



Mumbai Rap – A New Sense of the Sacred

Jayanti Datta

Associate Professor of English Literature, Sivanath Sastri College, Kolkata

The author was educated at Loreto House, Middleton Row, Kolkata, Presidency College, and Calcutta University. Her areas of interest are Creative Writing and Translation. Her novel *Yearning* was published by Writers' Workshop and nominated by the publishers for the Commonwealth Prize for first time authors. It was accepted by the Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation for distribution to 120 libraries across India. Her book of short stories *Churning* was published by Leadstart Publications, Mumbai. Her translation of Sahitya Academy winner Bani Basu's Bengali novel into English, *The Enemy Within* was published by Orient Longman. She has also edited a book on the multiculturalism in Shakespeare, published by Avenel and funded by the UGC. Her most recent publication in 2019 is her second novel *Until the Rains Come*, published by Avenel, Kolkata. She has also been working on Rap music in India, for the last one year.

Abstract

A recent phenomenon that has emerged in the urban spaces of India is the rising popularity of Rap music. There is a need for investigating how Rap, with its origins in the inner cities of America has become meaningful in different situations for very different people. This paper wishes to concentrate on Rap music in Mumbai, how it has helped people in the streets, gullies, slums and chawls to forge identity through everyday expressivity, which takes in various facets of their lived urban experience, such as space crunch, "development" plans overlooking the needs of those who have fallen behind in the rat race, finding solace in drugs, harassment by the police, and the overarching need to assert one's dignity in the urban concrete jungle. This is a new kind of folk music that also deals with changing cultural values under the impact of the ruthless application of market principles and the erosion of authenticity in social life. Commercialization and corporatization has affected almost every site in urban India, including music, and there is a wide spectrum of rappers, some of whom have taken up the new ethos as their credo, and some who have resisted it with all their might, preferring to carve out a different definition of modernity. Rapid urbanization has also led to a greater dissemination of knowledge and awareness on troubled issues such as the rejection of caste and religious distinctions, the rejection of patriarchal values, the uprooting of indigenous tribes and environmental degradation (such as the Aarey forest agitation in Maharashtra), which in turn has given rise to a new cultural politics reflected in Rap. Imagined communities, each with their own visions, are replacing the sense of the sacred and the collective. Ethnic revivals, fundamentalism, racism, can all be seen as defensive reactions to Globalization. They have risen from a desire to defend and preserve valued ways of life. Rap, however, is a very different and innovative kind of urban folk form that prefers to rise like a phoenix above ossified traditions and to make continuous creative interventions in the present moment, in the ever evolving and contingent urban reality.

Keywords

urban folk, imagined communities, everyday expressivity, new identity, cultural politics

If we had to trace the origins of Rap music in America it would go all the way back to African oral traditions. Travelling “griots” would move from village to village spreading news of their daily lives, of their dreams to other tribes outside of their immediate neighbourhoods. Hip hop developed from a combination of traditionally African American forms of music – including Jazz, Soul, Gospel and Reggae. It was created by working class African –Americans who took advantage of vinyl records and turntables to invent a new form of music that both expressed and shaped the culture of black New York City youth in the 1970s. (Blanchard, Becky). Globalization has opened up a rich avenue of cultural encounters with the other. Music has a quality of transgressing limits which leads to critical assimilation and starting from the 1990s, Mumbai (as well as other cities of India) has spawned a kind of Rap that is original and an urgent response to its own particular urban reality. Rap is a kind of urban folklore, which is being used to create and define the identity of an emerging community to itself as well as to others. In many cases in the past, music has given rise to a group identity, may be even a sub culture that did not exist before the music. For example, Flamenco is a strong sense of identity for the Romani in Spain (Blanchard, Becky). Identity, in part, is something we can choose. I would like to divide this article into three sections, each one dealing with a particular aspect of Rap music in Mumbai.

Everyday Expressivity: With the spread of literacy and printing, folk tales were thought to be converted into fairy tales ideologically appropriated by the dominant classes. According to Gramsci, folktales “contain the ‘fossilised’ remains of past conceptions of the world, along with the potentials for innovation in the generative process of culture”. However, folklore need not be exclusively identified with the peasant sectors of society. Urban Folklore can play an active role, intervening positively and critically in the current flow of life. “When folkloric performance introduces innovation, it does so in relation to those pieties constituting what is human possible upto that moment and then transgresses them, contesting for and forming a new piety” (Gencarella).

In Dharavi, issues of religion and caste and even patriarchy seem to be less important than the issues thrown up by the everyday struggle for survival within the context of the congested and challenging urban spaces they live in. What comes to the forefront now is attention to everyday experience where such fictions are rehearsed and ratified continuously - “Everydayness is released from routinisation and banality, and a new art form arises that is characterized by naturalness, practicalness, inconsistency, accessibility – all contributing to its ad hoc quality. Folklore, in its new form addresses the everyday life of piety.” (Gencarella). According to A list a.k.a Akhilesh Mishra, Rap primarily wants to tell a story, wanting to frame a certain narrative, developing a technique of storytelling. There is no singular definition of ‘folk’. Folk incorporates a number of disparate elements and it is possible to appropriate any of these tendencies to create an essentialised folk which is the danger of “Identity Politics”. The rappers of Dharavi try to keep themselves free from such appropriation and essentialisation.

Dharavi, as most people know is one of the largest slums in Asia, with a huge proliferation of small, informal businesses, in which one million people are involved with an annual turnover of one billion dollars. The Maharashtra Government wants to redevelop Dharavi, but its plan has not taken into account the fact that people not only live, but also

work in this settlement, something they will not be able to do in the new Dharavi. The National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) is protesting the Redevelopment plan for several reasons. All residents have not been properly informed about the project nor are all eligible for housing. The futures of rag pickers and vendors are at stake, which will not be included in these plans. Only a part of the project is for housing, the rest is for a commercial complex which will occupy more than half of the available land.

According to Sanjeev Sanyal, “Creating neat low income housing estates will not work unless they allow for many of the messy economic and social activities that thrive in the slums” (Chandran, Rina).

There are a number of Rap groups functioning in Dharavi, and together they call themselves Dharavi United. I met several members of the 7 Bantaiz and they talked freely on various aspects of their lives in Dharavi, in response to a questionnaire I had framed for them. There were several key themes or recurrent topics in their talk. Firstly, they did not consider themselves poor or underprivileged. They did not want to harp upon despair or deprivation. They rather wanted to assert their fighting spirit and their readiness for struggle. The 7 Bantaiz and others felt that the labouring aspect of Dharavi, where everybody is making money by hard work, and proud and joyous of their work, is not shown in the Zoya Akhtar film “Gully Boy” which generated much interest in the ordinary viewer about Rap music. Rather the seamy side of life has been romanticized in the film to show Ranveer Singh rise from it like a heroic figure. The paradigm of the single individual making it big by the dint of his resources somewhere undermines the underlying unity of the Dharavi boys.

These are certain excerpts from the songs “Wazan Hai” by MC Altaf and D’evil and “Achanak Bhayanak” by the 7 Bantaiz. The free translations from the original Hindi are my own.

MC Altaf belongs to Dharavi, while D’evil or Dhaval Parab grew up in the chawls of Dadar.

Wazan Hai

This is MC Altaf and D’evil

From the city of Bombay

What! Devil who? He’s the number one bloke...

There’s shit in his words, but he does what he likes.

From loafer to joker, he can be just anyone

When you see my bad side, all you can do is just run.

You can get hit for it

Man you’re a sham, but your ribs they’re for real

Your ribs can get hit for it

I can mould and I can break

Join my knees to my neck

And twist my torso around

I’m a known entity in these parts

No goddamned thing is beyond me

No turning behind

Got my feet on the ground

You got to keep changing to feel your blood rise.
Listen, there's dozens like you out there
Listen to my words
There's weight to my words
Yeah, weight to my words
I got ahead in the race
When I wrote of the streets
Got my pen and got the world
For me, they're the same
I'm living my life in my own different way
Want to listen to the truth now not bearing no more filth

Crazed with greed the world runs on
I don't care a fuck for it
My beat's turned on.
Hi, this is Altaf now
Hey, I want no violence
Hey, I want peace
We write songs, is that a crime?
My people are with me at any given time
My weight's in my art
And I fight with my art.
In the fight you're my brother
And you're my brother as well
If you're with me in this
All the colours will mix
There's those who think only of themselves
They're the fake ones eating on their own
The day's going to come
When it will belong to all
Can't you feel it?
Can't you be fair?
Has the world been bartered in the market of despair?
Has the world been bartered in the market of false faith?
Hey, listen to my words
There's weight in it, weight in it
There's weight to my words
Weight in it, weight in it.

And now, a very small excerpt from "Achanak Bhayanak" by the 7 Bantaiz: -

Sudden and colossal we've entered the fray
We work, we're together, listen, we're here to stay
..... if I fall, I'll rise
Won't cheat any fella
One purpose in my mind, never think ever smaller
What's there you ask, it's the Saat Bantaiz!

From where? We're from there
 Where there's danger, we're from there
 From the guts of Mumbai
 From its 17th part, from its 17th heart we're from there, we're from there.
 Fuck people who see only love and affection
 If the enemy's in sight, we'll go for intimidation
 Cause we'll never give up
 We don't know defeat
 Never bow low keep walking the street....

The emphasis, unfailingly, is on self –worth and dignity, it is on the creation of a new identity. MC Altaf a.k.a. Altaf Sheikh of Enemiez (part of Dharavi United) is a first year B. Com student. His parents did not support him, but he knows that Rap is a kind of mission for him. Even while he feels “shanti” while doing Namaaz, he is ready to perform at a Ganapati Mandal. He believes in no barriers, he is a learner, a seeker. [Bambaata of The Zulu Nation called the fifth element of Hip-hop, knowledge – knowledge of self. Bambaata redesigned the Hip hop party scene in America as “edutainment”, a mix of fun and socially conscious music and discourse – “one of the most beautiful and appealing aspects of the lessons is that they are never complete. They can always, at any time, by any member, be added to Hip – Hop at its best is about creativity that can happen within a specific moment” (Gosa, Travis). Dharavi Rap is very different from what is known as “Gangsta Rap” in America. Ashwini Mishra a.k.a. A list says that Rap, even in Mumbai, cannot be segmented into neat categories. The same artist can write about partying, boozing, women as well as about the need for revolution, for transformation of social inequality. The artist can be self –indulgent or self-destructive in one song, and revolutionary in the next. It is all a part of his brutal honesty. Tupac Shakur, who has been cited as an influence by many Mumbai rappers, is an example of this. However, the rappers that I interviewed in Dharavi, even while admiring Tupac, were mostly of the opinion, that it was a part of their mission to educate and inspire the youngsters of the slums. Abhishek Kurme a.k.a. A Stan (7 Bantaiz) says: “We are rapping to teach people the state of politics in this country. We are rapping to teach the young boys of our hood. Many wanted to leave Dharavi and go because people called us Kachda. Still there are boys who indulge in the thug life, in humpateli, the unnecessary brag. My friend got implicated in a false murder charge by the cops during a Ganapati Visarjan melee. But things are gradually changing now, young girls and boys are no longer trying to hide the place of their origin, they are proud now, proud that they belong to Dharavi. I believe we did this, all of us rappers, we created it. We are creating itihās” (Personal communication).

Life, for all these boys, is over flowing with “masti” and the hip hop way of being and attitude helps to sustain and channelize this zestful force, it helps to translate “masti” into art, it gives a sense of life purpose and mission. Aditya a.k.a. Crackpot (7 Bantaiz): - “Fifty Cent, Tupac, Notorious, B.I.G, Kendrick Lamar. They are all fighting for black people, but cops were calling them gangsters. That inspired me. What is happening in India? Rapes, Human trafficking, Dowry. You have to be in a position to be heard. We are rapping to teach the people. Half want to leave Dharavi and go. Half want to stay here. Now everyone is proud because of Rap at least!” One of the earliest Rap groups in Dharavi

is Dopeadelicz. Karan Amin, the manager of Dopeadelicz, talks about how the Rap crew was formed in the lanes of Dharavi. It is the brainchild of Tony Sebastian a.k.a Stony Psycho. The friends used to hang around the railway quarters, and a place where a Banyan tree stands which was nicknamed the Dope compound. They would chill on the train tracks between Sion and Matunga railway stations, and also near a market place, which at night, turns into a “chill zone” when the vendors are not around, and the kids take over the streets on BMX bikes and skateboards. (Amin, Karan)

Stony Psyko grew up in a small two-room house in the Matunga Labour Camp. His father is a factory worker who slaves 18 hours a day to make ends meet. Psycho began smoking pot after failing his school leaving exams. Pot and Rap music became a refuge for the group. Dopeadelicz gained viral fame after the release of the track “Aai shapath saheb me navtho”, which narrates the story about how psyko got nabbed by the cops while smoking pot in public, how he managed to convince them through Rap, into letting him go. The song gives a long list of crimes that the police should be turning their attention to rather than pouncing upon some college drop outs for smoking a little pot. Dopeadelicz has an ongoing battle running to legalize “Marijuana”. It is their way of attacking unrealistic academic expectations, their way of refusing to participate in a rat race clearly tilted against them, a way of challenging a system that overlooks the social and economic inequalities they have to face on a daily basis (Chakraborty, Riddhi).

The rappers of Dharavi guard their precious identity from those who try to encroach upon it and appropriate it, and these include big record labels and political parties. In the song “Bachan”, the 7 Bantaiz make a sarcastic commentary on the greed of people who look at Hip hop as a source of monetary exploitation. The rappers of Dharavi assert that they will create their music under their own independent label. However, even while resisting appropriation by multi nationals, they are not averse to endorsing certain brands, such as Urban Monkey or the online clothing portal Myntra. These endorsements will simultaneously contribute significantly to their financial requirements as well as help visibility, wide-spread propagation of a particular life-style among the youth. Distinct from commercial rappers like Badshah, the underground artists of Dharavi walk a tight rope, balancing easy and instant popularity and financial security concerns with a deeper commitment to the development of an authentic voice that might lead to transformation in society. These are excerpts from “Straight outta streets” released by Myntra:

“Graffiti has become a big part of Hip hop because at the end of the day they both are about breaking rules. And so is street wear. When I customize a pair of vans or draw on an airmax or just take a T-shirt and spray or it, what I’m doing is that I’m making sure that the person who wears my art work is not going to be a clone of someone else”.

‘Earlier fashion used to exist only in Malls, show rooms and fashion ramps. But now our streets are the ramps and we, the Hip hop artists are the models. You don’t need to be a rapper or a graff writer to rock the Hip hop style, because rapping and graffiti is something you do. “Street” is something you live” (Straight outta streets).

This vibrant everyday expressivity becomes a kind of new sacred, a new piety to replace restrictive life styles governed by caste, religion or patriarchy.

Globalisation and middle class angst: Economic Globalisation has led to the rise of transnational corporations which continually use new strategies to ensure that consumerism is not satiated. Following the crisis in Capitalism in the 1970s, mass production of goods gave way to rapidly changing product lines, using a smaller workforce, and reliant, to a great extent upon information technology. Economic and cultural globalisations are linked, as consumerism involves the consumption of symbols and life styles. The big multinationals try to control this flow of information across the globe by controlling the State and Media. George Ritzer (1996), a postmodern sociologist created the concept of Macdonaldisation which is the process by which the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society and the world. This domination involves rationalization of the fast food industry where the process involved became more efficient, calculable, predictable and controllable. This is applied to a variety of sites including universities, creating a society that is, to a large extent routinized and more accessible to the flourishing of huge corporations. In this entire transformation ‘public opinion’ “shifts from rational consensus emerging from debate, discussion and reflection to the manufactured opinion of polls or media experts. Citizen – consumers ingest and absorb passively entertainment and information” (Reddy, Sudhakar). Distinct from the slums of Dharavi or Khar are a group of rappers who are more educated and secure, financially. These include Ankur Johar a.k.a. Encore, Trap Poju and MC Dee. They raise their voices against these phenomena, which Habermas terms the “refeudalisation” of the public sphere.

Encore’s grandparents were refugees from Punjab. His middle class life was neither excessively comfortable nor uncomfortable, but he had a good education. He had the courage to leave a well-paying job and commit himself to music. Before taking the plunge, he was consumed by a feeling of uselessness. He resisted being a puppet of a “bloody system”. He began by joining a small online community on Orkut nearly ten years back (around 2009). It was a group called ‘Insignia Rap Combat’ which included D’evil, Divine and Trap Poju, who started engaging in text battles, as to who wrote better lyrics, and then started meeting in person to form a kind of community.

“Is pinjre jaise building mein
Hum kas ke baithe
Life meri bandh hai
Kaise main jaoon
Sapnon ko milne
Ye khidkhi bhi kaisi.
Jab raaste na dikhe
Ye kahaaniyan sirf
Bollywood script mein”.

This is the kind of cage that Encore is trying to break free from, he blames the incomplete and one-sided information that children receive from parents in text books. You reach home, put the T.V. on, and there’s mom shouting at you to do the homework. The child is guided along an accepted track. The average Indian parent is not asking the child what he actually wants. What does he yearn for, in the sunlight, in the drops of sweat? Encore is a musician who does not come from the lower strata of society, but shares the desire for raw

passion with 7 Bantaiz or Dopeadelicz. Like them, Encore too feels that “Gully Boy” is not representative. Hip hop culture cannot be a trend, it takes time, it has to be interiorized. The combination of swag, reckless defiance and brutal honesty cannot be a fashion to be adopted. You hip hop for something and share it though your energy, and that same energy is sustained in whatever you do, whether you work or write or party. Encore says that even in the club song he wrote for Tinder, there is politics and references to Dalits and Muslims! He wants to break down barriers and foster a respect for “otherness”. He wants the Hip hop attitude to percolate in society, especially among the youth. He is happy that there are young people who listen to his albums on the way to college and back. He has actively contributed to a college Talent network called ATKT.in which is India’s first nation-wide community for, by, and of culturally talented youth. He has hosted events and paid artists for shows. He says that Rap is a culture he has adopted, a culture that he is keen on spreading, a culture that fills up the void society is creating in him, with significance. He is facing the eternal conflict of rappers, how to promote the song, the visibility, using the very media he critiques, and yet refusing to dilute the message. During the election campaign of 2014, he says he took up every issue posited by it and gave counter –arguments in song after song, he refused to be intimidated by fear.

Vineet Nair a.k.a. Poetic Justice a.k.a Trap Poju is a friend of Encore’s, he belongs to the same community of rappers, but as an artist these is a subtle shift in perspective.

Trap Poju has a Post Graduate Diploma in Advertising and Brand Communication. He is originally from Kerala, he stayed in the Middle East for some time. Trap Poju does not want to make water tight distinctions between commercial and underground Rap, nor is he virulently against big labels. He says he will approach them cautiously, but he has no pre-conceived prejudice against them. His emphasis seems to be less on defiance, and more on the lyrical content of a song. These are excerpts from his song “Metanoia”:

I try to dive into my efforts
 Find just what makes me special
 There’s a pulse inside my mental
 In the flesh I’m essential
 And the rain is just the start
 The lightning rides a thunderbolt
 The party never stops
 As I watch all of them come and go
 I’ve seen you fall to drugs
 I’ve seen you misinterpret
 You’ve seen me fall in love
 When the meaning isn’t perfect
 I’ve been pushed and I’ve been shoved
 I’ve been judged just like the masses
 Plus, they thought they’d bring me down
 Watched as I rose up from the ashes
 I’m a phoenix, I’m a king
 Spread my wings you won’t believe it
 Fly over you’ll opinions

Most of which I disagree with
 Yeah I'm not a normal person
 You won't find me in a crowd.
 All of em try to hunt you down
 In your pursuit to earn that crown
 I hear the echoes all around
 They save me when I drown
 There's a curse over the grounds
 And I keep digging around
 But there's a blessing in the skies
 There's a message in disguise
 I hear them all the time
 Voices in the wild...

Sincerity is obviously a value in any artistic expression, but the question of authenticity is more central to certain genres such as Rap music. "Cultures are value communities, each style, genre etc. is a norm system, and each culture or subculture that groups itself around a style or genre is a value community. Each composition is a micro culture." The articulation of identity through the definition of values (of what is quality and what is not) tends to occur in different contexts of society. Three major contexts are a) The Musicians, the composer, the sound producers b) economic production (media industry, concert managers) c) The audience. Within each social context new values are articulated against the backdrop of dominating values (Volgsten, Ulrik).

These are the tensions within the genre and there is no homogeneity in the way different groups of rappers try to approach or solve these tensions. For instance, while the Dharavi rappers claim that all big music labels are rapacious, and that they will never surrender their independent claim to their music, Trap Poju is amenable to negotiation, as long as he is allowed to express the voices in the wild. Arif Chowdhury a.k.a Flying Machine of the group Beast Mode Crew does not think that there is any shame involved in wanting a piece of the pie. He feels that India is on the brink of a big economical breakthrough and he does not want to be left out on the margins. For him, hip hop is a means of expressing uniqueness or distinctiveness from the crowd. Perhaps it is necessary to make a distinction between Dharavi United and the Beast Mode Crew. While the urge for uniqueness of the latter might be a way of revolting against the mould of standardization, there is always a lurking possibility that this urge might be appropriated and integrated into the mainstream and utilized for purely commercial motives.

Rap as critical intervention: - We come, finally, to the third section of my paper which focuses on those rappers who get actively involved in current political processes, and are not afraid to take action that will create enemies. It is common knowledge that economic forces have been released which are becoming more and more deterministic, ruthlessly marginalizing the weaker sections of society and imposing dominating values upon them. As a consequence, many citizens are feeling themselves to be alienated, they feel a substantial loss of power, of an inability to intervene in the order carved out by the financial and political elite, unable to participate in any meaningful discussion on global affairs. These disaffected citizens are forming themselves into "imagined communities". It is the

post-modern “privatization of fears” that leads one to search for “communal shelters” or “imagined Communities” (Reddy, Sudhakar). Such communities might zealously protect their distinctive belief system to the point of fanaticism, leading to such phenomena as hyper nationalism or religious zealotry. The rap groups of Mumbai such as Swadesi and Bombay Lokal are also communities with a shared identity in their own right. They are trying to influence other political manifestations of “the people” with their own interventions. Ethnic revivals, fundamentalism, racism can all be seen as defensive reactions to globalization. They have risen from a desire to defend and preserve valued ways of life. Hip hop is in a category distinct from a desire to preserve the past. Rather, it rushes into the present moment to become cutting edge relevant. Hip hop artists are coalescing temporarily with various identity platforms on issues which are important to them, without becoming permanent members of that platform.

The Casteless Collective is a Gaana, Hip-hop, Rock, Rap and Folk Music ensemble. The 19-member band, put together by film director Pa Ranjith, wants to eliminate caste and religious discrimination through music. Abhishek Kurme of the Dharavi band 7 Bantaiz belongs to this group as well. He says that though there is no exterior “bawaal”, caste issues do exist as an undercurrent even in Dharavi. Seeming to speak from personal experience he says that caste differences can still lead to the splitting of couples. One of the notable compositions of the Casteless Collective is the “Jai Bhim Anthem”, which is the history of B.R. Ambedkar’s life history in Rap form. The Dalit Movement can be cited as the best example for an “imaginary community”. It has a heterogeneous caste composition fighting for the cause of egalitarianism. It primarily focuses on one issue, and once the necessary progress is made on that issue, the platform will be dissolved as the agents involved are too heterogeneous in other respects. “This dissolution is all the more inevitable since no single issue can demand the total allegiance of postmodern agents, whose diversity of interests effectively works against complete identification with any single goal, political or otherwise.” (Reddy, Sudhakar).

Swadesi is a group of young Emcees, DJs and Graffiti artists that aim to bring about change through music. “We believe that the future of our country lies in the hands of the youth empowered with the idea of ‘Swadesi’, embracing all things Indian”. There is ambiguity in the concept of “all things Indian”; ambiguity as to whether the concept is restrictive or liberating, whether it can be integrated within the narrative of Nationalism, or whether it chooses to remain outside of any dominant paradigm. Tod Fod and Mawali (the founders of this group) spent a lot of time hanging out at Aarey Colony, talking about music, about India’s history. They cite as their major influences Chandrasekhar Azad, Rajeev Dixit and Bhagat Singh. We see then a diversity of influences upon the group, some of which are contradictory to each other. It is difficult to bring Bhagat Singh, an atheist and a socialist into the same alignment as Baba Ramdev, who has capitalized upon his popularity as a spiritual guru to run several highly profitable commercial ventures.

However, Swadesi is a group highly admired by the other rappers of Mumbai because of the courage they display in taking on vested interests and in creating enemies. Through their activism, they managed to get a stay order against the cutting down of trees in the Aarey forests for the construction of a Metro Shed. This is a battle over Mumbai’s green lung. The 1300 Hectare Aarey Forest is situated in Goregaon, on the northern suburbs of

the city. It contains an entire eco system, many species of trees, birds and endangered animals.

MC Mawali: “I’ve seen crocs, deer, snakes, beautiful butterflies there and experienced so many of nature’s different colors and seasons there. I can’t tell you how blessed Mumbai is to have such a place –a forest right in the middle of the city.” (Valsan, Sanjiv).

There are 27 tribal hamlets known as padas in Aarey. The tribes are the original inhabitants of the land, and they sustain their livelihood by cultivating fruits and vegetables. One of the most vulnerable of these tribes is the Warli tribe, whose wall paintings are renowned the world over. In spite of repeated Court orders in the past, they have been denied proper water supply, healthcare and electricity, so that they are troubled enough to leave their land. The activists believe that the metro shed can easily be built on an alternative site. They fear that the metro shed is only part of a larger plan to increasingly encroach upon the forest land for commercial purposes such as the building of a 33 storey Metro Bhavan with restaurants and shops surrounding it. Over the last 5 decades, local and state authorities have clandestinely parcelled out hundreds of hectares of Aarey Colony to various development projects. The metro car shed project is the latest of these. Swadesi has collaborated with the inspiring Warli leader Prakash Bhoir to compose *The Warli Revolt* track. They say, “It’s time for the revolution to begin. Fight for the ones who don’t have a voice, fight for the ones who are being pushed out of their lands, fight for the trees, birds and leopards. Development is not destruction” (Kundu, Satvika). The track is notable for the way it merges the frantic rhythms of tribal percussion instruments with the hip hop beat to create a unique war cry. Swadesi warns – “A Massive revolution before you will stand... wake up and open your mind you fools before it’s all gone and there’s nothing left to lose”.

Conclusion: - To re-iterate all that has been said before, Rap in Mumbai is gradually constituting a new sense of the sacred. For those who are adapting it, not just as an art form, but as a life –style, a way of thinking, responding and being, Rap becomes a mission, a creator of significance, replacing older belief systems. This Rap emerges out of the streets, talks of the streets, carves out a community of people with a shared sense of identity. The ‘everyday’ replaces the special, the everyday is now a succession of charged moments challenging the banal show of routinised life. The rappers are defying and critiquing the status quo, they are providing counter images and counter symbols to confront manufactured and manipulative cultural products. They are asserting the possibility of uniqueness and unpredictability, going against the dominant paradigm that economic and cultural globalization is trying to establish. And some of the rappers are actively intervening in the political system, collaborating with other political manifestations to take on perceived enemies, making their art an instrument of hostility. To feel the ‘sacred’ is to revolt against the fake, the hypocritical in any form, the sacred becomes the cultivation of the authentic.

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