peddling businesses on the streets. They also dominate the union activity. *Netaji* is 35 years old, "BA pass[1]", and has worked at his father's vegetable stall for as long as he can remember. "I still help my dad and my brothers out at the shop everyday" he often reminiscences. His bigger concerns though are political, which was the reason for his presence at *Bhaiyaji's* stall. The election times had mandated this "ritual visit" *Bhaiyaji* told me later.

Netaji was a very busy man. I met him at his small, but modern, office on the south end of Aminabad in one of the newer office towers, a five-story building with tinted glass front. *Netaji*, as I learned was an important functionary of the party, who was paid an honorarium of sum he ambiguously called "just sufficient". It is a common practice among the politicians in India to use party funds for personal use, who until recently were not required to disclose their incomes. He is the main representative of the ruling *Dalit* political party in *Aminabad* and his main clientele are the street vendors and squatters.

Setting up a union of squatters and street vendors was *Netaji's* initiative and got "him a huge boost in the party." His primary responsibilities as the union leader were to ensure

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[1] 1 "BA pass" denotes to a bachelor's degree in Arts. It was, however, very hard to verify the educational qualifications of the people I interviewed. All of the adaptive and small retailers claimed to have at least an undergraduate degree and a few claimed to have a high school diploma among the *Dalits*.

that the street vendors and squatters affiliated to him were not harassed by the larger businesses, whose shop-fronts they normally occupied.

The traders unions are divided on the basis of caste and trades. The organization of upper caste retailers is based on their trades, whereas the *Dalit* political party in the state controls the representation of the *Dalit* retailers. The caste and political divides, according to many retailers of both upper and lower caste, is one of the biggest impediments in presenting a unified resistance against chain retailing.

Chapter Five: The Findings

Introduction

This chapter conveys the thematic findings that answered the research questions based on the retailers' resistance narrative, their level of participation in building resistance discourse and policy-making, the communication strategies employed in disseminating resistance, and the organization of resistance. The themes presented here are contextualized to the particularities of the *Aminabad* market, based on the observations by the researcher. In order to incorporate the social, political, and economic discourse, both within the market and in the larger context of Indian society, local newspaper stories, editorials, television reports, government documents, and the union publicity materials were included in this analysis.

The discovered themes are supported by the retailers' stories in their own words. This qualitative narrative research study sought to interpret the meaning behind the street vendors, squatters and small retailers' stories in order to understand the process of belonging, exclusion, affiliation, and organization. Therefore, the first research question centered on meaning of resistance narratives, while the subsequent questions focused on motivation and ability of the retailers to participate in the resistance movement. This involved an evaluation of level of participation, barriers, and facilitators in the organization of the resistance. The following are the questions, which led to the thematic findings:

Q1 What resistance narratives do the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers create against retail sector liberalization?

The findings on the resistance narratives are presented in Section I in the form of seven themes, which emerged from the interviews with street vendors, squatters, and small retailers.

Q2.1 What is the level of participation by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers in the development of resistance narratives?

Q2.2 What is the level of participation by women informal workers in the development of resistance narratives?

Q2.3 What is the level of participation by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers in the governmental policy making?

The level of participation by the street vendors, squatters, small retailers, and women informal workers is presented in Section II, in the form of three themes.

Q3 What communication strategies do the small vendors, squatters and small retailers use in universalizing their resistance to create a broader resistance movement?

The communication strategies adopted by the small vendors, squatters, and small retailers are presented in Section III. This section explores the communication strategies and tactics employed by the small vendors, squatters, and small retailers in universalizing resistance, their interactions with mass media and their use of new communication technologies.

Q4.1 What role do the NGOs play in facilitating the resistances by street vendors, squatters, and small retailers against the liberalization of the retail sector?

Q4.2 What role do the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers play in the institutional decision-making processes performed at the NGOs?

An overview of NGO activity in *Aminabad*, its absence, and the institutional decision-making in the traders' unions is presented in Section IV.

Section 1. The Resistance Narratives

The *Times of India* was promoting the "*India Rising*" campaign during the time of

this study. A front-page section was devoted for a month to celebrate India's prowess in

space, science, arts, global economics, education, infrastructural development, and the

individual achievements of prominent Indians. The intelligentsia and the social elites

contributed essays and editorials on their contributions to development in the field of

infrastructure, industrial, economic, and consumer growth, foreign investment, education,

communication, etc. in the national newspaper (Nobrega, 2008).

India's development and growth rate have been applauded in the international

newspapers as well (Sengupta, 2009; Setting up shop in India," 2006). India's poor, however,

are absent from these dicourses and the Indian government has been criticized for providing

subsidies for the farmers during the last few years of drought ("India overheats," 2007; Roy,

2008; Saeed, 2009). The union leaders often complained about the lack of their coverage in

media. Mr. Anjani Gupta, a secretary in the convenience merchants' union and the owner of

a small store near the *Chauaraha* said,

> The English press is totally biased against us. If you read the coverage of *Aminabad,*
> you would think the whole market is a big slum. The only coverage we get is during
> the protest or strike, but the stories are often about consumer inconvenience, rather
> than about the issues behind protests. The newspapers, however, are covered from
> front to back with the stories about malls and chain stores, and how this is helping
> convert Lucknow into a major metro. The malls return the favor by buying the
> advertisement from newspapers. We can't afford to advertise.

The people of *Aminabad* were not of the same opinion against the English media or

the prevalent development discourse. It is their 'relations to the development' that influences

their discourse. The adaptive retailers, the small retailers, and the street vendors and squatters

have quite divergent views on development and resistance. "The discourse on resistance", as

Netaji, a leader of the street vendors and squatters union called, "is the resistance against

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development. We live in dread of what happens in the name of development. Development to us means anti-encroachment. The traders, the people, and the Government just want to get rid of us."

The following themes consistently emerged in the discourses by various conditions of retailers. The findings have been supplemented by the discourses in media at political and government level.

The Development Narratives – Different Conceptions at Different Levels

Mr. Shanti Agrawal belonged to an affluent business family of Lucknow. Now, the business is divided among the three brothers. They own two shops in *Aminabad,* a shop in a mall, and a private university in a nearby district of *Barabanki*. His older brother is the Vice President of Lucknow Traders Union. Mr. Shanti, however, remains aloof from union politics. As the times have changed he has totally "revamped his style of doing business."

> As much as some retailers hate it, the chain retailers, in fact, do the business very efficiently. In 2007 my business suffered badly. The profit at our garment stores in *Aminabad* was plummeting. So, we decided to convert one of our loss-making stores into a wholesale warehouse, and rented it to Reliance Fresh (a chain store). We converted our other shops into more modern showrooms. I hired the same designer firms that Reliance uses. We now exclusively carry the premium-brand clothing, which top of the line malls sell. In my experience, if you have desire, you can compete with the chains on their own grounds. The retailers in *Aminabad* will have to modernize the stores, or their days are over. The problem with most of them is that they are resistant to any change. They just want to keep doing the things as they have been doing for generations. We need to change how we interact with the customers and what we offer to them. A customer wants more variety and professionalism; the traditional ways of credit and patronage need to be modernized. Most of the shops in *Aminabad* have untrained and illiterate employees. This is no comparison to the graduates at the chain stores. If we don't adapt we will perish, it's just a matter of time.

Mr. Shanti was very emphatic about the direction retailers needed to take, some times in opposition to his other brothers who were office bearers for the union, added, "I am still a member of the union, but I don't participate actively."

Mr. Ram Anjani, the owner of an exclusive electronics showroom, reiterated the same thoughts about changes in business. He said, "I have a shop here, but I have converted my other shop in the inner market into a storage unit. I also work in supply business for the chain retailers. Since the advent of chains, the storage and supply business has become very lucrative. Actually, I am more comfortable about my business now and there are more opportunities."

In fact the "modernization of business" was a pretty common refrain from the affluent retailers. Across from the *Hanuman Mandir* is Vivek's showroom. It is the largest retail outlet of any kind in *Aminabad.* Vivek, a 27-year-old MBA, after graduating from a premier business school in India started working in a family owned showroom for high-end dress clothes. It was a recently renovated, three-story, and glass front showroom in the middle of chaos, cacophony, and the crowd of *Aminabad* market. Vivek "persuaded" his "dad into this investment for future." Once inside the showroom, it was easy to forget the market behind. It was a plush air-conditioned showroom, three levels devoted to three famous international brands of clothing.

Vivek began thinking about these changes "while working for a project in one of my MBA classes. It is a very confident feeling to have. I am applying the principles that I learned in theory to this showroom here in practice." He made me talk about my experiences at Macy's and Dillard's, and wanted to visit "the US to understand and look it for himself." He believed that the biggest problem with *Aminabad* was that people didn't have the capacity to embrace new things.

> Most of the retailers here are still doing business the way their forefathers did. The shops still look the same, the practices are still the same, and they don't know how to treat a client professionally. In the malls and chain store there is more variety, the

things are organized, and customer service is excellent. Even when I have to drive a few miles, I prefer to drive to the mall or chain store, so that I can shop peacefully.

Mr. Kapil Sharma, the owner of a recently renovated apparels showroom across from *Aminabad* Park, resonated the prevalent view among the affluent and adaptive retailers, in advocating, "a wholesale changes in the market." He said,

> A few showrooms like mine are not going do much good to the market. The condition of the market, the infrastructure, the parking, and the encroachment problems are some of the few urgent things that need to be resolved. Did you see how crowded the streets are? That's because the unauthorized squatters have taken over the pavements. We have a round-the-clock security guard just to make sure we don't have encroachment in front of our showroom. We have been petitioning the city to do something about this situation, but nothing happens over here. The city administration has become too politicized because they don't want to lose the squatters and street vendors' vote. We need a holistic plan for the market. The downfall of *Aminabad* is due its loss of high-end clientele. The chain retail stores in the trans-*Gomati* areas provide better shopping experience. Who would want to come here? There is no parking for the customers. I never drive here because even if you find a parking spot, just driving in and out of the market is a hassle. Where is the development that the Prime Minister promised to bring?

The media in India and abroad have hailed the Prime minister of India Mr. Manmohan Singh, an economist of international repute, as the chief architect of India's liberalization ("Manmohan Singh's burning ambition," 2008; Setting up shop in India," 2006; Wanacott, 2007). During his tenure in the mid-nineties as Finance minister the market reforms had begun. Since, then India had seen unprecedented growth rate of 7-8% on an annual basis ("India overheats," p. 298). He had been credited with unshackling the Indian economy from underperforming public sector, promotion of private sector, and remarkable economic growth ("India's hamstrung visionary," 2009).

This development, however, does not reflect in the life of poor in India. In 2007, India still ranked lowly132 among 179 countries in the UNDP index and almost half of the population still lived under the poverty line (*Human Development Indices 2008*). Finance ministry's recently published Economic Survey has promised to continue the policy of

development defending high growth as critical to generate the revenues needed for meeting social welfare objectives (*Economic Survey*, 2009)

The shoestring retailers and street vendors in squatters are strictly opposed to the chain retailing practices. Unlike the adaptive retailers the shoestring retailers have faced severe economic hardships. Mr. Sanjay Kalia, owner of a small shoe retail store in the *Swadeshi* Market, has seen his "livelihood threatened by the development." He said,

> The development for one person here is the disaster for other. For those who can afford it, the trans-*Gomati* area with all its infrastructural development offers a great opportunity. For most like me in *Aminabad*, though, the options are very limited. We are waiting for some development to happen around our shops. The big showrooms are the only businesses in *Aminabad* that are flourishing because they have better connections in the city administration. The City has secured parking for their customers by removing all the encroachments around their showrooms, even in this crowded market. You won't find a single street vendor or squatter near these big showrooms. The private security guards and Police make sure of that, while I can't even secure the passageway for my shop from the squatters. Why can't they remove the street vendors and squatters from the whole market? That would be a great development for us.

The shoestring retailers commonly blame the lop-sided development on the corruption in the Unions and their political affiliations. Mr. Mohsin Ashrafa, owner of a small traditional *Unani* pharmacy, in his last 50 years has not seen much change in how the things work in *Aminabad.* He said,

> The affluent retailers in Aminabad and other markets have always enjoyed the benefits of development and government subsidies. The unions actually facilitate this favorable treatment for the affluent retailers because most of the top office bearers belong to the their class. They are the only ones who can afford to win an expensive election. I have never seen any small shopkeeper even elected to the leadership at *Aminabad* level. It has remained like this forever; I can't think how it will change. I can tell you for sure, that we may have survived this in the past, but the chain retailing has really been an unprecedented blow for our businesses. What newspapers call development, has actually been a disaster for us. The Union's plans are makeshift and piecemeal, more influenced by political interests of the executive members than the small retailers.

In fact, the National Traders Union has signaled its opposition to government's current policy regarding chain retailing, the national executive of the trader's body had demanded that, "the government formulate new laws for chain retailing." The National President of the trader's body, Mr. Banwari Lal Kanchal, in an interview published in the Union's newsletter, elaborated on the nature of these new laws in form of five main demands:

> Our first demand is to impose a stay on new chains, while we negotiate with the government. Eventually, we would want the government to come up with a national policy on retailing. Currently every state has its own rules. Second, we want a total ban on chain retailing in produce and food grains. Third, the new chain stores should only be allowed to open 10 kilometers away from the downtowns. Fourth, the government should provide the small retailers with better credit opportunities and low rate of interest. Fifth, the new tax structure, which puts undue burdens on the small retailers, should be scrapped – the sales tax should be collected at the wholesale level (*Vyapar Manthan*, 2008, p. 34).

Mr. Ankit Chandra, the owner of a watch repair shop on the road toward the bus station, deride the Union's incompetence for taking two years to take this decision. He said,

> The union leaders couldn't agree to a common agenda or demands because there was opposition from the affluent retailers, who didn't want to close their doors on chain retailing. Some of them are making good money in the supply business. Mr. Kanchal, himself, is a member of parliament for the ruling party, which supports chain retailing. It is really impossible to know the inner workings of the Union. The lop side development in the city has made the situation even worse in *Aminabad.* At first, most of the funds for market development were diverted to the trans-*Gomati* area as a model for new Lucknow. And then over the time, we saw the sales in our market drop. The Union still had no plan. Frustrated by this, when we started protesting ourselves at the local levels, only then the higher ups at the Union took notice.

The development propaganda and politicization of the unions is not lost on the street vendors and squatters, either. This theme constantly emerged during my interactions with them. The uneven development formed the basis of resistance narrative among the more deprived traders. Ramesh Gupta, from the nearby village of *Malihabad*, sold and exchanged used books in a small corner of a pavement near *Aminabad* Park. Ramesh's 'stall' was barely

10 sq. feet of space, one among many on the pavement in front of an old cinema hall. They shared the pavement with the pedestrians in a very busy part of the market, locally known as the 'book market'. He told me that he had to,

> Struggle to keep his spot everyday. This is a constant struggle with the shops in the area. I have to pay the cops to stay here. The shopkeepers and the city want us removed from here. We can barely meet ends the way we are living. I sleep right here on the pavement. I save whatever money I can to send it to my wife. My fifteen year old helps me here. A lot of us end up in *Aminabad.* During last drive the city administration destroyed some of my books; I was able to move most in time. We pay the beat constable to tip us off. If this is the development, then it's surely not for us. They had promised us space for resettlement in a park a mile outside *Aminabad*, but I hear the new administration will build a parking lot there. Now they want us to move to the outskirts of Lucknow.

> *Netaji's* union represented the street vendors and squatter in this area. He got livid at

the talk of resettlement. He said,

> We have been petitioning for years about resettlement into one of the parks surrounding *Aminabad*. This way we would still be close to the market. We have given them our plans and the names of squatters, with priority lists and every requirement. And every time they dilly-dally, until the space we want is used for some other purpose. Now they are offering us places in the remote corners of the city. The public doesn't understand our problem.

> The publics were the denizens of Lucknow. There had been a spate of Public Interest

Litigations (PIL) in the High Court of the state, by prominent lawyers and citizens, in a bid to force the government to improve infrastructure. These PILs, however, have mostly aimed at removing encroachments to create investment atmosphere in the city ("Vendors against anti-encroachment drive," 2008, February 5). The chamber of commerce and the editorials in local newspapers also supported the anti-encroachment drives (Singh, 2007a).

Migration from the rural area was often blamed by other retailers in *Aminabad* for increase in the number of street vendors and squatters over the years. In many accounts of shopkeepers this was considered as the biggest bottleneck in the development. The migrant workers, however, blame the migration on the lack of development in rural areas. Kamal

Kumar, now a permanent squatter in *Aminabad,* sells vegetables on the sidewalk in front of the old cinema hall. He recounted,

> We have some land in the village, but we can't make living out of that. I first come to *Aminabad* four years ago, when our village was first hit by a drought. Now, the persistent drought during last few years has driven most of the males in villages to the town in search of work. There are no jobs in the village. After years of promises our village is still without electricity, running water, or sewage system. I am 40 years old, and I haven't seen any change in my village since I was born.

The Global Pressure: WTO as the 'Evil'

Every retailer in *Aminabad*, whom I interviewed, cited WTO, or globalization, or privatization, or liberalization of retail to foreigners, as one of the main reasons for current state of retail in India. The specter of Wal-Mart, and associated myths about its effects on the small retailers in the US, was raised to illustrate "the devil that chain stores are," by Sailesh Gupta, a leader of garment retailers' union in *Pratap* Market.

"There are pressures from the WTO and the multinationals", added Mr. Gupta, while explaining the foreign ownership in retail sector. Similar discourses were employed in the form of banners and other materials in the protests against the foreign intervention in economic policy.

The discourse of protest against globalization had been borrowed from the protesters who had lost their jobs due to closing or sale of underperforming Public Sector Undertakings (PSU). The privatization of public sector has been criticized by the left parties (Jain, 2000), and scholars (Luce, 2007), who were often quoted by the Union newsletter and these articles were reprinted for distribution. It also formed a part of rhetoric by the union leaders. "Our cause is similar to these laid off workers, and uprooted farmers. We need to unite against a common enemy," exhorted Mr. Kanchal, the President of National Traders Union, many

times during his speech, while drawing similarity between their own unemployment and the laid off workers and in highlighting the government apathy.

Mr. Kumar, the President of *Aminabad* Traders Union, often criticized the "large multinational corporations," "unregulated markets", and "faceless international bureaucrats" in such organizations as "the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)" for doing the "bidding of capitalists." According to a union pamphlet, the MNCs were said to be eroding "national boundaries so that governments lost control over their economies." Globalization entailed the "end of economic independence."

The discourses from the critics, found a willing audience among the retailers, who they often used in their statements in the pamphlets and banners during the protest rally. This also symbolically connected them to the cause of "laid-off workers from the PSU", and "relocated farming communities" due to industrial expansion, according to Mr Ranjan, who owns a small electrical appliance outlet in the main market. The retailers of *Aminabad* often use the foreign intervention theme. "It is just a matter of time before they allow Wal-Mart in retail sector," was how Mr. Kumar, a union leader put this in perspective. He had read in the newspapers "the Wal-Mart has finished the small retailing in the US. There are only chain stores left." He felt that the same would happen in India. He insisted, "It's just a matter of time."

The Nostalgia

A lament for the glorious past was a very common theme in the *Aminabad* market. *Aminabad* had changed; it was not the good and the stable market as it had once been. The retailers complained that the investment in development over the last few decades had led to more "corruption" and to the "criminalization of politics." "No one can be sure of anything

now. Politician, thief, and policeman: the roles have become interchangeable. Due to uneven development, many long-buried dissensions had been released. The region, caste, and clan – now play on the surface of Indian life," said Mr. Sengupta, who owns a fair-sized scientific instrument shop.

During every election "the politicians come up with their own piecemeal agendas for development. Obviously they have no plan, every year the conditions in market get worse," told Mr. Mitra, who retails *Chikan* garments at his two stores in the Refugee Market. He added that, "this large flea market was established in fifties," adjacent to the *Hanuman Mandir,* during the post-independence period to "accommodate the Hindus displaced from Pakistan" after the partition of India in 1947. Mr. Mitra's *Aminabad* had seen its "golden times" during the 1970s when the *Aminabad* market emerged as the main trading center in the state. He said,

> People used to come from neighboring districts to Lucknow just to shop in *Aminabad*. You could buy everything in this market. The market started to become more congested in the nineties; the squatters and street vendors were few before that, and mostly migrated from the nearby areas. Now you can find the vendors from as far as Bihar (a bordering state, 500 miles to the East). We used to sit on some of the most prime real estate in the market, but not anymore.

Anwar, who is Mr. Mitra's neighbor and spends the afternoon hours at his shop, joined in the conversation. He added,

> The shop across the street was on market for a year before it sold for a loss. This was almost unheard of in *Aminabad.* My dad used to say, 'if you have a shop in *Aminabad,* your generations are secure.' Not the case anymore. The situation has become really untenable in the last few years with the opening of chain stores. Suddenly, we are facing a question of survival. It happened so fast. The already shabby conditions in the market have deteriorated to the point of disaster.

People of all conditions spoke with fondness of the days of long past. The roads were good, especially the *Latouche* road*,* now called *Gautam Buddha* road. It was one of the main thoroughfares, which is now almost choked with automobiles, handcarts, street vendors, and

squatters. The *Aminabad* Park, immensely valuable as land now, is now an underground

parking structure, and the grounds are unavailable to the public. The deterioration of the

park, from its iconic times during the days of national independence movement to its present

state, was generally referred to as a sign of decadence of the *Aminabad* market today. "As the

market has deteriorated, so have the fortunes of the people," said Mr. Prakash, a bookseller,

pondering over the view from his second floor window toward the park and the surrounding

deterioration. He lamented it as a loss of "our symbol of resistance." He added,

> In the 1920s, this park was the centre of political rallies from all over the state.
> Mahatma Gandhi, when he came to Lucknow in 1930 to address a rally, called
> *Aminabad* an ideal market, a blueprint for future. I have seen many rallies here. Until
> 1980s this park was open for public protest, a legacy of our national movement. In
> 1990s it all got destroyed when the City tore this park up to build a parking structure.
> Parking lot is built, but under litigation, so now nobody can use it.

> The state of the park and the conditions of the area around it indeed looked very grim

from Mr. Prakash's store window. Mr. Prakash blamed it on the "indiscriminate drive toward

development" based "on the United States model," without contextualizing it to "our needs,

necessity, capability, and the reality we live in."

"Turning the clock back" is something that many adaptive and small retailers would

very much like to do. Amit's convenience store is completely blocked by the parked vehicles.

The sidewalk in front of his shop is crowded with squatters selling plastic goods, barely

providing a passage to his shop door. He recounted a daily ritual,

> I have to fight everyday with the squatters. There are more coming everyday. A few
> years ago, there were hardly any squatters or vendors in this area. You can't touch
> them anymore, or they will blockade the whole market. Now, the retail chains have
> completed the process of our destruction. We were the largest convenience store in
> the whole market, now I can barely maintain the stocks, and the banks are wary of
> extending my credit. I never had credit problems in the past. The banks don't want to
> keep the shop as collateral any more. During my dad's days, he couldn't have
> imagined any of this.

While for the retailers of *Aminabad*, the loss of 'golden days' provides rhetoric for change; "for us there were no good old times nor any hopes for future if it continues like this," said Rakesh. The *Dalits*, who comprise a vast majority of street vendors and squatters, also have undergone changes. There was more political consciousness among the *Dalit* castes*, and they were better organized now than in the decades before.

Netaji, their union leader, believes that "collective action is the only hope. We are a majority, we live in a democracy, and we should have rights." For the *Dalits,* once known as untouchables, this proclamation of pride is new. Yet, many small retailers feel this exclamation of 'power' and 'pride' as a threat to the stability; and the upper and middle class retailers like Vivek, in a reflex of anxiety, feel that the "country is going from bad to worse because of this." This paradox was exhibited in the resistance narratives of the adaptive and shoestring retailers. To the shopkeepers, it was not clear whether it was the adversary above, the chain retailers, or the enemy below, the squatters and street vendors that affected them more. Since, both the chain retailers and the street vendors and squatters were absent from the scene during the prosperous times in the *Aminabad* market, both the chain retailers and street vendors and squatters are seen as the reason for current misery. The shopkeepers would rather go back in time, when they didn't have to deal with either of the two.

'We are the Victims' of Public Apathy

The 'public' is generally apathetic to the cause of the small retailers. The new retail chains have provided them with more flexibility in shopping and a larger range of goods to choose from. The city of Lucknow was going through a retail revolution. New mall and chain stores were opening everywhere. The news reports and opinion columns in local newspapers celebrated this as a "consumer revolution" (P. Sinha, 2007, p. 1). National newspapers called

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Lucknow a "high-growth city. A city chain retailers perceive as the next big destination (M.

Singh, 2007b, p. 1)."

Sailesh Gupta, a leader of the garment retailers union in *Pratap Market*, finds this

kind of "media coverage" as "distressing and very detrimental to our cause. This stigmatizes

our trade. We are called hoarders and profit mongers in media just to sensationalize the

stories, without any fact or source. We have to spend our scarce resources in countering the

newspaper propaganda."

The family-held retailing has long been a suspect among the consumers in India. The

Vaishya retailers have often been accused of price inflation, hoarding, and credit control and

distribution through the family members. The control of business activity by forming a

family or a caste centric clique has been noted by scholars (Srinivas, 1962), the media

("Business: Getting cheaper and better - Indian retailing," 2007) and the corporate business

leaders (Singh, 2007a).

Mr. Agrawal, the Vice President of the Union, however, finds the media coverage

"biased, false and baseless." He said,

> If we are such thieves, then how did the markets work before the chains and mall
> arrived? The chains undercut the prices to the levels that we can't even imagine
> competing with them. They have deep pockets. And the media calls us the profit
> mongers! This is totally ridiculous. My office writes letter to the editors regularly, but
> who reads page 4? People read the headlines and front-page features about the malls.

The public perception about *Vaishya* shopkeepers is based to a large extent on their

lending practices from the past. The retail activity in the past had been controlled by a close

relationship between the shopkeepers and their financiers, mostly a family and caste affair.

"The credit and the loans to consumers through this mechanism ensured the success of well

connected retailers, also serving to keep the outsiders at bay. This is the reason you find so

many *Marwaris* in *Aminabad* market. They arrived in the 1970s and now they control the

credit in the market. They were the controllers of credit, prices, and supply of commodities in the market. Now, when the going is tough, the credit has become even more scarce for outsiders," explained Mr. Prakash at one instance, while describing the intricate dynamics of family held credit and banking in *Aminabad*.

The lack of public support in the last few years has gravely affected the development of market. The public apathy also leads to government inaction. "A losing struggle for public support for our cause," according to Mr. Kumar, "is the biggest impediment to our struggle. If people don't support us, no government is going to invest money in an old market. The people, media, and government treat us like pariah. The city spent millions on infrastructure during the last year, but nothing came *Aminabad's* way."

The retailers have been unable to shake their traditional image as "gross profiteers" among the consumers "due to unfair comparison with the prices at the chains," said Mr. Alok Govil, the Senior Vice President of Lucknow Traders Union and reputed as a fiery public speaker. He acknowledged that,

> The lack of public trust and support is the biggest impediment and challenge to our resistance. The people of Lucknow don't realize the important role we play in the economy. The unemployment from this sector will spill out to the other sectors and effect the development of the city and the State. We are the victims of the sudden changes in policies. We don't have MBAs working for us; it's mostly just the family members who work in the shops. The thing is, we don't have any support from the government for training and re-employment. It seems like the retailers have been left to fend for themselves. The government should immediately provide us with better credit opportunities and streamlined tax policies. As long as the governments are in the pockets of rich corporations this is not possible. We are the victims of the circumstances that we didn't create.

The plight and mistrust that the street vendors face from the public was of a totally different nature. One afternoon at my usual stop at Rakesh's tobacco shop, I saw Pappu. I had met him once, one early morning at Rakesh's stall. Pappu's presence here was unusual because the vendors don't normally hang around tobacco stalls in the afternoon. Pappu

revealed that, "the vendors have been barred from the neighborhoods" he walks around to

sells his produce. He recounted,

> The night before there was a theft in the area and now we are not allowed inside the gates. This happens every few months. People here think that we are scoping the neighborhoods during the daytime to break into after nightfall. Hopefully it will be resolved soon. Normally it doesn't take more than a week. People in the neighborhood hate walking to the crowded vegetable market. They only realize the convenience of getting fresh vegetables at their doorsteps when we are not there. So, after a few days of harassment and bickering they let us in.

> The neighborhoods surrounding the *Aminabad* "area are all gated" and require a

background check for the street vendors plying in the area. Pappu bribed the policeman Re

100 ($2) to get the clearance certificate. *Netaji* had tried to negotiate on behalf of the street

vendors earlier in the day, but the neighborhood committee was "adamant that the miscreant

was one of the vendors. Now they want more security checks."

Netaji recounted the details of police brutality during a routine City administration

drive to remove the unauthorized vendors ("Vendors against anti-encroachment drive," 2008,

February 5). It ended several injuries later after "several baton charges by the riot police."

Netaji recounted that,

> This protest was a joint effort of all the unions of squatters and street vendors against the anti-encroachment drive by the city administration. After every such drive we end up losing our merchandize. The City doesn't have a permanent solution, but they enforce the anti encroachment drive to appease the big retailers, who pay for their election campaigns. We have nowhere to go, so we just come back after the cops are gone. This happens all the time.

> To prevent this everyday harassment, *Netaji's* union is fighting for street vendors to

get their status legalized. He said,

> We have been pleading our case with the mayor to rehabilitate or provide license to the street vendors and squatters. They have been promising these things for years and still there is no plan. Now, they are seizing and destroying our wares and arresting us. They want us to move 10 miles away from here, on the outskirts of the city. Who is going to come and buy our stuff if we are not in the main market? Some of us have been here for generations. The vegetable market is as old as the Aminabad itself.

The street vendors and squatters share their workspaces with both the retailers and the neighborhoods. In accounts by other retailers they were blamed for "general malaise in the market and nuisance in the neighborhoods." They were always in "someone's way." They often times even slept in the public spaces – on pavements, on carts, open to all the elements of nature and the whims of people. As *Netaji* put, "it's a no win situation and an everyday struggle."

The Next Generation – 'We Have no Future Here'

The retailers of all conditions raised the looming specter of mass unemployment pointing to the disintegration of their family-run businesses to highlight their plight. The newspaper editorials and the opposition political parties have brought this into the mainstream political discourse ("Left joins BJP in opposing retail FDI," 2005). Every sort of retailer raises the demons of the Wal-Mart effect and its deleterious effect on their employment.

Ayur medicine Mall, at one corner of the *Aminabad Chauraha*, is at the cross-section of the bustling thoroughfare. It is a family owned business. Mr. Kumar is in his 50s and with his younger sibling has been managing this shop for last three decades when their father suddenly passed away. He often recounted the details of his quitting school and taking care of family business at a very young age, but doesn't see much future for the business in *Aminabad*. He said,

> I see no future for my sons and nephews in this business. I never asked them to help me at the shop even when I could have used their help. They need to build their career where there is future. My eldest son is pursuing a Masters degree in accounting and the younger one is studying at an engineering college. God willing, they will be able to build a much better career in than in *Aminabad.*

For many in *Aminabad,* both adaptive and shoestring retailers, business has been a family affair. The next generation slides in to take the spot, without any ritual or ceremony.

Mr. Saran Singh is "ancient." A reference to his age and experience, something he likes to remind people often. His grandfather was one of the earliest shopkeepers in *Aminabad.* He sold electrical appliances in what looked like an almost empty shop; its deteriorating ornate furniture and shelves indicated that the shop has seen better time. Three generations of his family "have made living in *Aminabad,* but not any more," he asserts, "I am the last one here, my grandchildren have found careers elsewhere." He added,

> While retailing was profitable, the generational transition was the natural thing to do. Keeping the business within the family we were able to reduce unnecessary overheads and secure the employment of our children. However, after three generations in *Aminabad,* I encouraged my grandsons to look for jobs elsewhere. This kind of retailing is not going to survive. When I was growing up, my grandpa used to say, 'you can make more money here in a day, than you will make in a month at a job.' It's not true anymore. My son works as an accountant in an investment bank, my grandchildren are in engineering school. The truth is that there is not much future in retailing.

The generation theme was a very common narrative among the shoestring retailers. The fear of unemployment and the novelty of "working for others" was a common concern. "In generations nobody in our family has worked for others. My dad bought me a new shop after I had children. But I don't think this is a good career for my son. He is studying at the University, and will hopefully find a well paying job" recounted Ranjan, who as an electrical appliances trader had seen his profits drop to "half from last year." He wanted to be "a scientist and teach" at the University of Lucknow.

> After I got my Masters in Chemistry, I wanted to pursue Ph.D., but my father wanted me to help grow the business. He would say, 'you can make more money here in a month than you will make in a year as a university teacher.' Those were different times, but now I don't want my children to get into this business. There is no future here.

The desire to move out of failing businesses had not translated into reality for all the shoestring retailers. Atul Chopra at only 39 feels stuck. "It's not that I can go and find a decent job tomorrow, even if I wanted. This is all I have done since I was 21. We had it

going great until a few years ago. Now, it's even hard to maintain the profit that we made five years ago"

The adaptive retailers have more resources to adjust to new situations and, according to Vivek, the manager of a large family-owned showroom, "this, in fact, is an opportunity to expand our business by using the incentive that the Government is offering." On the other side of economic spectrum, for the street vendors and the squatters this is not even an issue. They would rather willingly take anything, "nothing can be worse than this for my children. I wish they could get out of here and find job somewhere else," lamented *Bhaiyaji,* who has three children aged 6, 8, and 12. The children go to a government run school that has resources only to provide classes for "two hours," otherwise they help at the shop, "washing vegetables and fruits for display," or run around the neighborhood.

A Hierarchy of Blame - the Struggles Within

The crowded pavements created the problems for all the retailers in permanent structures. The shoestring retailers blamed the adaptive ones for undermining the resistance by "collaborating and copying" the practices of chain retailing. For the street vendors and squatters "all of them above," were intent on "evicting us from the market." "For us it is a struggle for survival, and the chains have compounded the problem by selling fresh produce," explained *Netaji.*

Kallu, repaired and polished shoes across from the old cinema, near the *Aminabad* Park. In his late sixties, he makes a living repairing old shoes in his stall, barely big enough for him, he hunched there at the side of the lane, near the gutters, below the floor level of the shops. His face was worn and lined and crudely roughed; his face blackened, perhaps from shoe polish, eyes spaced out. He was at the bottom of social, political, and economic

hierarchy. He recounts that "ridicule and harassment" are every day things for him. He belongs to the *Chamaar Jati,* traditionally the leather workers, and considered the lowest even among the *Dalit* sub-castes. He faces "persecution from the nearby shopkeepers, pedestrians, and even other squatters everyday. They complain that we crowd the market and drive the upscale clientele away from the market. I have been polishing shoes here since I was a kid. I also have to make a living."

Mr. Prakash has seen the market get crowded with vendors in the last decade. He blames it largely on "migration from rural districts because of the deterioration of farm lands in last decade. This trend worsens during the drought years, and *Aminabad* market seems to be their main destination." He also points at the city administration for not doing any substantial resettlement for the street vendors and squatters after decades of negotiations. He explained,

> Blaming the street vendors for the demise of *Aminabad* is a diversion. It seems expedient to blame the vendors, but it was the retailers unions that opposed the plan for relocation to a park outside the market. The shopkeepers argued that a parking structure is a more immediate need. The street vendors really don't have much say in these matters.

Constant nagging of the past has taken the form of irreconcilable differences between the shopkeepers and the street vendors and squatters. The situation has gotten worse in recent times "due to tough times that the retailers are facing" summed up Rakesh, who owns a small tobacco and betel stall at one corner of the *Aminabad Chauraha*. This is vantage spot and Rakesh shells out "free cigarettes and some more" to the beat constable, so he can stay here. It is a common practice for the street vendors and squatters to pay the cops to avoid facing harassment from the shopkeepers, but this doesn't guarantee their "safety during the anti-encroachment drives by the city administration" according to Rakesh.

I spent 15-20 minutes everyday at Rakesh's stall, who is 21, recently married, loves to chat, and is quite willing to introduce me to other vendors. During my time there Rakesh and other street vendors often expressed their concerns about the changing circumstances due to chain retailing. According to Kallu, the shoe-shiner, "the falling sales are making the retailers jittery and they blame us for making the market so congested. We have to struggle everyday to just keep a little place to make a living."

The blame game among the retailers creates "dissensions among the rank and file of the association," admitted Mr. Agrawal, the Vice-President of Lucknow Traders Union. The opposing narratives within the association preclude a collective action on the part of retailers. The veneer of unity in the unions' rhetoric doesn't reflect in small retailers' every day discourse, which is often a fight for survival against each other. The divide within is sometimes too large, and is often played out in public during anti-encroachment drives. To *Netaji,* this is a contentious issue. He said that, "every small group is fighting just for themselves. I am not foolish to think that the retailers are looking for our welfare, they just want us out of here."

The 'Big Business' and The Corrupt Politicians

The corruption in the sale of public enterprises is commonly cited by retailers in *Aminabad* as a sign of nexus between the corporate business and the political establishment. The Comptroller General's reports are used for highlighting the corruption in government dealing with the corporations. The political contributions from a conglomerate, Reliance India Limited, a big media story during last elections, was cited from the newspaper reports and constituted a major part of union propaganda. The retailers blamed these "nefarious connections" for their current condition. During interviews many cited the publicized

incidents of corruption. The 24-hour news channels have popularized a new 'genre' of 'sting reporting.' The race among broadcasters to produce sting-shows has generated a lot of interest and was often used as an example of failure of system at the higher levels of government in retailers' discourses.

India ranking as one of the most corrupt business environments among the developing nations according to the Corruption Perception Index (*Corruption Perception Index 2008*, 2008), was heavily reported by the media. There was a usual complaint among the retailers that "all the politicians and bureaucrats are corrupt." The widespread acceptance of this perception about public corruption made it a very common theme in resistance narratives among the retailers. The retailers and their unions were quick to portray this as one of the "main reason for the problems" in *Aminabad*.

Many retailers who were interviewed pointed toward this "collusion of politicians and chain retailers," when illustrating the "difference in the development of *Aminabad* area and the trans-*Gomati* area." The trans-*Gomati* section of Lucknow has seen "massive infusion of money in developing roads, parking, and other amenities for the chains and malls. In *Aminabad* we don't even get the potholes patched for years," complained Mr. Motiani. "The big businesses contribute heavily to the political parties, and in turn they reap the benefits. We are promised all sort of things, but nothing really happens here."

Mohit Agrawal, who owns a convenience store in a busy location, has seen the losses mount over the years. He said

> The step-motherly treatment of *Aminabad* and the development of trans-*Gomati* area as a new retailing district is the reason we lost most of our high-end clientele. Now its getting harder and harder for us to sell the expensive products, which usually have more profit margin. I had to adjust my inventory. The convenience stores around the area have suffered the worst in the last couple of years.

The parking issues, the congestion on the streets, the crime, the unemployment, and almost everything unsavory in the market was commonly blamed on public corruption and political apathy. Mr. Agrawal, the President of Lucknow Traders Union felt that:

> If we are given the same attention by the government that is given to the chain retailers, on the basis of efficiency, sales, and service, we can compete successfully with the chain operators. What we cannot compete against is the power of money, and corporate ability for undercutting the prices.

The discontent of the retailers and the narratives that emerged out of these conditions didn't necessarily form the basis for political action by the leaders of trade associations. The union decision making process was top-to-bottom, where the ordinary narratives often found no representation.

To explore the issue further and to examine the organizational aspects, the next section addresses the structure of resistance movement, the decision making process at the unions, and the level of participation by the ordinary shopkeepers. This section will also explore the decision-making at the government level and the retailers' participation in policy formulation and implementation.

Section II: The Level of Participation in Discourse

The Politics Within - 'Representation Rather Than Participation'

A unique aspect of union activity in India is the politicization of resistance. All the

union and trade activity at the local level converges into two trade unions at the state level.

Why two associations? Safdar, a social worker who has been engaged in documenting the

lives of impoverished street workers, called it the 'curse of politics.' The politicization of

social groups for electoral groups has been a common phenomenon in politics since

independence. The political parties canvass on the basis of caste, class, religion, region,

language, etc. in India. These groups form cohesive voting blocks during elections and a

reservoir for political activism in between the elections, and the political parties work hard to

corral them into their camps (R. Kothari, 1989). Safdar explained this in the context of Uttar

Pradesh and its effect on activism,

> The union activities at the state and national level are also political activities.
> Currently one of the two retailers associations is a part of the ruling political party,
> which makes its representation on behalf of the retailers very suspect. The opposition
> party controls the other association, and uses it similarly for its own political end.
> This 'unholy' nexus between the political parties and the retailers unions mostly
> works against the retailers themselves. It is the agenda of the political party that
> determines the scope and intensity of protests. This top-bottom structure of protest
> seriously undermines the efforts of local retailers. Often a retailer is unaware that the
> top brass of the union is working at the cross purposes to the benefit of a small
> retailer. The activism at the unions is directly affected by the status of the parent
> political party, depending whether it is in power or opposition.

The street vendors and squatters.

Netaji's union is affiliated to a powerful political party. Led by a mercurial *Dalit*

leader, the party has consolidated the *Dalit* votes across the state. "The *Dalits"* according to

Netaji, easily formed a majority of the electorate in *Uttar Pradesh.*

In the years following independence, the traditional upper castes continued to rule in

most parts of India. For example, until 1977, upper castes continued to hold prominent

elected positions in Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state in the Indian union (Jefferlot, 2003). Until 1962 as many as 63% of ruling Congress members of the Legislative Assembly came from the elite castes. The trend, however, changed in the 1990s, when the traditional lower castes such as *Ahirs, Kurmis, Koeri, Lodh Rajputs*, and *Jats* began to dominate the political landscape of northern India (R. Kothari, 2004). Mr. Prakash, the bookstore owner and an amateur historian explained the rise of *Dalits*. He said,

> Over the past twenty years *Dalit* movements across India have made great strides in challenging untouchability and enhancing access to political institutions. The *Dalit Panthers* of India, a radical social movement, which emerged in Maharashtra in the 1970s, popularized *Dalit* movements as an extremist political expression. Like the Black Panthers, the *Dalit* movement with its success began to fragment. The gains in electoral politics by *Dalits*, have not translated into the changes in their socio-economic conditions. The socio-economic recognition and the implementation of the constitution – for securing *Dalit* rights - still remains an unfulfilled goal for the *Dalit* parties,
>
> Electoral politics has helped *Dalit* leaders secure their position in the Governments,

though. Currently a regional *Dalit* party heads the coalition government in Uttar Pradesh. Now, the *Dalit* political parties were the harbinger for the movement. *Netaji,* a union leader for the street vendors and squatters is also an operative of the ruling *Dalit* political party. He acknowledged,

> The issues of vital concern to street vendors and squatters are lost in political expediency. I have to constantly petition higher up leaders in the party so that we can get the land for our resettlement is allotted near the market, the earlier proposals directed us to move outside the city. It's the promise politicians made before the election last year. They tell me its not easy for them, they have to take all the interests in account. The party is still the best hope for us. At least since the *Dalit* party came to power, there is a less threat of our forced removal from the market.
>
> *Netaji's* street vendors and squatters union collaborated very closely with the party

office in the city, "on a day to day basis". This connected him "directly with the political bigwigs from the party," so, he could plead his "case with them." He received an allowance from the party and some office space to run his union. The decision to protest or not "is taken

at the party level, unless it is a local issue like harassment by the shopkeepers." In *Netaji's*

world there is no pretense of separation between political and union activity. In fact, all the

union activity is organized and sanctioned by the party. *Netaji* explained the reasons,

> These people are uneducated and poor; they don't know how to organize. The party
> provides them with the agenda and a platform to protest. If we didn't have political
> backing we would be thrown out of *Aminabad* in no time. The squatters and street
> vendors face the same issue all over Lucknow, so it's good to have party setting the
> agenda for us. Most of our people don't have time or means to do it on their own. It's
> at the behest of our party that the Reliance Fresh was banned from Lucknow.

> The party members, even those who were not squatters or street vendors, participated

actively during the protests. *Netaji* added, "The party leaders made sure that the strikes and

rallies are successful." His political party was in power when the decision to ban the

"Reliance Fresh" chain stores from the state was taken. Both the Lucknow Traders Union

and the squatters and vendors union touted it as a great success due to their efforts. The story,

however, unraveled within a few months, when it was revealed that only the Reliance stores

were banned in the state, while other chain stores were free to open and operate. It was

reported in local and national newspapers as a falling out between the Reliance Industries

(the largest conglomerate in India) and the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh over the

Reliance's financial contributions to the opposition party during elections ("Only Reliance

Fresh outlets have been closed: UP Government," 2008). This incident was often used as an

example of political corruption in interviews with retailers, which also made its way in their

publicity material.

> *Bhaiyaji* mocked the idea of benevolence of the party or the chief ministers' acclaim

as 'messiah for the *Dalit*'. He had seen "the politics of protest for decades and nothing has

changed for good." He is not "naïve. They just want our votes." He added,

> Truth is that we don't have any other option. Most of the people here are so poor and
> uneducated; they can barely think what is right or wrong. Nobody ever asks us what

we want. We do what we are told. The city administration gives us the orders to evacuate and the party tells us to strike. How come even when the Chief Minister is from our party nothing has changed for us? The political parties need us for our votes, after that they forget about us. The *Dalit* leaders have bigger fish to fry, we don't matter after the elections.

Netaji, acknowledged that the slow pace of change was due to political reasons "even when a *Dalit* is the Chief" Minister of the state. According to him,

> The caste is the most important thing in politics. A person looking for office or a political career would have to be of a suitable caste. That means belonging to the politically dominant caste of the area. He would, of course, have to be someone who could get the support of his caste; that meant he would have to be of some standing in the community, well connected and well known. And since it seldom happened that the votes of a single caste could win a man an election, a candidate needed a political party; he needed that to get the votes of the other castes. For the system to work, it requires compromises and co-operation from the other communities. The Chief Minister has to contend with a lot of political realities.

The power achieved by the *Dalit* political parties in Uttar Pradesh was great. And the fear of fall, the loss of powers, was equally great. Mr. Prakash explained,

> This necessitated a control over the movement, something to fall back upon in the event of loss of power. In Uttar Pradesh, this political necessity has led to the coalition of *Dalit* and the *Brahmin* political leaders, elected on antithetical platforms, in forming the latest edition of coalition government.

The adaptive and shoestring retailers.

The retailers of all economic conditions in *Aminabad* depend on their political connections to get the issues of their interest addressed. The President of the National Traders Union Mr. Banwari Lal Kanchal, currently a Member of Parliament, belongs to the ruling party. The Lucknow Traders Union is affiliated to a nationalist Hindu party. The Union's Vice-President, Mr. Agrawal, is a member of the central committee of the party, and hopes his "political connections will help in securing better infrastructure and renovation for the market."

The discourses of the resistance are heavily conditioned by the political agenda of the political party. The relationship between the unions and the political parties muddled the

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roles of petitioner and decision-maker. The decision-making here is a "top-bottom process."

Mr. Mustafa, a hardware store owner, describes the process thus,

> The agenda is normally decided at the state level, by various trade-specific unions. For instance, I am a member of Lucknow Hardware Merchants Union, which is affiliated to Lucknow Traders Union, our representative body at the state level. Unless it is a dispute that involves all the traders we chalk out our own strategy. These days when the issue is about chain retailing, which affects all the traders in the market, the central leadership provides us with an agenda and a plan of action. The trade-specific unions implement it at the local level.

> Since, the issue of chain retailing affected the retailers across the state, the issue was

dealt at the state and national level. Mr. Agrawal, the Vice President of Lucknow Traders

Union, acknowledged the "difficulty in coordinating with the various trade bodies." He

explained the complications of decision-making process:

> The issue of liberalization of retail sector was determined after long deliberations to be a state level issue. Prior to this, the different trade-specific unions were taking action of their liking. This had created a lot of confusion and misinformation. We need all the retailers as 'one' against the chain retailing. Eventually, as per our charter, all the trader-specific unions from the metro cities of Uttar Pradesh collaborated at the state level to come up with a common agenda. In turn, we distributed our agenda and plan of action regarding protests to the various trader-specific unions in Lucknow. We had a town hall meeting with the representatives for our member trade unions in Lucknow, where we laid out the agenda that was determined at the state level. The unions disseminated the information to their members for discussion and vote. The plan of action was adopted in a 'voice vote' at our next city-level meeting, after the trader-specific unions had gotten the plan approved from their executives. 100% of them approved agitation against the government retailing policy.

> While Mr. Agrawal claimed the decision-making at the unions was "democratic", Mr.

Kapil Sharma, a garment retailer, considered it nothing but "political posturing."

> The decisions regarding protest and resistance are made at the behest of the political parties, and then through the myriad channels of trade union activity they come down to us. Did you know that we have no less than 50 trade-specific unions in *Aminabad?* It's hard to figure out who is connected to which union. No matter whom we are affiliated with, we get to know about the decisions when the unions distribute the fliers to the shopkeepers in the area announcing a rally, protest, or strike. Other than that piece of paper, I have neither heard from the union, nor have they sought my

opinion. These days everyone is worried about his business, so we follow whatever comes our way. We don't have much choice.

The politics in state, as reported in the newspapers, was opaque to the visitor. The coming and goings, which filled the newspapers, were the politics of alignment and realignment; there wasn't much discussion of policy or programs. There were only enemies or allies (Singh, 2007b).

The people of *Aminabad* consistently complained about the nexus between the politicians and union leaders, whose stories of unscrupulous deeds were recounted in great details by many retailers, mostly based on newspapers accounts, or television reports. Yet, for most there is no "alternative to the unions," said Mr. Kumar, the President of pharmacists union. He added,

> The unions are our only way to organize. The unions have done an effective job in resolving local disputes; we still need various trade-specific unions to come together and better organize on pan-market issues like, infrastructure development and chain retailing. Every group and trade thinks its needs are first, every group thinks itself as unique, and every group of retailers seeks to separate its issues from the issues of other groups. There are many incompatible and vested interests among the actors involved.

The Union – 'Corrupt', 'Divided', and 'Parochial'

Most of the retailers I interviewed didn't share the enthusiasm of their unions. A mistrust of the unions was universal. They were generally skeptic about the "union's capability" in view of the relationships between the "politicians and the union leaders." The union rhetoric of unity and its claims of democratic decision-making were highly suspected and openly mocked by the retailers. The elderly Mr. Swaran Singh has seen the relationship between "elected and representatives" deteriorate into "despot and subjects." He said,

> For politicians, whether union leaders or political leaders, it is an issue of acquiring and maintaining power. They acquire it through false promises in elections and maintain it through corrupt practices. The people are poor, but the power they give is intoxicating. When a majority becomes shaky, a politician's vote in the House

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becomes an asset. The votes are sold any number of times. It's in the newspapers. TV channels are thriving on exposing political scandals. All our top union leaders are the members of political parties. Quite a few of them are also legislators.

Mr. Sailesh Agrawal had observed the union leaders' activities closely during his time at the Lucknow Traders Union. He was the representative of the *Pratap* Market Traders Association to the Union.

> All the top leaders are either connected to politicians or they are politicians themselves. The union leaders serve as middlemen for politicians by facilitating fund raising and canvassing for them among their constituents. The retailers who pay the most also benefit the most, with lucrative contracts and plush government supply deals. The election to the executive body is a very expensive exercise. The contestants spend millions of rupees. The political parties, although not at the forefront, provide the logistical and financial support for the candidates, who are required to run as independents. This is just a façade; in reality political parties field their candidates in the elections. The party affiliations are an open secret.

The trade unions in *Aminabad* are the fragmented bodies, based on archaic trading nomenclatures, a legacy of pre-independence national movements. During the independence movement, the traders of *Aminabad* were smaller in number and organized on the basis of their trades. The trades remain the basis of their organization and activism. The trade-specific unions have traditionally been based on the sub-castes to maintain the social or economic status quo in the market. Mr. Prakash, owner of the oldest private publishing house and the first bookstore in *Aminabad*, has seen the union activity closely during his four decades here. He is also a *Kayashta*, an upper caste jati, and a rarity in the business world. "I am supposed to be a bureaucrat," he laughs. He is also an amateur historian and a writer. He, thus, elaborated on the lack of unity among the retailers:

> The strategies of protests have not changed in Aminabad in a century. The unity of the traders is only in name. The squatters, street vendors, and retailers in permanent structures have almost nothing in common. The grass-root organization of union activities is based on the trade. There is a union for every trade, you name it and it's there. For every trade in *Aminabad* there is a union. I have not seen them come up with a unified agenda other than to shut down the market for a day as a token of unity.

Amit Gupta, a hardware retailer, considers the hierarchies within the unions and trade associations as the "root cause for failing activism." Different trade bodies have different issues and different problems as well as agenda, yet, the union centered discourse emphasizes on glossing over the differences in economic, social, and political conditions of the retailers. The association and union office bearers are mostly higher income retailers, reflecting the interests of affluent retailers within a particular trade group. The low- income retailer is almost absent from this discourse, and is depicted as the one that threatens the development, peace and order of society, and a drain on resources. Mr. Gupta further reflected on the divisions among the retailers:

> We are so fraught with divisions among ourselves that it is almost impossible to reconcile all the differences between the trade-specific groups. If the electronics retailers are not as adversely affected by chain retailing today, sooner or later they are going to be in the same boat as the worse affected garments retailer. This has been a trend. More and more retailers are realizing the potential danger to their livelihood, but it has not really translated into a unified agenda. It's the unions' job to come with a unified agenda, to get over our petty differences, but it is rare that we get participation from all the trades. When the street vendors are concerned, we have no interaction with them until there is a problem between the retailers and the squatters; otherwise we work in separate spheres."

Traditionally the affluent retailers have controlled the union politics. The political association had "promoted the political careers of quite a few union leaders", and "political parties have in turn taken over the unions' politics." Navin Kohli, a *Chikan* garment retailers further explained,

> It is hard to understand the logic of so many trade unions. It undermines any collective action. For instance in our *Chikan* trade one shop out of five is supplying goods for bigger shopkeepers in the same area: thread for C*hikan* embroidery, gold and silver spangles for embroidery work, wooden printing blocks for stamping designs, and the wide-ledger stationary for book-keeping. In the inner area around the park, most shops sell basic, everyday items connected with traditional ways of living, Hindu and Muslim. Each trade had its own union, each with its own parochial interests. Just among the traders connected to *Chikan* garments, there are at least five unions. The number of unions is staggering. I can't see how it helps anybody but the union leaders.

Mr. Prakash, with his usual efficiency and historian's insight explained the raison

d'être and the role of the trade-specific unions in the movement,

> The number of trade-specific unions grew over time as the differences between the trade bodies grew. The Lucknow Traders Union was primarily created to resolve the disputes among different trades in the city. The Lucknow Traders Union was never meant for collective action. It has always been the job of local trade-specific unions. Now these unions, which have fought among themselves for years over petty issues, are trying to work together to fight against a better organized and government backed corporate sector. We need a different mechanism to organize our protests.

Mr. Kumar is the President of *Aminabad* Traders Association. The association is

entrusted with coordinating and representing different trade associations in the market. His

primary duty is to coordinate among various trade unions in Aminabad and disseminate the

information about the union activity at the city level. He said that, "we have been trying to

create more trust among different trade-specific unions and a workable relationship with the

street vendors and squatters union. But, our livelihood sometimes adversely affects each

other. The only resolution of dispute with the street vendors and squatters is their

resettlement outside *Aminabad.*" But, Mr. Kumar acknowledged that it would not be easy to

collaborate with the street vendors and the retailers under the current circumstances. He said,

> We used to have better working relations, until a few years ago, but the sudden downturn in the retail activities in Aminabad has made the retailers jittery. The congestion in the market is taking a very heavy toll and these bottlenecks are destroying whatever clientele we have left, so the plan to work with the street vendors and squatters is not a priority at this time. Every time there is a possibility for their resettlement, one or the other party finds it unacceptable.

Netaji, the leader of street vendors and squatters union, is also deeply skeptical of

collective action with the small retailers. He scoffs at the idea of joining the cause with the

small retailers. He said,

> Our needs, our daily life, our livelihood, and our demands are always at the cross-purposes with the retailers. We live on the streets and they want us out of here. In fact, our fight is mostly against the retailers, while theirs' is against the chain

retailers. We try to have a working relationship with them, but having a unified agenda is out of question. It's a big divide, we on the streets and them in their shops.

The unions, at present, are the "only form of expressions for the retailers of any kind." Among any section of retailers, it is the dominant ones who hold the positions of authority. They also are often in a better position to secure advantage for their own business. After years of being neglected, this is what "spurred" Mr. Kumar "to run for a union office." He admitted in one of the candid moments.

> The retailers, who are closely connected to the top union leaders, are in better position to further their business interests. The Lucknow Traders Union channels the retailers' requests for expansion licenses, trading permits, and government supply contracts, to the city. The personal connections with union leaders often determine the approval or disapproval. The bribes, of course, need to be channeled to the right people, and the union also ensures accountability. These functioning are very murky, almost everybody knows it, but very few know how the wheels work. The union facilitates this.

A close relationship between the union executives, party functionaries, and bureaucrats created a public relations nightmare for the union officials. Some union leaders privately admitted that "the nexus" created severe organizational problems. The interests of "the political parties and other benefactor have to be co-opted," explained Mr. Sailesh Gupta, before making decisions about the protests. The main constituency of the unions – the member retailers which many retailers felt was the last one to be addressed.

The Absent Women

The role of women in the retail sector was mostly limited to artisan specialty, in case of Lucknow mostly to *Chikan* embroidery. *Chikan* is a style of exquisite hand-embroidered clothing for which the Aminabad market is the largest retailing outlet in India. *Chikan* production in *Lucknow* is a large-scale, low technology industry in which hand-powered labor predominates; piece wages were paid; and there were no factories. Embroidered garments were made in stages, starting with fabric cutting and tailoring, followed by block printing and embroidering, and, finally, laundering. In all stages but one, male specialists predominated. However, the embroidery stage was completely dominated by women. There were no reliable figures on how many embroiderers there were; estimates ranged from 30,000 to 100,000 (Paine, 1989)

"*Chikan* embroiders in the city have been and remain the preserve of Muslim community," according Mr. Navin Kohli, who owned a *Chikan* showroom, in one of the prime locations in *Aminabad*. "While most of the retailers in *Chikan* production were Hindu, the majority of craftspeople and technicians were Muslim women."

All female embroiderers encountered significant obstacles in gaining access to the labor market. The embroiderers faced limited occupational choices, constrained movement out of the house, and are barred from direct marketing simply on the basis of their sex. Mr. Kohli recounted his own lack of interaction with the women artisans,

> Muslim community being more conservative, they always use the *purdah* (veil). These days only rural Hindu women do *purdah*. I have never talked, even once in my years of selling *Chikan,* to the artisans who do embroidery for my shop. I have always dealt with their agent, who is usually the husband.

> In one instance, I encountered the husband of a *Chikan* embroider, Khalifa, who

wanted to fire his wife's and daughter's agent and wanted himself to be appointed as their

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new agent. This happened at Mr. Mitra's garment shop in the Refugee market. Khalifa was

pleading his case, since his "agent-ship" was dependent upon Mr. Mitra's granting him

credit. Later, in an informal chat, Khalifa related the chain of events and people that are

involved in the transactions between retailers and embroiders,

> Agents (middle-men) locate, recruit, and pay us, sometimes we have to go look for agents, but since my wife is a very accomplished embroiderer we don't have to worry much about the agents. The agents provide us with the initial costs of raw materials, or in some cases the raw material itself, which we cannot afford otherwise. Our agents are either our relatives or neighbors. We prefer to work with the relatives, but our old agent is cheating us. That's the reason I am here. I would prefer to negotiate the wages and work orders directly for my wife and my 14-year-old daughter, who is now beginning to work.

> In addition, the women usually had onerous household responsibilities. But foremost

among the specific barriers to their participation in the labor market was the requirement that

they observe some degree of seclusion from men-folks.

Chikan embroiderers did not work outside the house, and rarely went to collect

embroidery themselves. Because of limitations on their mobility and visibility in the public

realm, they learned few other skills, and could not pursue jobs in offices or factories. Instead,

they relied upon subcontractors to bring them work that could be done inside the home. Most

did not even explore urban bazaars as consumers and are the least informed about the market

in *Chikan (Wilkinson-Weber, 1997)*.

Due to such restrictions, I was not able to interview the women in this informal sector

of retail supply. The husband of a Chikan embroiderer provided most of the information

about the women artisans. Some information regarding this was also gathered during the

interview sessions with other *Chikan* retailers.

Some Hindu retailers very occasionally let their wives help them with cleaning, organizing, and general maintenance at the shop. A general merchandise retailer, Ashutosh, whose wife helps him occasionally, explained,

> Her place is in home, to take care of the kids and house. Retailing requires long and odd hours and this is no place for women. I sometimes let her come to the shop before the festival shopping times, when I can really use an extra hand, but if I can afford I will hire a help as this is not a place for her. Not, with men all around!

> Retail sector in Aminabad was almost exclusively male dominated. During the study, only on very few occasions did I find women helping their husbands in retail chores. In every case, their husband turned down my request for an interview with their wives. Mr. Desai, a bookstore owner, whose wife accompanied him everyday to the shop, gave a very logical explanation: "she is only here for company, she doesn't know about the business. If you want to know about my business, ask me."

Section III: Communicating Resistance

One evening I had a follow-up interview appointment with Mr. Mustafa at his hardware shop on *Gautam Buddha* road. We had barely started our conversation when a boy, around 14, came into the shop, delivered Mr. Mustafa a couple of pamphlets and the Union's newsletter called '*Vyapar Manthan*' (Trade Deliberations), and asked him to sign the receipt of the material in his notebook. Mr. Mustafa explained; "the boy is 'a runner' delivering the union literature to the shopkeepers about the next rally".

The pamphlet exhorted the traders to "wake up before you die," under it, skull and bones prominently displayed on left and right of "Chain retailer is the merchant of our death" (see Figure 1). It urged the traders to unite in fight against "the mighty enemy," with claims that "victory is close. Let's fight till the end." Mr. Mustafa told me that the "organizers rely on the pamphlets and word-of-mouth as the primary means of information dissemination."

"Read and Pass" was a way of distributing the Union's materials widely, encouraging the members to educate one another by sharing the organization's literature. The newsletter delivered by 'the runner' encouraged the members to disseminate the information of an upcoming protest event. It also urged the members to "network thorough business associates, family, friends, and other personal relationships" (*Vyapar Manthan*, 2008). The Union urged the members to encourage their friends and relatives to participate in the protest activities.

The pamphlets and newsletters played a vital role in disseminating the information and literature. In urging their members to "spread the word to their friends and family," the unions use these mass communication tactics "in a personalized and targeted way." Mr. Agrawal explained,

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A handful of the retailers in *Aminabad* use computers or Internet. There are also a few who are illiterate. Under the circumstance, the printed material and the word-of-mouth tactics ensure that all the retailers in the area get the important information. This strategy is also helpful in bringing the reluctant traders to the protests. This approach helps create a discourse among the traders, their friends and their families. Direct contact also provides us with feedback from the traders in a more immediate way and helps us in refining our message and tactics.

The state-level protest rally in front of the Legislative Assembly in Lucknow was one event the Union had been preparing for months. Speaker after speaker stressed the need for more participation. These rallies were well attended, but it was not lost on the leaders that only a "fraction of retailers" participated in protests. Banwari Lal Kanchal, a member of the Indian Parliament and the National President of the traders Union, exhorted the retailers to "participate actively" by encouraging them to recruit more people for "our cause."

> You need to persuade and pressurize the retailers in your neighborhood to participate in the protests. We need to engage everybody that we can. Whether you use our literature, or whether you have printed your literature yourself, doesn't matter. If each one of you will do a small part, our organization will get strong and the government will be forced to listen to us. But, first we have to put our own house in order. I urge you to bring one extra person to the rally with you. One person at a time we will grow stronger.

The Propaganda

It is necessary to make a differentiation between the terms "propaganda" and "public relations." Propaganda is communication that seeks to persuade not through dialogue or "give and take argument," but rather through the manipulation of symbols and emotions. The overall goal of propaganda is not to provide information so that the receiver may make a decision but rather to deliver information in a form that moves the individual toward the sender's desired position (Pratkanis & Aronson, 2001). In contrast, public relations activities are based on the concept of relationship building. Organizations engage in dialogue with their various publics to resolve conflict and arrive at agreements that benefit all of the parties

involved. Public relations places exposure in credible third-party outlets, it offers a third-party legitimacy that advertising and propaganda do not have (Grunig & Hunt, 1984).

The Union's messages were generally an appeal to emotion, not intellect. The symbol of 'skull and bones' was often used to imply the enemy - the chain retailers. In the February issue of the newsletter, the cover page depicted the chain retailer as a slobbering tyrannosaurus devouring the small retailers. The trade union leaders, on the other hand, were shown as benevolent community leaders, participating in the social and gainful activities. "The Hindu *Swastika,* scales of justice, lamps, and other Hindu symbols, are used in posters, stickers, and billboards to invoke a feeling of commonality with the public, and to dignify themselves in the process," noted Mr. Prakash, in one instance (see Figure 2).

A poster prominently displayed in at Union office in *Aminabad*, invoked the memory of colonized India. It is a very common theme among the groups protesting against the foreign investments. "A single East-India Company enslaved us for 200 years, just imagine, how many years the 100 chain stores are going to enslave us?" shouted the poster.

A perusal of union "publicity" material revealed that slogans and one-liners, often clichéd, were at the nucleus of resistance discourse. The use of photographs, sketches of various Hindu symbols, Gods, slogans, etc. were very dominant in the discourse. These symbols could be found displayed as stickers on the shop windows, walls, trees, cars, and any number of things. The walls of *Aminabad* were covered with graffiti and posters about the impending ruin of small retailing, an ominous indication of disaster about to strike the small retailers. The text or an analysis of the issues was usually relegated to the last few pages of the Union newsletters. These analyses were often a reprint of news articles and editorials that were critical of chain retailing.

The "meet and greets."

The unions collectively organized "meet and greets," with the members of the public during Hindu and Muslim festivals. On the last day of Ramadan, the *Aminabad* Traders Association had organized the *Iftar*, it is a ceremonial evening meal during which Muslims break their fast. Thousands of people had gathered after the Friday prayers at *Aminabad* Park. The market was closed for the public holiday, but the crowd was even larger than when the market was open. A massive tent was set up in the park to serve traditional Islamic food. The local restaurants catered the food. The atmosphere was festive. The disparate elements of Indian society mingled together. The men and women, rich and poor - castes indistinguishable, beggars, and children milled toward the food stall. From the second floor window of Mr. Kumar's shop/office it looked like a torrent of humanity. Mr. Kumar was one of the organizers of this event. He explained,

> We organize the 'meet and greets,' during all the major festivals every year. Our *Holi, Deewali,* and *Janamashtami* (major Hindu festivals) meet and greets are a great way to connect with people. The festival provides a more relaxed environment for interaction. We also do the same during the Sikh and Islamic festivals. *Iftar* is usually the largest gathering. We organize informal gatherings of retailers a few times a year, but public events are important for good public relations.

The banners around the park portrayed the chain retailers, as outsider, as foreigners, as colonizers. The fight against chain retailing was the fight against the oppressor. An important aspect of the gathering was to illustrate the commonality of problems – for people to identify with the retailer's issues.

These festivals were also the occasions when the big retailers in *Aminabad*, and the other areas of city, offered sales, provided food and drinks, and let the union officials pass out fliers. "This", Mr. Prakash believed, "is gross commercialism on a Holiday. These retailers are competing against each other to get most people in their shops. They totally

undermine what the Union is trying to do." Individual infractions were some of the many distractions to the "unity" the unions had to "gloss over" on everyday basis. "These are tough times, some retailers are opportunists, but most of us are unified," argued Mr. Agrawal, the Vice President of Lucknow Traders Union.

The unions billed themselves as respectable organizations, which were opposed to the 'corporate colonizers', and boasted a membership roster that included many public and political figures. It tried to achieve its goals of bolstering membership, broadening its appeal among members of the public, and dealing with the critics, by organizing rallies and festivities during public holidays. This was not very different from what the chain retailers did during the festivals with their mega-sales events. For unions, however, this was more than a business opportunity, it was also a way to connect to the community, and during the times of agitation, it was a hope to gain a sympathetic audience.

The 'star' presence.

The important rallies always had "star" attractions. The famous movie stars graced the occasion with their presence, in turn ensuring a heavy turnout of people. This practice was borrowed from the election campaigns. The movie actors and other celebrities lend their voice and image to create television commercials. "Having leaders and prominent members of society at the meetings lends the Union some leverage in its efforts to influence public opinion. The presence of national political leaders and movie stars bring a more extensive media coverage and positive editorials. Last year Atal Bihari Bajpai was the guest speaker at our rally," proudly remembered Mr. Agrawal. The poet politician, Mr. Bajpai is a former Prime Minister of India. He represented Lucknow in the Parliament before retiring in 2008. "Mr. Bajpai taking up our issue is a tremendous boost. The protest got national and

international coverage. The network news covered his address live. Our national president

Mr. Kanchal was interviewed by CNN. The rally was a great public relations success," said

Mr. Kumar, another office bearer in the Union.

The use of politicians in protest activities had its detractors. Mr. Bajpai's membership

in a prominent Hindu nationalist party was divisive and a source of dissension among some

retailers. Sailesh Gupta, leader of a small association of garment retailers, found the use of

politicians distractive from real issues. He said,

> A politician comes with his own agenda. The small retailers are not an issue for him. We provide him an audience and platform for his reelection. They merely perform lip service. Why don't they ever raise this issue in the parliament? What did Mr. Bajpai do for us when he was the Prime Minister? Did you know that Mr. Bajpai is also very close to Mukesh Ambani?"

Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries owns the Reliance Fresh chain stores, which

was at the center of protest in August 2007. A movie star, however, was very welcome. Mr.

Adani, a hardware retailer, said,

> There is nothing like a movie star. People will go any length to see a movie star. People remember seeing a movie star in person. They remember the place. They remember the event. My dad still remembers the time when he got an autograph from Shabana Azami at the Lucknow airport. He had a Rupee bill, but Shabana Azami would not sign on currency. They settled on an empty cigarette pack. People associate good images with movie stars.

The newsletter.

The National chapter of the traders Union published a monthly newsletter, which can

be described as an organizational newsletter. The Lucknow chapter does not have its own

publication. A letter from the Union's new President exhorted the members to increase

participation and included an agenda for future agitation. It contained information relative to

those closely associated with, or of like mind with, the organization's ideologies. It contained

pictures of executive members facilitating the election of new members, of dignitaries

addressing functions, a few letters to the editor, and the accomplishments by the Union in the month past.

The print material was a key element of the Union's communication strategy. The public relations efforts relied on the ability of 'the runners' to mass distribute its literature. The runners were adolescent boys, who got paid hourly for biking around the market and delivering materials to the shopkeepers. The union heavily relied on its pamphlet series and the monthly newsletter to bolster support for the retailers' cause. "The printed pieces afford the organization a controlled message delivered directly to its member," explained Mr. Singhal. The stickers on the walls, windows, shutters, electricity poles, cars, and paid billboards offered an opportunity to quickly reach the larger audience. A person passing through the market could not but notice a deluge of slogans on banners hanging from electric lines. The urgency of the situation was revealed in the landscape covered with graffiti and slogans.

The mean world.

The Unions' rhetoric and the print literature relied on a number of fear appeals to motivate audiences to action. The threat of foreign ownership is the most visible theme. Increased unemployment is another theme that is consistent in speeches and print materials. Mr. Agrawal often quoted a slogan from the pamphlet displayed in his office, "4 million retailers livelihood is threatened by chain retailing."

Many rumors abounded among the retailers about the foreigners acquiring farming lands around Lucknow. Rakesh, the owner of a tobacco stall, once told me that he had heard from the villagers, who come to market that, "the foreign companies are buying the farm land around the city to secure supplies for their fresh-food stores." *Bhiyaji,* a vegetable vendor,

had "also heard these rumors." He said that, "there was a panic in the vegetable market a few months earlier over the reports about foreign companies buying farm-land. This would cut the supply for the squatters in the fresh-market." In fact, the Government of India has not allowed the sale of farmland to the foreign investors. The Indian conglomerates, however, are free to purchase the land anywhere and they are indeed buying large tracts of farmland around Lucknow ("Only Reliance Fresh outlets have been closed: UP Government," 2008).

The Union leaders often compared the retailers' plight with the farmers of Tamil Nadu, raising the specter of mass suicides. The scholars (Gajalakshmi & Peto, 2007; Patel, 2007), newspapers (Prabhu, 2009), and documentaries (Heeter, 2005) had extensively explored the suicides by farmers in Tamil Nadu during the last few years of drought. The documentaries and extensive reporting about the farmers' mass suicides in Television news shows had helped make this a major election issue and a part of public discourse. The retailers often used this theme in their publicity materials.

The pervasive sense of insecurity and vulnerability had contributed to a conception of a mean world, and was often invoked in retailers' discourses to identify with each other's plight and invoke unity among the ranks.

Media – A Testy Relationship

The Union seeking to influence public opinion and political agenda depended in part on the mass media to communicate its messages to a more general audience. Other than sending press releases and event notifications, the Union was very limited in its interaction with the mass media. An occasional interview by a union leader, or an editorial supporting their cause could be found in the inside pages of newspapers. Television networks covered the protest rallies on a regular basis, which moved to prime time if a celebrity worthy of note

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was attending the event. The national celebrities and political leaders often became the center of the coverage, which ended as soon as she or he left.

Mr. Agrawal noted the discrepancy of the coverage between chain and small retailers. He had often complained in letters to the editors of local newspapers about the favorable coverage of chain stores in the media.

> The media promote the malls and chains as 'the new wave'. Lifestyle sections in the media are full of free publicity. Sales and rebates at the chain stores are covered as news stories. They rarely cover *Aminabad* in a positive light; all the stories are about crowd and parking. It doesn't help in attracting people to the market.

> The Lucknow edition of the largest selling English daily newspaper in India, the *Times of India,* ran a series of stories on 'retailing experiences' in the city (Singh, 2007b; P. Sinha, 2007). The stories covered the new malls and chain stores, with interviews from the shopkeepers and their customers. Mr. Agrawal believed that this manner of media coverage drove the upscale customers away from *Aminabad* and undermined "public support for our cause."

The retailers of all economic conditions blamed the English media for demeaning them and portraying chain retailing as the only way for development. The negative coverage of the deteriorating *Aminabad* market and its languishing infrastructure has compounded the problems for the small retailers in the market. Some of it is true, but the "negative tone of the press and the how they compare us unfavorably with the chain retailers has more or less driven away our high-end clientele" said Mr. Ranjan.

Technology, or a Lack Thereof

At Vivek's showroom all the records and sales transactions were computerized. A broadband connection kept his main retail outlet connected to their other shops. Mr. Kumar's pharmacy and Mr. Kapil Sharma's showroom were few other instances. Computers were not

very common in *Aminabad.* There were a few shops that used electronic sales counter, but the use of computers or the Internet was very scarce. Most retailers used very wide ledgers for the double entry style of Indian bookkeeping called *Bahi-Khata* (Lall Nigam, 1986). The *Bahi-Khata* system of bookkeeping has continued for more than millennia, is still a popular style among the retailers in *Aminabad.*

The use of computers and the Internet were an anomaly among the retailers. The mobile phone, however, was the rage. Almost every shopkeeper had a mobile phone; busy retailers had two, three, or four. Even some of the street vendors and squatters had mobile phones. "The mobile phones are great in an emergency. We have a database of all our members. We can text them instantly. The text message is a great way of communicating with our members, it's the cheapest way to communicate" recounted Shailesh Gupta. This, however, did not eliminate paper mailing. "We still have to make sure that all our members get the information. The Union charter requires us to either mail our members the information or deliver it by hand." He admitted that text messaging is more timely and practical, but the rule changes require "every participating trade body to ratify it. It's a long and cumbersome process and some elderly members are sternly opposed to it."

The Street Vendors and Squatters

The story here is very short. A majority of the street vendors and squatters could not read or write. According to a UNICEF ("India: Education statistics," 2007) report the adult literacy rate in India is 66%. Among the *Dalit* castes it is even lower at 48%. A few street vendors and squatters had phones. The squatters and street vendors have little time and resources to interact with media. Bits of news were heard mostly through the grapevine in the

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market, an occasional glimpse at a newspaper, and from the television screens in showroom

windows. Under these circumstances, according to *Netaji*,

> The best strategy is word-of-mouth. We have a pretty smooth mechanism. During the last anti-encroachment drive, a street vendor noticed a posse of police and city officials at the entry of *Kaiserbagh* market. He tipped me. I texted some and called a few other squatters in the area, who in turn spread the word by mouth. We were able to gather and blockade the market in time, before the Police and City could start the drive.

> *Netaji's* system is very efficient. He had the phone numbers of the few squatters and

street vendors who own mobile phones. He text messaged them with the issue and location of

protests. "Within five minutes everybody knows about it." This efficiency, however, didn't

translate into anything more than a tactic to communicate with the members during crisis.

There was no organized communication strategy among the street vendors and squatters.

Rakesh's stall also provided a vantage point for the news dissemination about the

union activities. "*Netaji* or mostly it is one of his lackeys, who will go around telling people

about the strike or rally. They sometimes gives us pamphlets, but mostly we rely on the

mobile phones and word of mouth to spread the word around." The protests in India mostly

take a form of strike, rally, and loud demonstration. Rakesh explained,

> Some of us will gather at the *Chauraha* and congregate toward wherever the rally is supposed to take place. When we had a demonstration against the heavy handedness of the city administration during an anti-encroachment drive a few months earlier, we brought the whole market to stand still. In spite of a heavy police presence, the party cadres from outside and the local street vendors and squatters forced the shopkeepers to close the business for the day. The anti-encroachment drive, in the first place, was the handiwork of the shopkeepers. The main reason for out protest was to stop the collusion of shopkeepers and city administration in our harassment.

> Bringing the market activity to a halt is very common form of protest in India.

Strikes, demonstrations, rallies, boycott, and a general shut down of all economic activity is

the legacy of the Indian national movement for independence against the British. This was

indeed put to an excellent use and was instrumental in the success of the movement itself. It

is this legacy that provides legitimacy to these forms of protests in India (Chandra, 1989).

The forms of protests may be same for the small retailers and the street vendors and

squatters, but the small retailers have better strategies for coordination, communication, and

public relations than their street vendor and squatter counterparts, who rely on the word of

mouth and have to "sacrifice a day's worth of wages to protest," said *Bhaiyaji*

The issues relating to resettlement, treatment by larger retailers, and the future were

left to the political parties. "I neither have resources nor expertise to organize more than a

local protest. Our political party takes up these issues with other local leaders and informs us

about the plan of action" *Netaji* explained.

The *Dalits'* political party in Uttar Pradesh proclaimed welfare of *Dalits* as their

primary agenda. In the speeches, their leader asserted, "*Dalits* are her only agenda." She is a

mercurial leader, the most prominent among a number of *Dalit* caste leaders in the country

(Duncan, 1997). She is also the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. A number of billboards

proclaimed her as the "messiah" of the *Dalit* caste. She is their main spokesperson. The allies

in positions of power, have "served to undermine our cause," commented *Bhaiyaji*. "In the

last five years in power they have done nothing. Now that the party is in power, we can't

even protest against the government policies."

Street vendors and squatters had very limited communication strategy. Their

discourses of everyday survival were lost in the discourses and celebrations of development.

Media coverage of the people at the bottom strata in *Aminabad* was limited to anti-

encroachment drives. They had no mechanism in practice to influence the media or it's

coverage.

Section IV: The Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO)

A Brief Overview of NGO Activity

The Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) occupied an important place in implementation of the welfare programs, development-oriented initiatives, empowerment of women and the poor, literacy campaigns, housing, microfinance, etc. The list of their activities is impressive and very diverse. NGOs have been active in a wide spectrum of programs involving social welfare, empowerment, service, and rural development. The international funding and government initiatives had led to a widespread proliferation of NGOs, as a facilitator for peoples' participation in development and the future (Sooryamurthy & Gangrade, 2001).

The NGOs varied in their methods. Some acted primarily as lobbyists, while others primarily conducted programs and activities. For instance, an NGO concerned with poverty alleviation might provide needy people with the equipment and skills to find food and clean drinking water. Whereas another NGO helps through investigation and documentation of human rights violations and provides legal assistance to victims of human rights abuses. There are others who provide services to support development activities implemented on the ground by other organizations. The sources of NGO funding include membership dues, the sale of consultancy services, grants from international institutions or national governments, and private donations (Sheth & Sethi, 1991).

The estimates about the number of NGOs substantially vary. Only a few close approximations were available. The estimates ranged from a hundred thousand (Staples, 1992) to more than a million NGOs (Sarkar, 2008). A national database of NGOs in India has

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125 active organizations listed as registered in Lucknow. This is not an official list. It only

includes the NGOs that registered on their Website ("NGOs in Uttar Pradesh," 2008).

"There have to be more than a thousand NGOs in Lucknow," asserts Safdar, they are

"on every street corner; many are not even functional. The NGOs business is a mess." I had

met Safdar through a friend. He has been a consultant to the UNICEF and other NGOs for

more than a decade. His involvement with the NGOs "starts at project formulation and ends

with the final report." His association with the NGOs began while he was still in college.

> I was flirting with many things when I was in college; working with the NGOs was a
> passing fancy I developed during my years in college politics. One thing led to other,
> some funding opportunities came along. It all started with a small health awareness
> campaign in the villages of eastern Uttar Pradesh. I was 22 then. We used to drive
> half a night; and in the morning we set our stalls in the central square. One village at a
> time we surveyed the whole eastern part of the state. Soon, I was working as a
> consultant for their development programs, which led to consulting opportunities
> from other NGOs in the area. I have had job offers from the UNICEF, but I prefer
> consulting, it let's me choose my involvement.

Safdar added,

> People outside may not understand the kind of corruption that exists in the NGO
> sector. The funding opportunities only exist for NGOs that are politically well
> connected. The bureaucratic red tape and corruption let only a fraction of resources
> reach the people it is intended for. The use of NGOs as the main channel for welfare
> activity by the government and the international organizations, with almost no
> oversight, have made their functioning opaque to the public. There are NGOs that
> exist only in records, to secure funding from the government agencies. Often a
> percentage of the grant money is shared among the corrupt bureaucrats and
> participating NGOs.

The Missing NGOs

Among the people in *Aminabad*, there was a general indifference and mistrust toward

the NGOs. During my interactions with the retailers, street vendors, and squatters, I regularly

asked about any NGO that might be working with them. The answer was always "none". It

was surprising. There were NGOs working in every area of underdevelopment. Although a

few of the NGOs were working with artisans, who supply the garment and shoe retailers in

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Aminabad. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a national organization for

women's empowerment worked with the women artisans in the area. "It is an organization of

poor, self-employed women workers" ("SEWA," 2009). It primarily offers cooperative based

microfinance and poverty alleviation advice to the Woman artisans (Wilkinson-Weber,

1997). However, there were no organizations working directly with any group of retailers. I

asked Safdar. He tried to explain,

> The NGOs prefer to work in areas where there is no other means of organized
> activity. In retail sector, the existing unions resist the entry of NGOs. See, it all comes
> down to raising funds. The unions claim to be the sole custodians of the retailers'
> welfare. This puts them in direct competitions for funds from the Government and
> International Agencies. It's hard for the NGOs to get funding in face of direct
> opposition from the entrenched unions. There might be an organization working to
> feed the poor, or something like that. But the unions don't tolerate NGO activities
> where the roles overlap.

> The issue of NGO participation makes the Union leaders prickly. Mr. Singhal was

dismissive of the NGOs. He said,

> The Union takes care of the welfare and organization of its people. We have a better
> understanding of the retailers' problem. The people running the NGOs want to pocket
> the little funding available for small retailers. Just look at their record. At one time an
> NGO was providing microfinance to the vendors, but the scheme lasted only a month.
> Some bureaucrats and NGO functionaries are under an investigation for
> embezzlement in the microfinance 'deal'. The same thing happened with the mid-day
> meal programs. The piecemeal programs don't work. We can do these things better.
> The Union is in better place to take care of these things, they should channel the
> welfare programs through us.

> *Bhaiyaji,* the fruit vendor, confirmed, "every now and then we will have an NGO

doing literacy drive, free meal program, or the vaccinations. It only lasts a few months. Then

they run out of funds and the program ends." The criticism of NGO practices, its

unaccountability (Smith-Sreen, 1996), lack of transparency (Smith-Sreen, 1996), corruption

(Sheth & Sethi, 1991), and ineffectiveness in program implementation (Robinson, 2006), are

extensively reported in scholarly research. The credibility of NGOs among the retailers was

very low. During the interactions in *Aminabad,* almost everybody asked was indifferent of the NGOs' role in their current resistance against chain retailing.

The organizational activities of the retailers are conceived, organized, and implemented either by or through the various traders' unions. The unions were the only 'recognized' representatives and 'custodians' of the resistance. No other organization had any visible presence in this area. Since, the unions were the only bodies organizing protest activities among the retailers of *Aminabad*, the following findings are limited to unions' activities.

The Institutional Decision-Making in the Unions

The unions are very different from the NGOs in their organizational structure and financial management. The shopkeepers, street vendors, and squatters elect their trade-specific union executives at regular intervals. These are "due-paying members of their trade specific unions. The shopkeepers have to pay separate dues for membership in the *Aminabad* Traders Association, which automatically gains them a membership with the Lucknow Traders Union and National Traders Union" Mr. Agrawal, the President of Lucknow Traders Union, explained, while lamenting the "declining revenues" and "overdue membership fee," on more than one occasion.

The due-paying members directly elect the executive body of the trader-specific unions, as well as Aminabad Traders Association and Lucknow Traders Union, in an election every two years. A president usually heads the executive and a few other functionaries like vice presidents, secretaries, and a treasurer provide the support staff. "The election to the unions is a pretty elaborate affair," recounted Mr. Prakash, when asked about the remnants of fading election posters on the walls outside.

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The union elections are a huge affair. The elections for the *Aminabad* Traders Association were the most bitter and a large amount of money was spent. The contestants for the President's post invited the ministers, party leaders, legislators, and celebrities to canvass for their candidacy. This lasted for weeks. They organized concerts and free health clinics. The posters, banners, and graffiti were on every wall, pole and billboard. What you see outside are the remnants of that election.

During the election campaign every aspirant's agenda promised a "tougher protest against chain retailing" remembered Shivesh Gupta. He himself had successfully contested for the President of the *Aminabad* Garment Retailers Association. The executive bodies of various trade-specific unions, like Mr. Gupta's, in *Aminabad* make decision about the participation in market-wide action. "For a citywide, state wide, or nation wide action, the traders' respective unions at the city, state, or national levels make the decision."

In this system the bodies at lower levels elect the representatives at higher level. In effect, there were two intertwined and parallel organizations in *Aminabad.* The trader-specific associations and the *Aminabad* Traders Association, both directly elected by the retailers of *Aminabad*, "rightfully" claimed the representation and decision-making rights for the same constituents. Mr. Prakash acknowledged the "dysfunction." According to him,

> This mess leads to two major problems. One, we get two circulars about every issue. For instance, I get one from the *Aminabad* Traders Union and other from our local booksellers' association. Sometimes, even when they profess the same goal, the information they circulate is contradictory or confusing or both. Two, this creates a lack of accountability. The blame is always on the other side. Some trader-specific associations are less affected by chain retailing. The convenience stores, garment retail outlets, electronic and electrical goods stores, bookstores, and the restaurant businesses are the worst affected. Some trades like hardware, mill supplies, and Hindu lifestyle are hardly touched by chain retailers. Jewelers, servicing outlets, pharmacies, etc. are affected to a varying degree.

There is a general refrain among the retailers about the missing office holders. Atul Govil, who owns a garment-retailing store, summed the feelings of many small retailers about their union leadership,

> You can't find them when you need. The leaders have no accountability. They spend so much money in the elections only to ensure their personal benefits and political

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gains. The President of National Traders Union is also a Parliamentarian. Their decisions are made in collusion with political parties. The leaders cut deals to get licenses, and supply quota for themselves and their own people. You should have a look at their showrooms.

In one instance, during a discussion on the process of decision-making and the unions' claims about the grass root democracy in their organizations, legitimized by free election and a constitution, Ranjan Trivedi, owner of a small electrical appliance outlet, gave an insightful analysis,

> The union leaders make decisions according to their own understanding of the problems. Even when they are thinking about others, it is limited to the retailers of their own class and trade. Almost every leader owns a big showroom. Shoestring retailers can't afford to run for office. They don't have money or the political connections. A lot of them don't even care about the union, but mostly follow the unions' directives, particularly when it relates to their trade. It's a messy process; we know about the decisions through the circulars, beyond that it is anybody's guess.

The unions held the town hall meetings every "once in a while." After one such meeting, which commenced with a speech by the President of *Aminabad* Booksellers Union, followed by one speech after the other, ending in a rendition of the National Anthem, Mr. Prakash, who had only come to the meeting at my insistence ruefully pointed at "the futility" of the whole exercise. "This is a town hall meeting but all they do is give speeches and drum up their so-called achievements, as if they are always in campaigning mode. Speeches at the meetings, speeches at the protests, speeches at the rally, speeches are all that happens. And in speeches there is nothing but the slogans. There is no listening, no participation at all."

Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

This study sought to examine the narratives and communication strategies employed by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers for the creation of resistance discourse, and their use of mass media and information technology in universalizing the protest movement. The study addressed the lack of current, complete, and non-fragmented research on the condition of street vendors, squatters, and small retailers.

The research study specifically aimed to explore the localized resistance movements and the efficacy of retailers' communication techniques in translating the local resistance to the state and national levels. For this purpose, the theoretical framework utilizing Harvey's conceptualizations of local resistance movements as well as Williams' concept of the "militant particularisms" and narrative storytelling were used in this study.

The first section of this chapter provides a discussion about the site of study, the retailers' resistance narratives, level of participation in resistance activity, and the use of communication practices and strategies. The second section discusses the theoretical constructs in the context of retailers in *Aminabad*. The study limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed in section three.

Section I: The Place, People, and Their Participation in Resistance Narratives

The lives of small shopkeepers in *Aminabad* were in a perpetual conflict with the established order. There were mutinies within the movement – an expression of self-awareness negated by the established old anarchy and disorder. It revealed inequalities, fragmentations, hierarchy and divisions within a seemingly unified and homogenous resistance. It showed the disparity and mistrust between different class and castes, and it

confirmed the primacy of caste identity in everyday interactions. The socio-economic divisions among the retailers contradicted the unions' claims of democracy, participation, and unity in the resistance movement.

The research study was conceived to understand the dynamics of resistance in the retail sector in *Aminabad*. The study set out to explore the lives of retailers after a decade of sweeping economic restructuring in India. The main curiosity throughout was the exploration of resistance narratives against chain retailing by different types of retailers in their resistance.

The narratives

The most visible signs of decline were the condition of the shops, with half empty shelves and showroom windows. The shopkeepers often invoked the nostalgia of the past to highlight their current plight, when *Aminabad* was bustling and the profits were doubling every year. They squarely blamed the chain retailers, government apathy, and collusion of the two for current decline of their market. And they often invoked the specter of neo-colonization and fears of mass-unemployment and its effects on the other sectors of economy to build arguments against foreign investments and corporate chain retailing.

Among the shoestring shopkeepers, it was a common refrain to point at the nexus of 'corporate India' and corrupt politicians for the lack of development in *Aminabad*. The government-aided infrastructural investment in the trans-*Gomati* area, also the center of chain retail activity in Lucknow, was pointed out as a testament of the step-motherly treatment of *Aminabad.* The shopkeepers blamed the corrupt system and government inclination toward liberalization for most of their ills.

Economic development was a recurring theme in the discourses of the retailers and street vendors. The supporters of small retailing as well as its detractors used convenient interpretations of 'liberalization policies' and 'development' in their resistance discourse. The economic development and their effects were heavily discussed in the mainstream media. However, the retailers claimed that the media didn't give a fair coverage to their concerns about the bleak future and looming unemployment prospects.

In retailers' narratives, particularly of the shoestring variety, "imminent" unemployment was a recurring theme. During the protests, this sentiment became a tangible expression in the form of banners and slogans. On other hand, the street vendors were already living at the subsistence level, and the shopkeepers were their main adversaries in securing space for business activity in the market. Their narratives against the retailers formed the mainstay of resistance discourse when the future was concerned. Their existence in the market itself was an everyday struggle with the shopkeepers. The chain retail stores were mostly a secondary issue for them.

Lacking the conditions for collective action, the decisions about resistance activity were largely left to the deeply divided trade-specific unions. This in turn left the shoestring retailers merely hoping for some government action through petitioning, which their own narratives suggested was not forthcoming.

Individual initiative depended on the status of a retailer. Only the affluent ones seemed capable of coping with the developments in *Aminabad*. For some, joining hands with the chain retailing as suppliers, was a more ideal situation. However, for most retailers, the affluent class of consumer was eroding. For instance, the upscale garment retail was now the

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chain retailers' and malls' domain. The shopkeepers, who were flourishing until not long ago, bemoaned their loss of high-end clientele on almost every occasion.

The consumers have generally welcomed the trend of malls and chain retail stores. The crowds at the malls were large and according to media reports "the sales events at the chain stores have attracted even the otherwise reluctant customer" (P. Sinha, 2007, p. 3). For the shopkeepers of *Aminabad,* the price comparisons with the chains and the media label of "gross profiteers" hampered the effort in gaining public support.

In retailers' accounts and the union's publicity materials, monopoly, price cutting, dumping, and other illegitimate means adopted by the chain retailers were highlighted. This, however, hasn't affected the chain stores and malls; the Lucknow's middle class, in many accounts was, as Mr. Prakash explained, "enamored by the new chain outlets." Consumer sympathy, if any, had not translated into stemming the deterioration of small retailing in *Aminabad*.

The street retailers and vendors' resistance narrative, though reflective of their common plight, haven't translated into a collective action. The resistance is common, but the existing divisions based on caste, class, custom, and trade have prevented them from formulating a unified approach. This has exposed the limitations of existing mechanism for resistance activity – the trade unions. For most retailers, individual initiative was the bleak option.

The retailers' representative bodies, and their participation, or 'say' in the decisions about their own livelihood and welfare; and their ability to transform local resistance into something larger, are some of the key issues discussed in the following section.

The Level of Participation

In an attempt to examine the democracy of a resistance movement in action, *Aminabad* provided a rare prospect, where all sorts of shopkeepers were pitted against the chain retailers, purportedly as one. How were the small retailers reconciling the disparities within themselves, differences rooted in generations of economic disparity, caste distinctions, and everyday rituals ingrained in millennia old myths? I believed that the answers to these lay in the their narratives, myths, and their rituals to realize those myths. The following discussion explores how the particularities within the retailers groups, their organizations, and the party politics affect the level of participation by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers.

The Differences Within

The different segments of resistance often invoked the symbols and narratives that were simultaneously divisive and unifying. For instance, the caste was the most relevant identifier among the people. While it united the predominantly *Dalit* street vendors and squatters in their struggle against the retailers with permanent structures, who are predominantly upper caste, it precluded a common action with the same retailers when the fight was against a common enemy – the chain retailers. In other instances, the class divides among the shopkeepers, between the adaptive and shoestring, created frictions within the unions about the scale and goals of resistance. The trader-specific unions' viewpoints favoring their particular trade also factored in diffusing the agenda and scope of protests, much to the chagrin of the garment, general merchandise, electric and electronic appliance retailers, who were the worst affected in the market.

The caste, class, and trade.

The people with different economic and social circumstances had different responses toward chain retailing, based primarily on their caste identity and class perception. The retailers' economic conditions and the relationship with the marketplace – their encroached and negotiated, or legitimate and established business spaces, were the primary considerations in classifying the retailers in the categories of street vendor, and squatter, or adaptive and shoestring retailers respectively. This was also their most visible identifier in the market.

However, this identifier in most cases was determined by their caste. The caste was the invisible constituent that most often determined the order and hierarchy among the retailers in *Aminabad*. Béteille (1992), a prominent sociologist and a social commentator, has illustrated through his field studies that the rules of inclusion were what made upper castes Hindus what they were and hence were forbidden for the lower castes. The same held true in *Aminabad* Market: the retailers in permanent structures were mostly upper caste and the street vendors and squatters predominantly lower caste.

The socio-economic divisions based on caste and class undermined the notion of unity among the traders. The chain retailing and ensuing structural changes had further complicated the socio-economic divisions among the traders. The impact of chain retailing on the small retailers was not uniform. Different trades were affected in different ways. For some it was direct and for many others diffuse and indirect. It had not helped in molding the small retailers into one occupational class ready to fight for resistance. This has, in fact, served to widen the division within small retailing, separating the "adaptive" storekeepers from those that could not afford to modernize their businesses.

These new circumstances were manifested in the retailers' organizational activities, where the modernizing independents were working at cross-purposes against the shoestring retailers. Many of their activities were directed as much against the street vendors and squatters as against the chains.

The existing socio-economic divisions are compounded by the fast paced liberalization of the economy. The impact of chain retailing has served to further entrench the divisions among retailers. One section competed with the big stores and adopted their business models; while the other was marginalized into traditional market areas where the chain retail had not yet begun to operate.

The trade-specific unions that emphasized the unifying qualities of a small business ideology ignored the ground reality; the images that appeared united, were often a grotesque collage of competing interests. A peddler with a pushcart or a squatter conceived of himself as a 'small' trader and thought of the retailers with permanent structures big and small alike as a 'big' businessman. But a retailer in a small shop in turn compared his store against the big showroom retailer, a department store, or a national chain, identified himself as 'small' and derided the street vendor and squatter as not a businessman at all. Similarly, a retailer in a big showroom invoked its 'smallness' when competing against the larger national chains, ridiculed the trading practices of the small retailer as backward and not capable of modernizing.

Though the squatters, street vendors, small retailers, and adaptive showroom retailers used the symbol 'small' in similar ways and encoded an identical message, their sense of what the word meant and the uses to which they were put served to create wedges within the resistance against the chain retailers.

The party politics.

The differences within were stretched further by the relationships between the political parties and trader-specific unions. It was a symbiotic dependence: the unions colluded with the parties to channel their demands to the Government bodies and the unions in turn facilitated a reliable vote bank for the political parties. The office bearers at various trade unions were also the members of their benefactor political parties. For instance, the President of the National Traders Union was also a member of the Parliament, the highest legislative body in India. At local levels, a few of the union leaders were also legislators, and in one case a cabinet member in the State Government.

The street vendors and squatters didn't have many choices in their political affiliation. A dominant *Dalit* party in the state had initiated, helped create, and in effect controlled their organization. Since independence the *Dalit* political parties have been the main representatives of issues related to their caste. After half a century of struggle and peripheral role, the *Dalit* political parties were more entrenched and mainstream. In *Uttar Pradesh*, a *Dalit* political party was in power. The caste organization and identity are the important forms of social or symbolic capital for the *Dalit* political parties.

The scholars argue, that in the years since independence a certain amount of money, a certain amount of education, and with that there had also come the group sense and political consciousness among the *Dalits* (R. Kothari, 2004). The *Dalits* had ceased to be abstractions. They had become people stressing their own particularity, just as better-off groups in India stressed their particularities. The *Dalits* had found stability and hope for collective action in the groupings of region, caste, clan, and family.

The Chief Minister was from a *Dalit* caste. The street vendors and squatters were her party's professed constituency, which they fiercely courted and guarded from the other political parties. Being in the government it became imperative for the *Dalit* parties to control the resistance, not to let it get out of hand. It was a strange dynamic when the *Dalit* party that governed the State also organized the protests against the City and State Governments to oppose anti-encroachment drives. The politics had corrupted the movement. It sounded cliché, but it often resonated in the words of street vendors and squatters.

The union leaders, for expedience, justified their association with the political parties, while at the same time the shopkeepers criticized this association for corruption in the unions. The political nexus created a situation where the decision-making was obfuscated and the union leaders' role in it unclear.

The decision-making at the unions at every level was a top-to-bottom process, which left the shopkeepers more confused about the role of political parties in unions' decisions. In this conception of protest, the needs of smaller retailer were left mostly unaddressed. Their demands did not make it to the top, and the decision makers did not reach out to listen to their problems or ideas. Even when the narratives of resistance and the conditions of change were common for the various levels of retailers, a collective action was precluded due to the particularities of union politics.

The scholars as well as social commentators have questioned the pace of development and the top-bottom approach adopted in policy making and implementation. This is an approach, Arundhati Roy (2009), an acclaimed author and social commentator, considers to be encrypted with genocidal potential for the poor and those without resources to adapt.

The particularities that already existed in the retailers' social, economic, and political environment were magnified in the face of chain retailing. The resistance was fraught within by the 'push and pull' from the segments within. In spite of a professed agenda against the chains, the retailers constrained by their particularities were pitted against each other. In their narratives, the shopkeepers belie the Union's rhetoric of 'united action'. a wistfulness for the prosperous past lurked in their discourses on the present decline and future uncertainty.

The Communication Practice, and Strategies

The small retailers adopted a fourfold strategy for their resistance activity to: highlight their plight, influence the policy makers, counter the narratives created in media and mainstream discourse about development, and create a favorable public opinion. The street vendors and squatters had lesser control over the resistance, which was directly controlled by the party apparatus.

The Resistance Strategies

The union agenda was piecemeal and centered on events like rallies, demonstrations, pickets, protests, festival gatherings, etc. The resistance activity would go from the tumult of a rally or protest to a long interval of casual lull, while waiting for the government response. There was a lack of plan for action between these events, sometimes for weeks. The events were organized to protest against specific government policies like, restructuring of sales tax, rebates to the chain retailers, or anti-encroachment drives. The rallies and speeches normally led to other publicized events when the union leaders presented the Government officials with an official petition of their demands. The stories and pictures from these events formed a substantial part of the propaganda material in their Union newsletters, and pamphlets.

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The union members commonly complained about a lack of coherent program for resistance. The union activities were restricted to petitioning the government and waiting for the response before organizing a follow up protest. This happened very often. During this long and uncertain waiting period most protest activity fizzled.

The linear communication between the unions and the Government was reflected in the top-to-bottom decision-making approach within the unions as well. The small retailers were rarely part of the negotiations within the unions in determining the agenda and plan for action. This was the domain of more affluent, and politically connected union leaders who decided and communicated the agenda to the whole retailers body. Under these conditions, the unions' claim of grassroots participation in the decision-making process was very suspect in the shopkeepers' views. The shopkeepers didn't have many opportunities to participate in the policy making. The one-way communication without any process of feedback from the retailers hampered resistance activity at the union level, and often prevented any meaningful participation or action.

The trade and area specific unions contributed to the confusion in determining a collective agenda for market-wide action. The perceived and real needs of different specific trade bodies were often left unaccommodated, which became manifest during the times of protests. The traders unaffected by chain retailing were reluctant to participate actively. A few sections of the market remained open to business during market and citywide strikes. The movement was fragmented within and in reconciling the demands of various factions; the ensuing agenda didn't reassure or represent many.

In determining the agenda for resistance and strategies for organizing the protest events, the democracy within was elusive. While the union leaders demanded participation in

government policy-making, the same mechanism was conspicuously absent within their own organizations. The protesting shopkeepers had very little control over the message content, or its efficacy. Mr. Agrawal, the President of the Lucknow Traders Union often blamed the "internecine between the trade-specific unions" and their "parochial understanding" of the "common cause" as his "biggest headaches," when defending the democracy within the Union as "the most feasible, under the present circumstances."

The small shopkeepers, however, broadly considered the union organizations at the city and state level as unresponsive, inefficient, and corrupt. As a consequence the retailers often retreated to the comfort of their trade-specific unions to channel their demands, which were less abstract and directly related to their immediate problems.

The Communication Strategies

The unions' communication strategy was three pronged. They petitioned the Government to restrict chain retailing, attacked the chain retail conglomerates for predatory business practices, and invoked their resistance as a public cause against the corporate-political-bureaucratic collusion and ensuing corruption.

The petitioning events were publicized protests in front of the legislative assembly, the Governor's mansion, or the Municipal Corporation. A formal reading of the petition followed a ceremonial handover with a promise from a government functionary for sympathetic consideration. This worked in a cyclic manner – the government responded after a long bureaucratic delay, which led to another petition event in response. It took months and years to resolve. The follow-up petitions and actions were meticulously recorded at the Union office, but rarely made it into the monthly Newsletter. Very few shopkeepers seemed to know the details, other than a broad overview that was intimated in the earliest fliers.

Round the clock pickets, for two to three days, were organized by the street vendors and squatters to protest against the chains and supermarkets selling fresh produce for a few weeks during the time of this study. The shopkeepers, on the other hand, usually resorted to protests from a distance. They primarily used posters, mail-in-letters, stickers, banners, billboards, fliers, and an occasional full-page advertisement in the local newspapers. This abundance of print material seldom made its way outside the *Aminabad* area. The walls of *Aminabad* were the most visible indicator of this protest activity.

The rallies were a bigger event and organized as a joint effort by the *Aminabad* Traders Association with support from the local trade-specific unions and the Lucknow Traders Union. The rallies were intended to favorably influence public opinion; and to

encourage a wider participation; the fares and festivities were included as side attractions. The celebrities, prominent social activists, and political leaders were invited for a daylong affair of speeches. In the rhetoric, the boundary between the shopkeepers' problems and the public issues was blurred. The retailers' issues were depicted as a 'common cause' and a matter for 'public concern'.

The Publicity Tactics

The unions relied heavily on the propaganda materials for communicating resistance. Most of this material was in the form of posters, stickers, and the Union newsletter, which were conceived, printed, and distributed by the National chapter. The local unions didn't create their own literature, but merely distributed it through their union offices and shops, or passed it out as fliers during protest events.

The unions don't have a dedicated public relations staff. The unions' presidents act as the main spokesperson for their respective trades, and that marks the end of public relations for most trade-specific unions in *Aminabad.* The public relations activity during the time of protest events extends to sending pitch letters to various news outlets, letters to the editors of local newspapers, TV and newspaper interviews, and persuading a friendly reporter to write a feature story on their plight and the upcoming activity. To bolster the local efforts, the National chapter of the retailers' union paid for the advertisements featuring movie celebrities and an occasional sports star.

While the Union claimed that stressing the same message helped in creating a unity at the pan state level, to the shopkeepers these messages were abstract and only vaguely connected to the local struggles. This was key a issue for resentment among the worst affected retailers in *Aminabad.* Their umbrage at the Union was reflected in the discourses

among them and during every interview conducted. But, at the same time, they were totally reliant on the unions for any organized activity.

The Use of Technology

In the context of 'the digital divide' in India, Keniston and Kumar (2004) illustrate the divide between those who are able to use and participate in information technology and those who are not. This divide is described in terms of information rich and information poor peoples. In the context of marketplace, the chain retailers are information rich and the small retailers information poor people.

For small retailers, information dissemination is largely limited to the print material. Their protest materials – newsletter, posters, pamphlets, banners, stickers, fliers, etc., are confined to the marketplace and their advertising to the shop-front. In the Television and print medium, news coverage is limited to an occasional protest activity; and advertising is almost non-existent. The Union has no website, and a handful of the adaptive retailers use the Internet or computers at their retail outlets. The text messaging on cell phones is used to disseminate information in emergency, which is the limit of Union's technological prowess.

The chains, on the other hand, have dedicated public relations departments and logistical support from the local Chambers of Commerce. They regularly advertise sales events and related public events – celebrity appearances, concerts, fashion shows in the newspapers, websites, and cable Television. Their websites announce the events, advertise the products, and counter the union rhetoric in a timely fashion.

Section II: Theoretical Constructs Revisited

When conceptualizing this study, it was believed that Raymond William's experiences with "militant particularisms" and Foucault's essays on "governmentality" will provide a good fit for exploring the issues of resistance and welfare in a neoliberal state. The goal, here, was not to replicate Williams' research, or to use 'militant particularism' as a binding theoretical construct, but what Williams himself encourages, to employ the flexibility of these concepts for further understanding of place-based movements. In advancing Williams' work, Harvey has brilliantly incorporated the role of space, place, and time in resistance movements. This helped conceptualize the displacement of the prime market space from *Aminabad* to the trans-*Gomati* area, as well as the issues pertaining to the resettlement of street vendors and squatters from the main market area to outside the city.

The objective was to evaluate the study goals, not bound, but guided by the relevant theoretical expositions. This led to some new understandings of the concepts when applied in this context. It revealed dialectics between the modernity and tradition in a very different fashion than what Williams and Harvey had experienced. The following discussion is an attempt to contextualize the effects of caste and class realities, and governmentality as experienced in *Aminabad,* in creating 'militant particularisms', the issues of governance and the retailer's welfare.

The Ironies Within

Williams (1989) considers that the alliances and solidarities that shape the movement should not be seen as a means towards the creation of small, harmonious communities. Nor should they be seen as merely building blocks for the formation of a few key global demands remote from place-located political activity.

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He further argues that these local intersections and alliances should be celebrated as integral to the alternative political identities and practices (militant particularisms) that are being shaped through counter-globalization struggles. Harvey (2001a) and Williams (1989) both consider these intersections as important because they can produce transformation of identities; and they can oppose neoliberals' supports to globalization.

The assumption that differences can be overcome, however, is undermined in the Indian context by the underlying ironies among the constituents for collective resistance. Freire (1972) warns that a critical understanding of the oppressor, although a step in the right direction, does not yet liberate the oppressed, resolving the particularities among is a prerequisite for conscientization. It requires an in-depth understanding of the world, allowing for the perception and exposure of social and political contradictions. Among the resistors the augmentation of critical consciousness is severely challenged by the inherent particularities of the resistors against chain retailing. The particularities that define their social identity are rooted in their affiliations – caste, religion, gender, governance, etc. The unions are formed to celebrate the cause of their particular trade, their particular caste, their particular area, and their particular economic needs.

The India market conditions resemble Hemingway's (1937) depiction of "have and have not" during the depression era. However, here it is the caste, not the class, which predominantly determines one's economic status and organizational representation. The unions are divided into opposing teams; the predominantly *Dalit* and poor street vendors and squatters' unions are pitted against the predominantly upper caste *Vaishya* and more affluent small retailers' unions. The managing of resistance, here, is a top-to-bottom exercise, a *Dalit* party does the refereeing among the factions within the street vendors and squatters' unions,

while the same is attempted by the Lucknow Traders Union on the other side of the social

divide in *Aminabad.*

Their particularities are deeply ingrained in the social, cultural, and ritualistic history

of inclusion and exclusion from social mobility. These particularities circumscribe a

negotiated discourse, unified platform, or collective participation from different conditions of

the retailers. This fosters an atmosphere, where the different sections of small retailers are

actually pitted against each other. The negotiations here are a very delicate process. The

détente lasts as long as the truce lasts. And, the truce lasts as long as the mediations last.

A unified resistance needs a common adversary. Symbolically, the chain retailers

serve this purpose. However, their narratives expose the differences among them. For most,

among the lower strata, the chain retailer is an abstract enemy, seen only on the publicity

materials[2]. Their tangible differences lay in the pavements, storefronts, streets, parking lots,

and spaces they share everyday. The immediate threat from the chain retailing only

superficially united the small retailers in their protests; the differences within were left

unresolved. The resistance organizer's undertaking was not to make abstract concrete, but to

let the abstract become visible through immediate concrete.

The governmentality.

According to Foucault (1991), the inherent governmentality within neoliberal

conditions adds a few more layers of abstractions to the concrete expectations. The

governmentality is not India's tragic irony, but the global irony – socialism and neoliberalism

interacting within and with the Indian traditions. India's irony lies in the expectations of

people based on the enshrined Welfare-State functions in the Constitution as The Directive

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[2] (*Vyapar Manthan*, 2008). In a recent issue of the Union's newsletter the chain retailer was
depicted as tyrannosaur (see Figure 3).

Principles of State Policy (India, 1950), which frames the agenda for the Government to enforce certain basic rights and ensure social security for the poor. The prospects for action and the expectations of social equality through the State intervention, however, have become abstractions within the neoliberal realities of the marketplace – the welfare activity is delegated to the non-profit organizations and the policy making dictated by the global realities.

The Constitution of India soon after Independence promoted a socialist civil society (India, 1950). The directive principles of state policy enshrined in the Constitution were the guide in achieving social change and maintaining welfare activities for the underprivileged. Unlike the West, where the locus of change has been the individual, in India the primary actor has been the group. The state promoted the trade unions and cooperatives, formed on the basis of caste, trade, and class, to achieve its goals of economic parity. These unions and cooperative could coexist only in a market protected by the state, where the indifferent performance of the economy was secondary to idea of equitability.

The economic meltdown in 1990s and the pressure from international monetary organizations to privatize the public sector prompted the Indian state to allow more autonomy in the market. The politically supported and parochial trade unions of the past, now, faced new realities in a globalized economy. The ironies within the trade groups became more manifest and debilitating due to the abstract nature of global adversary. The earlier tactics of petitioning the government by the groups for the changes in their favor became redundant when the state edged toward smaller government. However, due the abstract nature of global adversary, the protest activity by the traders unions is still directed at the government. Ironically, while the market has acquired a measure of autonomy from the

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state, the global market has, in turn, eroded the state's capability to intervene in social welfare.

The small traders are fighting a battle on two fronts, the state and the market – one a seemingly concrete agency for change and the other a harrowing abstraction; both are formidable adversaries. It is within this atmosphere that the retailers' resistance movements for recognition, identity, and equality, operate. In the society, vibrant and autonomous multiple non-class identities have eclipsed class identities even when the emphasis on social equality remains. The non-class identities based on caste, language, and geography dominate the resistance discourse; while at the same time prevent a collective discourse representative of one's class. The dominance of caste identity over any other, creates a stratification of class in a fashion that precludes the "militant particularisms," which Williams (1989) envisioned as model for universalizing resistance in Western societies.

In the marketplace, the professed socialist ideals of the right to education, employment, and a 'meaningful life,' compete with the ideology of neoliberalism. The socialist ideology of equitable distribution of wealth contradicts the neoliberal notion of individual property rights as sacrosanct. The governance thus becomes a confusion of global ideologies competing within the continuing Indian traditions that contradict both.

The retailers unions' singular reliance on petitioning the government for mobilizing change is, in fact, the delegation of their functions promised to its constituents to an agency they are protesting against. The belief in the government's ability is a consequence of the movement's inability to propose an alternate discourse that is inclusive of its particularities. The hypocrisy of petition-mode of protest becomes exposed in the retailers' narratives, which accuse the power structures of colluding with the conglomerates in the policy-making.

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The tradition and modernity.

In spite of the global influences of modernity and resistance against it, the traditional elites have continued to maintain their positions of power in governance and economy. The millennia of colonization by the Mughals and then British, four decades of socialism in the post-independence era, and the last decade of neoliberal interventions have not dented the traditional caste elites' interaction with the power structures. They have continued their caste-based ideological control over the rules of social, political, and economic interactions and mobility.

The caste identity, of all the particularities, is the most manifest in regulating the structure of Hindu society. In fact, the caste designation is in most situations the basis of other particularities. A system that Weber (1989) calls an "enchanted garden" (p. 183). It is a built-in order of caste hierarchy, understood as a meaningful, value-filled order that determines the proper function of things and how people ought to live their life (India, 1950).

The notion of mass resistance is a modern conception, a radically different reality from the caste system, a shift, that Weber (1989) believes, creates the "disenchantment of the world" (p. 158). A successful resistance movement is dependent on the cohesion within. It is reliant upon its constituent's ability to set aside their belief in the inherent meaningfulness of things, such as caste, class, or trade in order to look at the world as vast aggregate of individual entities.

The *Vedic* Hindus believed that there is a built-in order of nature based on the caste that determines what things should be like and how people should live. The caste is predetermined by deeds in past lives and manifested by birth in present life. Only within the hierarchy of caste can anything have significance and meaning.

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A summation

The irony (Kierkegaard, 1989) in Hinduism lies in its attempt to encompass the entire world, but the seeds of impossibility of doing this lay within itself, and this is connected with the other, its view of what it actually calls the world, because everything that hitherto had asserted itself in the world and continued to do so was placed in relations to presumably single truth based on the caste. And, therefore to the upper castes it is a validation of their opinions of their own greatness. The irony is embedded in the *Vedic* order that is supposed to instill harmony and welfare for everybody, a function that is now limited to preservation of the 'order of the things'.

The nature of this irony handicaps the resistance movement in reconciling the differences between different worldviews – a predetermined order of social hierarchy in the caste system versus the individual as objects in causal order determining the order in resistance.

The movement from particularity to universality entails a 'translation' from the concrete to the abstract. Since violence attaches to abstraction, a tension always exists between particularity and universality in politics. This can be viewed either as a creative tension or, more often, as a destructive and immobilizing force in which inflexible mediating institutions claim rights over individuals and communities in the name of some universal principle (Harvey, 2000).

The particularities that Harvey mentions can find a universalistic and unified expression, if, perhaps only if, the common cause – the movement – can overcome the ironies within; if the dynamics that attempt to unify the disparate elements can manufacture

an efficacious alternative to the caste-based expressions; and if the rationality in universal can overcome the attributive in particular.

In Kierkegaard's opinion, "just as scientists maintain that there is no true science without doubt, so it may be maintained with the same right that no genuinely human life is possible without irony" (1989, p. 326). He argues that the irony needs to be put under control for enabling gainful life. When irony is controlled, it also prevents the idol worship of phenomenon, of ideology – tradition or modernity; and paves the path for a discursive resolution.

Resolution – A Participatory Approach

The realities of the past can neither be abandoned nor revived per se, but have to develop according to the contextual realities, as they exist now. To resolve the ironies, Bakhtin (1981) prefers a dialogical approach, a notion that dialogue is not limited to language but also applies to our being. In fact, consciousness is in itself multiple. The presence of many voices in such a setting is not only due to the internalization on the part of the dominant but also to the cultural factors surrounding the resistance –caste and class, and the situational factors – time and place. A participatory discourse exhibits a conscious striving to assign to every particularism its place in the whole.

The dialogic approach emphasizes a participatory politics by affirming contextualism and giving priority to the interpretation of shared meanings over philosophical justification. Jacques Derrida (1998) argues that in deconstructing the metanarratives based on modern or traditional ideologies, the marginalized create new discourses and a new sense of responsibility. For this discourse to be participatory, it needs to be non-unitary. A true participation can be made possible only by focusing on incorporating the abstractions and

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ironies in the discourse, rather than glossing over them. The non-unitary nature of discourse ethic is variously interpreted in Bakhtin's (1981) "heteroglossia," Foucault's (1985) "genealogy of ethics," Freire's (1972) " conscientization," but each argues for a theory of ethics that is more discursive than what is entailed in the modern universal morality.

Schrag (1989) explains this non-unitary discursive ethics as transversality - "a refiguration of universality (p. 170)", which amounts to the idea that "the universal is transmuted into the transversal". His notion of "transversal logos of communication (p. 170)" is a communication across differences that acknowledges "the integrity of particularity and the play of diversity (p. 154)". The transversality in discourse can create a passage between modernity and tradition, between unity and difference, between the over-determination and under-determination of reason, between integrity and diversity, between person and social being, and between theory and practice. A participatory action based on conciliation between modernity and tradition, needs to address the notion of discourse ethics as not unitary, but as a way to secure unity in difference and difference in unity.

In voicing their dissent, retailers' narratives frequently draw upon local knowledge, cultural practices, and vernacular languages-songs, poems, stories, myths, metaphors and symbols that are used to inform and inspire collective action. However, these ordinary narratives are not reflected in the "unitary" discoursed that emerges from the unions' deliberations in town hall and public meetings. Dialogic approach can facilitate a confluence of the particular cultural, economic, and political milieu from which a movement emerges - its place of performance. To achieve transversality the union activists need to take the ordinary narratives into account, and contextualize it as a shared understanding of abstractions and realities. A dialogical understanding, thus created, can influence the

character and form that a movement takes, evoking a community's sense of place and history.

The relationship between history and resistance narrative is linked to a threefold mimesis (Ricoeur, 1992). It entails the past of the world as it exists - a world already prefigured, and the world of everyday action characterized by the dialectics of tradition and modernity. Ricoeur (1992) argues that, the present here and circumstances now can ultimately lead to the world reconfigured where the mediating function is served by the narratives that reflect upon resistance with the aim of encompassing them in present totalities.

The promise of participatory resistance is dependent upon its constituents' ability and the institutional flexibility to adjust to the need of sameness through the negotiation of selfhood. The resolution, however, is reliant on the adjustment of self, situated in 'space and time,' and the reconfiguration of ironies in practice (Kierkegaard, 1989). The retailers' ordinary narratives are conditioned by the awareness of similarity and self among its constituents. Bakhtin (1981) argues that the expression of sameness – understanding the other - is determined by the self, which changes over time. The dialectics of self is realized in the mediation of two orders of permanence – the past and present. The retailers' ordinary narratives reflect this selfhood, which allows them to change and adapt to different situations depending on the circumstances of sameness. The stories of the migrant retailers, who have adapted to the conditions over time, illustrate a pragmatic understanding of their realities. The unitary discourse in the union rhetoric, however, was not reflective of this. It was shorn of all the particularities in hopes of achieving a united-front.

Militant particularisms are reliant on the idea of sameness for their culmination into a more universal resistance. However, the assumption of sameness, as is seen in activities of

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the retailers' unions, cannot be construed as a participatory discourse. The sameness has to emerge from the social, economic, and political ironies that circumscribe the selfhood, which can, in turn, become a facilitator in fight against the metanarrative.

In retailers' protests against chain retailing, 'public discourse' was the primary activity for resistance in *Aminabad.* The unions' claim of 'public discourse' through speeches, posters, newsletters, stickers, banners, billboards, rallies, and strikes, was generally challenged by the retailers as non-representative. In their narratives the retailers of all kind derided the unions idea of united agenda. In *Aminabad,* the discourse between various factions was limited to dialogues between – the trade-specific unions, traders' unions and government, street vendors and squatters on one side and the shopkeepers on the other, etc. The analysis reveals that the ideology-based discourses and power relations were not transcended despite the regular incorporation of deliberative discourse practices of public and town hall style meetings at union offices.

The link necessary to forge a participatory action out of disparate interests, non-inclusive discourse practices, and vast differences in the socio-economic realities of different kind of retailers was missing. The resistance narratives among different kind of retailers reflected the similarities in their plight against chain retailing, but the similarity was circumscribed by the socio-economic disparities among them, which made a collective discourse impossible.

The analysis of retailers' resistance movement revealed that regardless of presence of deliberative features (public and town hall meetings) and a collaborative network of trade-specific unions, the problems of empowerment and diversity can persist. The features of deliberations adopted by the unions are inconsistent owing to its centralized nature of

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representation and lack of civic engagement in policy formulation. It should be recognized that essential to formulating and implementing resistance against chain retailing is the cultivation of common discourses and action frames across the union network, ideological divides, and policy arenas. The common discourses and actions should emerge from the ordinary retailers' narratives, which can further serve as template for the broader discourse about resistance.

The progression of movement needs to proceed not from concrete to abstract, but from abstract to concrete. The unions are more focused on the abstract enemy – chain retailing, while the concrete differences among its constituents are overlooked. It is not just the outside forces that are preventing a collective action by the small retailers. It's, also, not the lack of powerful resistance narratives or the need for change in small retailers' conditions that's thwarting the resistance. The unresolved ideological, social, and economic differences within have thwarted a meaningful union-led resistance. A participatory action requires resolution of these ironies, not glossing over the particularities to realize immediate concrete. A dialogic-understanding - the conciliation of ironies, is prerequisite to participatory communication – the conciliation between man and others.

The disposition of facilitators in resistance, however, must be kept in account while theorizing participatory action. The theory of participation only provides a framework; the sites of real action are the settings where abstract ironies and particularities circumscribe seemingly concrete actions. The ironies and particularities that exist in a society also beset the facilitators and activists. Hence, for an action to be participatory, it is paramount that its facilitators resolve their own particularities, explore their own positionality in relation to people and place, and create a dialogic understanding with various constituents in the setting.

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Only then, a participatory action can be in the realm of possibility.

Section III: Final Thoughts on Research Study and Recommendations

Problems encountered while conducting the research included: (a) approaching the women in the retailing sector, (b) locating literature on the resistance activity by the street vendors, squatters, and small retailers, (c) locating literature within the past 5 year period having to instead rely on literature dominant in the mid-to late 1990s, (d) locating literature on the ways in which specifically focuses on women retail workers, and (e) locating research which is qualitative rather than quantitative. This researcher removed most of the obstacles to research and successfully finalized the study, however, the inability of the researcher to interview women retailers and the related issued are discussed below.

The Absence of Women

In spite of the tales of male ethnographers' nightmares in interviewing women in the informal sector, I had attempted to locate and make contacts with women retail workers in *Aminabad.* My experiences were not very different from other ethnographers. It wasn't that there weren't any women. In fact, among the squatters and street vendors, the women are quite visible. The men – a husband, father, son, brother, or cousin, however, almost always accompanied them. Every attempt on my part to approach a woman vendor ended in talking with the accompanying males. The local norms pertaining to social interactions with women also prevented me from approaching them directly without "permission" from their husband or father.

Most of the shopkeepers here are upper caste Hindus and the prevailing taboos and customs excluded their women from the market place. Only in very few instances, I came across a shop, where a woman regularly helped in shop-keeping activities in *Aminabad.* Mr. Kanti Desai's wife usually accompanied him to his bookstore. She helped him with shelving

and book keeping at the shop. The elderly couple lived in an old residential complex, few blocks from their shop. She, however, never participated in any discussions, just nodded or smiled when Mr. Desai talked.

At one other shop, Mr. Arora's pharmacy, his young wife shared back room duties with him but would rarely come outside for any sort of customer interaction. She, like him, had a degree in pharmacy and was intrinsic to the functioning of his business. On being asked about her limited role, he admitted the "ridiculousness of situation," and called the "market customs and the oddity of her presence in the male marketplace" responsible for this.

The women here were invisible, or unapproachable to an outsider to have a direct conversation or interview in any meaningful way. Where the presence was relevant to retailing, the husbands provided an account of their wives' limited backroom experiences. This was far from a sincere expression of women's experiences, and issues. These indirect discourses reified women's traditional role and position in society and were contextualized to men's understanding of social and market realities.

Suggestions for Future Research

To understand the efficacy of the resistance discourse this study employed an ethnographic approach. It attempted to comprehend and conceptualize a resistance movement in action by examining the narratives of its constituents in their natural setting – their shops, marketplace, and venues of protest. An objective was to explore the participation level of the retailers in the decision-making and their ability to translate the local protests into a larger resistance discourse.

Their narratives revealed many ironies and particularities that were preventing the professed goal of "collective action." The resistance narratives were powerful but a unified expression was lacking. The conditions for resistance were present, but the mechanism was fractured. The "Participatory Action" approach for facilitating a productive participation among the constituents can be a way forward for future research.

John Fiske says that resistance movements are the "desire of the subordinate to exert control over the meanings of their lives." Dialogism lets the ironies that conceal this subjugation play out - revealed and accounted for. Participatory Action can actively facilitate a dialogical understanding for reforming and recreating the institutions according to the small retailers' needs and resistance discourse that reflects their collective expression.

Closing Remarks

When I went back to see Mr. Prakash before my return, he was closing his shop. As we walked through the market he spoke with his curious mixture of melancholy and realism. He said,

> We've had reform movements from the very beginning. From the earliest days we've had movements against the Hindu structures. Buddha dissented, *Mahavir* left to found *Jainism*, Guru Nanak founded *Sikh* religion, Raja Ram Mohan Roy rebelled, and the *Dalits* converted en masse to Buddhism. They all rebelled to be reduced into sects, and became as traditional and orthodox as the previous people. We've been colonized and conquered by many – but nobody has been able to destroy the Hindu society. During all those horrible invasions by the Muslims and British, the Brahmins kept on chanting prayers and practicing orthodoxy, fitting in nicely and reconfiguring the system to their own beliefs.

> It was the acceptance of strange ironies – the particularities that have survived

millennia of onslaught were not to be wished away. They were a part of the beginning of new understandings, a part of Hindu society's growth and part of its restoration. The irony must manifest itself as a phenomenon in the resistance, for it also makes clear more than meets the eye, thus preventing blind allegiance to the ideologies. Just as actuality acquires its validity

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through action, the action acquires its validity through the resolution of its particularities. How the particularities are resolved and how they are reconfigured will determine the future of marketplaces and success of resistance movements.

Appendices

Appendix A: Newsletters and Pamphlets

Figure 1: Depiction of chain retailers as merchant of death.

व्यापारियों मरने से पहले जागो! ☠

गरीबों की मौत का सौदागर है ''रिलायंस फ्रेश''

पहले सब्जी बेचने वाले होंगे तबाह, फिर किसान की बारी, सब्जी खाने वाले भी नहीं बच सकेंगे इनकी चालों से.....

प्रिय व्यापारी साथियों,

हम आपको खबरदार कर रहे हैं, चेता रहे हैं और समझा रहे हैं, ये समय हाथ पर हाथ धरके बैठने का नहीं है बल्कि हमें हमारे हिन्दुस्तान को और हमारी सामाजिक विरासत को पूँजीपतियों की षड्यंत्रकारी चालों से बचाने का है।

इसलिये जागो, उठो और एकजुट होकर संघर्ष के लिये तैयार हो जाओ वरना हमारा सब कुछ मिट जायेगा और हम फिर एक बार गुलाम हो जायेंगे, देश के बड़े घरानों के और विदेशी बहुराष्ट्रीय कम्पनियों के।

''रिलायंस फ्रेश'' जहाँ खुले वहाँ गरीब सब्जी विक्रेताओं का सब कुछ स्वाहा हो गया, खाने को रोटी नहीं है, रहने का घर भी जा रहा है और इस सबके बावजूद अपनी बात कहने पर मिली पुलिस की लाठियाँ और बर्बरता। पहले ये सब रांची में हुआ और फिर इंदौर में और अब किसी भी शहर में भी हो सकता है, कब होगा जब ''रिलायंस फ्रेश'' खुलेंगे, कब खुलेंगे, अभी पता नहीं किन्तु किसी भी दिन खुल सकते हैं। सब कुछ तैयार है। दर्जन से ज्यादा सब्जियों की दुकानें ''रिलायंस फ्रेश'' सजधज कर खुलने के लिये तैयार हैं। हमें इन्हें रोकने के लिये प्रयास करना चाहिये।

किसान सोच रहा है ''रिलायंस फ्रेश'' से हम मालामाल हो जायेंगे, उसे नहीं पता ये वैसे ही जमींदार हैं जो किसान की पीठ पर कोड़े मारकर उसके खून पसीने से पैदा होने वाली फसल काटने आया करते थे। किसान यदि इनके कहने पर नहीं आया तो ये अपनी पूँजी के जोर से उन्हें भी तबाह कर देंगे अर्थात यदि इनके मुँह माँगे दाम पर किसान ने अपनी सब्जी इन्हें न बेची तो ये किसी और प्रान्त अथवा देश से सब्जी लाकर उसे मुफ्त बिकवा देंगे और क्यों नहीं कर सकते आखिर पूँजीपति जो ठहरे। जब बाहर की सब्जी दस रुपये पंसेरी बिकेगी तो क्षेत्रीय किसान भी उसी भाव में बेचने को मजबूर होगा और यही से शुरू हो जायेगी किसान की तबाही। जब किसान को खाने के लाले पड़ेंगे तो उनकी जमीने हथियाने में भी यह बड़े—बड़े मगरमच्छ पीछे नहीं हटेंगे।

आपको याद है न लिप्टन ने चाय का प्रचार करने के लिये गाँव—गाँव फ्री चाय बँटवाई थी। न पीने वालों को मुफ्त में बार—बार पिलाई थी अब जब हम अपने देश का मट्ठा पीना भूल गये तो एक घूँट चाय तीन रुपये में भी पीनी पड़ रही है। आज हम चाय के गुलाम हो गये हैं। क्या आपको याद है लीवर ने भी डालडा का चस्का पहले मुफ्त बाँट कर लगाया था। कॉरपोरेट जगत द्वारा सस्ते का सब्जबाग दिखाकर आपको लूटने की तैयारी की जा रही है।

सब्जी खाने वाले बड़े प्रसन्न है, उन्हें लग रहा है ''रिलायंस फ्रेश'', चमचमाता शोरूम, ठंडी हवा, बेहतर सब्जी, सब कुछ मुफ्त में मिलेगा, बड़े मुगालते में हैं हमारे उपभोक्ता उन्हें यह नहीं मालूम कि यह तब तक है जब तक आपके घर, चौराहों, हाट बाजारों और सब्जी मण्डियों में सब्जी बेचने वाले हैं, जिस दिन ये सब मिट जायेंगे। उस दिन यही ''रिलायंस फ्रेश'' आपको अम्मा—दादी याद दिला देगा। सब्जी ऐसी कीमत पर मिलेगी कि आपके सारे महीने का बजट एक हफ्ते में ही स्वाहा हो जायेगा। फिर आप भी सब्जी विक्रेताओं की तरह पटरी पर आ जायेंगे। ये बातें आपको सपना लगती होंगी किन्तु दुनिया को प्रगति के सब्जबाग दिखाने वाला अमेरिका इन्हीं हालातों से गुजर रहा है। आपको भूलना नहीं चाहिये की हिन्दुस्तानी को चाय, काफी एवं शीतल ठंडा पेय (कोका—कोला, पेप्सी आदि) पिलाने की आदत फिरंगियों ने कैसे डाली है। आज हम इन सबके ऐसे आदी हो गये हैं कि महीने के बजट का 25 प्रतिशत हिस्सा इस पर ही खर्च हो जाता है।

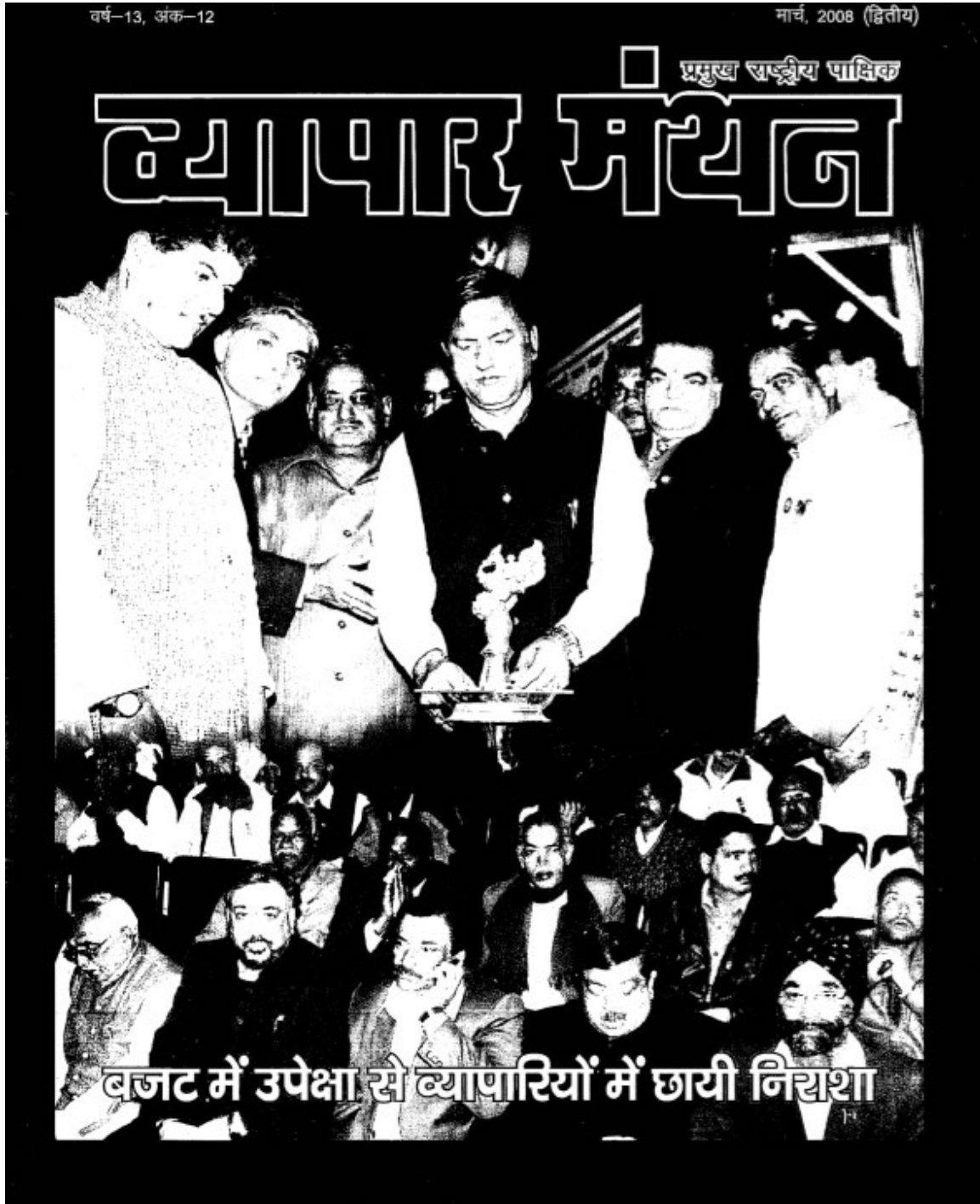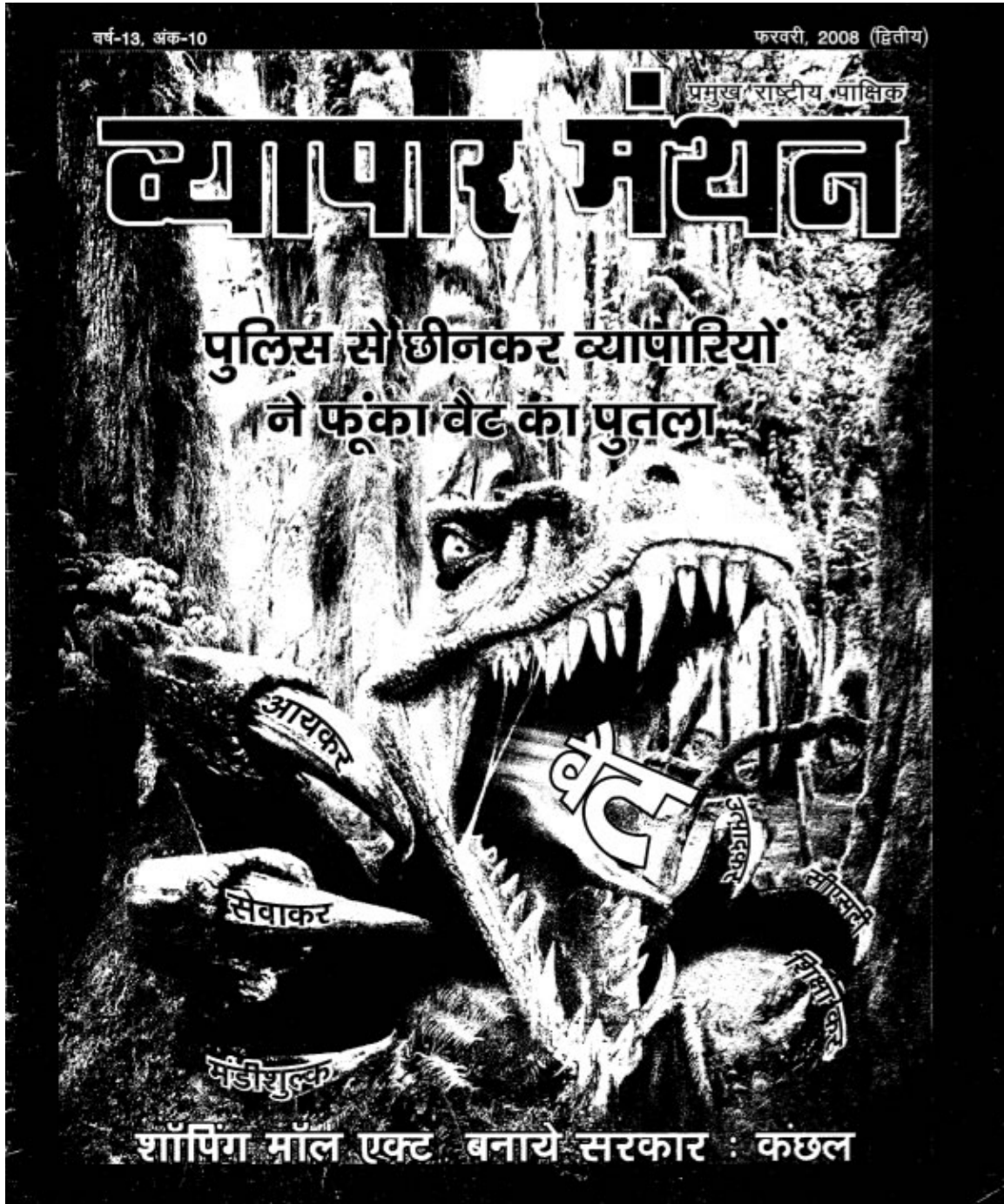Figure 2: Union leaders at an inauguration ceremony.

Figure 3: Chain retailer depicted as tyrannosaurus.

Figure 4: The Aminabad Chauraha

Figure 5: Squatters Corner at the Chauraha

Figure 6: The Aminabad Park

Figure 7: Entrance to Kaiserbagh Vegetable Market

Figure 8: *Garbarjhala* Market

Figure 9: View from Mr. Prakash's Bookstore

Figure 10: Guatam Buddha Road
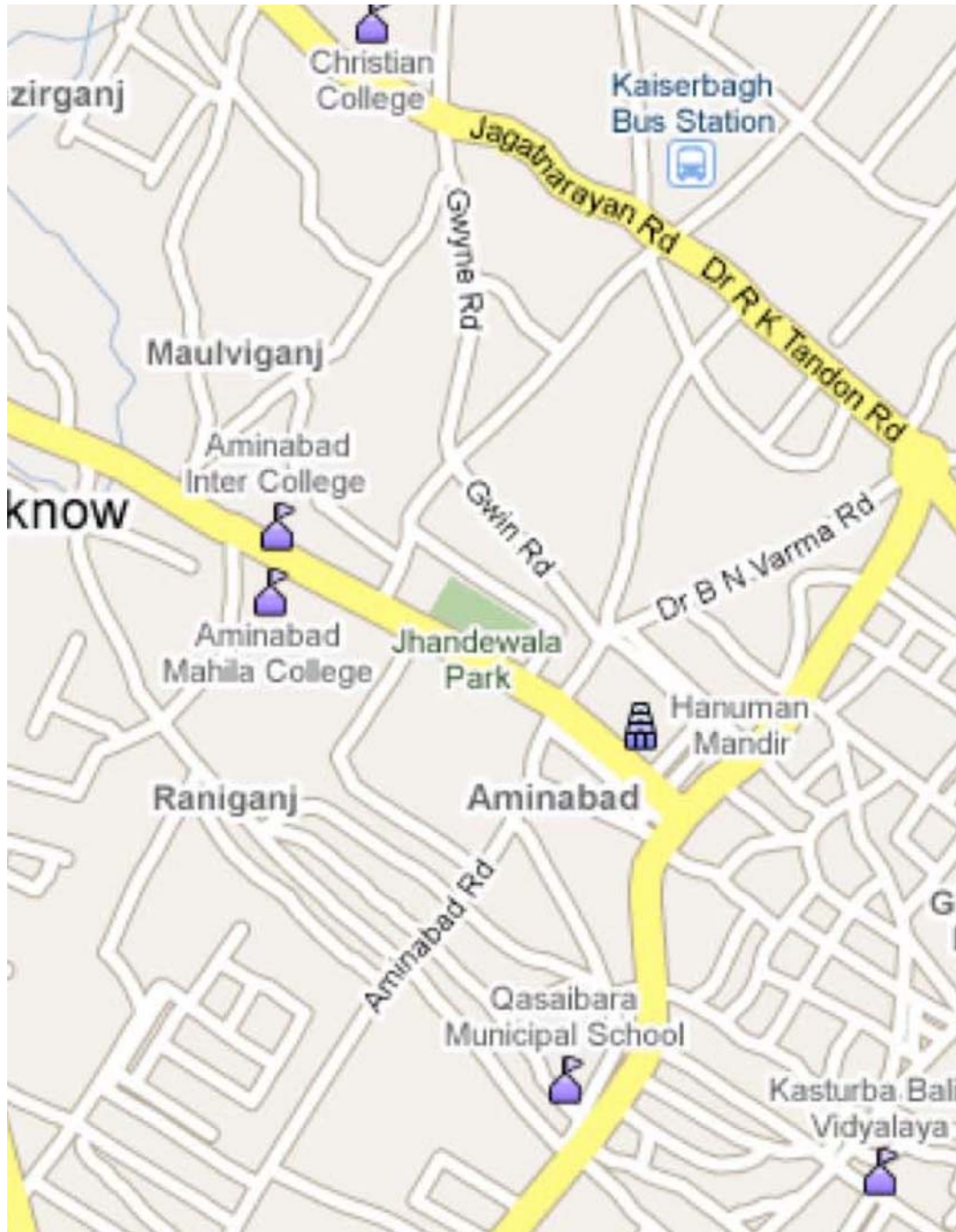
Figure 11: *Chikan* Market

Figure 12: The Old Cimena Hall

Figure 13: Aminabad Road

Figure 14: Google Map of Aminabad Market

(Google, 2009)

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2004 Best Faculty Paper, awarded by Association for Education in Journalism and Mass
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