TALKING ABOUT CONSUMPTION

How an Indian Middle Class Dissociates from Middle-Class Life

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ABSTRACT

Members of the middle class in the Indian city of Baroda employ a common moral discourse on consumption, one that is shaped through the operationalization of historically rooted ideals of community, family solidarity and asceticism. These ideals are set against the experience of urban middle-class life. This discourse describes consumer culture as debased materialism, while at the same time presenting it as central to middle-class social life. This article explores the nature of the tension apparent in this contradiction, and finds that employers of this discourse accept the inescapable nature of status battles around consumption while denying it legitimacy and real significance for the constitution of their individual selves. Modern consumption is accepted, but this acceptance is morally ambivalent. People draw on collective ideological resources to describe and interpret their individual and social selves in order to individually dissociate from what they take to be an immoral society.

Key Words ◇ consumption ◇ India ◇ middle class ◇ morality

Introduction

During the 1980s, the Indian government started to change parts of its economic policy. For decades, import substitution had been an important goal around which India's planned economy was structured. But at this time the government gradually abandoned the earlier state perspective predicated on an ideal of self-reliance. State controls on production were lifted and India opened up to foreign investors, which resulted in a considerable increase in the availability of consumer goods on the Indian market. Subsequently, since the early 1990s—when liberalization policies that were initiated in the 1980s became more pronounced—the Indian middle class,

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the most important market for the new consumer goods, became the focus of considerable media attention. This typically concentrated on the middle class's potential as a market for consumer goods. In publications, this middle class is usually estimated at 100 to 350 million people, depending on the criteria employed.[1]

But the need to pay serious attention to the middle class as a social and cultural phenomenon has been acknowledged in the academy as well. Leading sociologist André Béteille, for example, has noted that members of the urban middle class accord each other status by taking into consideration distinctions of class rather than caste (1996). Recent ethnographic works describe cultural production among members of middle classes connected to individual class position (Derné, 1995; Osella and Osella, 2000; Puri, 1999). Emerging perspectives (scholarly and journalistic) take as their joint research focus the middle class, the nation and questions of identity. On the one hand, there is the debate, mostly among western-based anthropologists, about the centrality of the middle class to the imagination of the Indian nation (Fernandes, 2000; Mankekar, 1999; Rajagopal, 1999). On the other hand, there is the corresponding critique of Indian-based observers regarding the unwillingness of the middle class to take on responsibility for the development of the nation (Bidwai, 1984; Kothari, 1991; Varma, 1998).

In almost all of these works, *consumption* is seen as both significantly shaping middle-class culture and identity and mediating the relationship of the middle class to the nation and national culture and identity. And yet, there have been few ethnographic studies of how the consumption boom among the middle class is experienced and lived (but see Mankekar, 1999; Osella and Osella, 2000). Indeed, the field research I conducted in Baroda, in the western Indian state of Gujarat, during 1996–7 was not intended specifically to study consumption. I wanted to explore whether, among the middle class, there are shared perspectives on life and society that are related to and inform one's class position. But when I prompted people to discuss their lives and their perspectives on society and social and cultural change, they invariably turned to the topic of consumption as central to the experience of modern life. Accordingly, this article ethnographically addresses the experience of and discourse about consumption among the middle class in contemporary India. What do urban, middle-class Indians make of their own consumption practices and what meanings do they attach to them? How and in what ways do these practices enable self-reflection about individual selves and wider society?

The research results clarify the nature of middle-class self-seclusion from the nation that is often suggested in one debate about the Indian middle class (Bidwai, 1984; Kothari, 1991; Varma, 1998) and call into question the centrality of national identity to the experience of modernity among the Indian middle class that is foregrounded in another (see e.g. Fernandes,

2000; Mankekar, 1999; Rajagopal, 1999). In contrast to both arguments, the central point I seek to make here is that the members of the middle class understand consumption in moral terms, and that this understanding is shaped through the operationalization of ideals of sociality, set against the everyday experience of urban middle-class life. Present-day consumer culture is seen as debased materialism. It is commonly described as a condition in which people seek self-realization or self-expression through goods rather than through spiritual or social pursuits, which leads to the evaluation of individuals on the basis of their material possessions rather than other (higher) aspects of their person. This evaluation, it could be said, is a cliché, especially so in India where people can readily draw on ideals of asceticism and Gandhian principles in counterposing Orientalist categories of the 'spiritual East' against the 'materialist West' as an easy critique of the advent of modern consumer culture. However, what makes urban middle-class discourse on materialism interesting is that people present consumption as central to their own social lives yet deny it legitimacy and real significance for the constitution of their individual selves. Modern consumption is accepted, but this acceptance is morally ambivalent. In their interpretations of their lives and society, people draw on collective ideological resources, but with the purpose of individually dissociating from society which is taken as immoral.

Ethnographic Site

I do not claim that the individual perspectives presented here stand for *the* Indian middle class in part or whole; obviously, there is far too much diversity in the stratum of society that can pass for 'middle class' to support such a claim.[2] However, the people who speak here share life experiences that bring them together in meaningful ways that *are* connected to their class positions.

I conducted fieldwork for this article in Baroda, a city with a population of around 1.5 million in the state of Gujarat. In broad terms, upward mobility and a strong increase in consumption have been a common experience for a significant part of the population of Baroda and those who have migrated to it in recent years. Many have taken part in the economic development of this city, part of the so-called 'golden corridor' of Gujarat, and live far more prosperously than previously. Moving around Baroda, one comes across dozens of *societies*, recently developed housing estates, each consisting of dozens of similarly built row houses. A standard middle-class residence is made of brick and is neatly plastered; it contains two, three or more rooms, a separate kitchen with standing platform, indoor plumbing and a space outside for washing clothes and utensils. Much money is invested in home decorations and appliances. Refrigerators,

mixer-grinders, television sets, sofa sets, fans and coolers, and music systems are commonly available, and middle class families can be expected to have at least some of these items in their homes. Most also own vehicles like mopeds, scooters and motorcycles and increasingly purchase cosmetics and packaged foods. Clothing fashions have become increasingly diverse, with more and more teenagers adopting, and being allowed to wear, western fashions. Visits to restaurants, fast-food establishments, and beauty parlours are equally part of a middle-class lifestyle.

My year of fieldwork consisted of interviewing, participant observation and the study of local media. I chose a wide range of individuals with whom to work because it became apparent that members of the middle class share a social world that has been little described or analysed by social scientists, despite the prominence accorded the topic in scholarly journals and other media in India. Interlocutors are men and women between the ages of 17 and 70 and drawn from diverse caste and regional backgrounds, though all can be classified as Hindu and most as Gujarati. All are from families where one or more members have obtained a college education and white-collar job. They earn a living as bureaucrats or other state personnel, as professionals, as small and medium entrepreneurs such as shopkeepers, and as small industrialists.

Members of the middle class I interacted with also frequently share urban residential space, living, as they often do, in the same society (housing development). They consume at least in part the same mass media and consume or desire the same modern goods. And, perhaps most importantly, many of them share the 'newness' of much in their lives, having experienced a near-simultaneous surge in the current levels of prosperity, and exposure to new media and the consumer goods to which I have referred.

Given these visible changes and signs of consumption, many in the local middle class articulate the sense that they have entered a new era, with a way of life thoroughly different from that of some 20 or 30 years ago. They are not speaking simply of the experience of prosperity alone, rather consumption is also understood to have social and moral implications. In the following section, I explicate the twin responses of Baroda residents to the issue of consumption: consumption as central to middle-class life, and at the same time, consumption as tainted by moral illegitimacy.

Class and the Necessity of Consumption

Before the advent of 'this era', as people refer to it, life was 'simple'. The range of goods present in the lives of earlier generations was limited, and desires were in tune with that reality. Now, the presence of wealth and a much wider array of goods have made for a new standard in consumptive aspirations. Goods that were previously out of the reach of local people

have come to be seen as requirements to live a satisfying life. When people say that the cost of living has increased, as they often claim, they not only have in mind the steady increases in the price of daily necessities like cooking oil and food grains but also the standard of living that they now perceive to be suitable and normal. Once, while talking to my landlord Dharmesh, I brought up a duality people often mentioned to me: 'old thinking' and 'new thinking'. He explained the duality with reference to the nextdoor neighbours. The difference between 'old thinking' and 'new thinking' is apparent in the conflicts between Rakesh and Purnima, who are in their 70s, and their son, his wife and their teenage son:

> Rakesh and Purnima are of 'old thinking'. Their son Jitesh, his wife and their son are of 'new thinking', or of 'this era'. For example, concerning things bought for the house. Some things are bought that aren't really necessary. But other people have it in their house, so they should also have them, Jitesh and his wife and son will feel. Like a refrigerator. In summer, one puts ice in the water. But it's not really necessary. However, visitors notice it if you don't have it. In such a situation Rakesh would think 'in my time we didn't have it and it was all right'.[3]

In local understanding, those individuals characterized as 'old thinking'—that is, elders of the previous generation—made do with whatever they had and aspired to no more than that. Nowadays the attainment of upward economic mobility and the adjustment of one's life towards those goals are the norm. Moreover, many feel the pressure to conform to this norm. The issue is, for them, not just a matter of desiring pleasure but of needing in order to become or remain a social equal to others. But a social equal to whom and in which realm of society? Given the great disparities in disposable income that have developed *within* caste groups over recent decades (Fuller, 1996), the social equality that Dharmesh refers to is that among and between members of a class, rather than between caste members. As Dharmesh notes, middle-class status demands levels of consumption and practices that are in tune with 'the times', meaning that one must maintain the higher standard of living that upward mobility and the availability of new consumer goods have made 'normal'. And the social context in which 'the times' become important is that of the expectations and unspoken demands made by socioeconomic peers. An important reason goods like refrigerators have become 'requirements' is the fact that status competition demands such possessions. Dharmesh touches upon this sensitive point when he explains that one reason Jitesh wants to have a refrigerator is that guests 'notice' if they don't get ice in their water when they come to visit. The 'noticing' is a matter of (d)evaluation.

Moreover, in this context, the status granted by such wealth is not the same as the status that traditional patronage or patron–client relationships provide. Instead, it is the prestige among independent equals that is at issue here, rather than the status of the 'big man' in relation to his social inferiors. The nurturing of clientele can still provide one with status, but in the

understanding of the middle class the possession of modern goods themselves now provides prestige. But in whose eyes? Those others are friends, relatives and colleagues but in the context under discussion, they are most importantly one's neighbours, given that a large proportion of the middle class in Baroda lives in housing estates that cater specifically to middle-class families. Chandrakant, a man in his early 40s, has experienced considerable upward mobility. His father was an uneducated man who made a living extracting oil from peanuts and other oilseed. Seeing the educated rise in status, his father strove to educate his children so that they could attain this position as well. Now Chandrakant is an engineer working at a power station and living in one of the better middle-class housing estates in Baroda. In speaking of his own upward mobility, he notes the considerable importance of maintaining his status among those who are part of his social world for his sense of self-worth, and how he adjusts his ambitions accordingly:

> First we lived on the east side of the city. We came into this neighbourhood in 1990. This area is more posh, it gives a little status, living in this *society*. In that other neighbourhood, it is lower middle class and middle class. So you adjust to that, your growth. You compare yourself to them. If you are a little better there, you're satisfied. If you come here, you compare with others having more money. Children see how others are living, what they're having. When my son was 3, he talked about other people having a car and that we should also have one. They [children] see it all: lavish house, telephone, air conditioning, car, *scooty* [a popular scooter model]. We feel that our children should not have an inferiority complex. So as soon as we could afford a car, we bought one. With a ten-year company loan. . . . In that other area we did not have many expenses because the standard of living was not high. But the standard of living should be on a par with others. So after we came to live here, I started a side-business. Representation of companies. Two to three hours a day. The social circle is decided by income. The lower income [people] are in another part of this neighbourhood. Their circle will be different. A person in this area does not have friends in that area.

In the views of Chandrakant and others, one's consumption should be on a par with that of the neighbours. The sense of 'community' that is formed under such conditions is based in large part on the desire to prove one's worth to class fellows through conspicuous consumption. In the words of Kamlesh, a university student:

> This competition is mostly with neighbours, because they'll have these things, and these [others] will see them buying something. People in the middle class come from villages; they may have relations in the village they come from. For those people in that village, these [urban] people are too high. They don't compare themselves with them. The people in the middle class already take those [village] people for granted. With similar people they compete. In my house it is like that too. My father is a professor. Relatives are teachers, or work in a bank. We don't see them as competition.

Though associations with neighbours and colleagues may be emotionally superficial and very different from the meaningful attachments one has with relatives, people are highly attuned to gain or loss of prestige and adjust

their consumption habits to fit the requirements at hand. This may seem an obvious point but it becomes much more complex when we take into account that this form of modern society runs against local cultural ideals of sociality—of which more later—that continue to be taken seriously, no matter how far they are often removed from practice. At first sight, we see here a discussion about consumption in terms of status competition, but little cultural appropriation or evaluation. However, this is only apparent. Understandings and evaluations of consumption in the middle class in Baroda are highly moral in nature. 'You are supposed to be modern' is an idea that people often expressed during conversations. This idea is an evaluation of reality, expressing an experience of alienation. It speaks of the distance that is felt to exist between morality and the demands made on those who want to take part in the goings on of present society. But what is that morality about? Why is consumption at odds with being a good person? There are several dimensions to this matter, which I will turn to now.

Materialism

The duality I have referred to in the preceding section is evident in other evaluations of social life and individual conduct in Baroda. In characterizing a person as 'good', people often use descriptions that at the same time qualify that individual as non-modern. One of these terms is 'simple', alluded to previously, by which it is understood that such individuals organize their lives in a sober, dignified manner, live frugally and seek neither enjoyment nor status through consumption. The ideal of simplicity is often deployed in opposition to 'wasteful' practices such as going to movies, eating out and buying expensive clothes. Therefore, the qualification 'simple' is a moral one, signifying a non-engagement with a modern lifestyle that is, among other things, associated with consumption for the sake of enjoyment.

It is not the case that poverty is esteemed. The importance of wealth is beyond debate and I have not come across middle-class families that consciously abstain from consumption in order to stick to ideals of simplicity. In placing a premium on simplicity, Barodians express their loyalty to an ideal without actually adhering to this moral principle in daily life. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, or Gandhiji as he is referred to with reverence, is admired as the sublime practitioner of the ideal of simplicity. Gandhian ideals of austerity are hardly appealing to today's youth, but for many people Gandhi is an ideal figure. Even those who have no inclination whatsoever to live simply themselves regularly refer to Gandhi's simplicity as an ideal state. Indeed, Gandhiji is so much a sacred figure that he is

marginal to the actual conduct of daily life; his ideals are often seen as having no real place in the daily lives of common folk.

Those who espouse Gandhian principles and claim to live according to his precepts are subjected to popular scrutiny and even ridicule. Such ideals are seen as standing in the way of survival in the dirty world, or as impossible to emulate given humans' lowly nature. Popular expressions indicate the derisory evaluation of adherence to ideals like abstinence from material goods or sexual pleasure. Take for instance the expressions: *Naa malyu to mahaatma Gaandhi* (I couldn't get it, therefore I became Mahatma Gandhi) and *Mali to maari levi, nahi to mahaatma Gaandhi* (If you can get a woman, have sex; otherwise live like Mahatma Gandhi).

With further reference to popular discourse on consumption, the Gujarati verb *sudhaarvu* also has this dual valence. It can roughly be translated as 'to improve', or 'to move to a better condition', and is used to refer to positive aspects of modernization like the electrification of villages and the abandonment of social customs that have dubious legitimacy, like dowry or the confinement of women to the home. On the other hand, it tauntingly refers to people who engage in conspicuous consumption, especially those who have recently experienced upward mobility and are eager to express their new success through emulation of an upper class lifestyle, which includes possession of expensive modern goods, use of the English language and fashionable clothing.

In this instance, 'development' and 'reform' as positive advances in terms of broad social change and the overall economy negatively mark the exhibition of personal economic success and a new 'modern' lifestyle. Seen in this light, such terms suggest a change from a morally superior, frugal lifestyle to one oriented towards consumption. People, young and older, offered numerous stories that criticized a lifestyle of wanton consumption. There were stories about people buying items on an instalment plan rather than saving beforehand, or about people taking the money saved for retirement and buying luxury goods; or about adolescents harassing their parents to obtain a desired motorbike or other expensive items. The desire to consume expensive, modern goods is often described as a 'craze' leading to irresponsible lending and spending.

Interlocutors noted that one particularly negative aspect of the dominant role of consumption in everyday life is that it is individual wealth that earns a person respect rather than other attributes, such as cultural refinement. Comments include the following: 'Literate or illiterate, if you have money they will invite you', 'If you have money, you pass as cultured'. The point people make here is clear: never mind whether you are culturally refined or a roughneck, being rich is enough to make people attracted to you. The matter of fact recognition that 'Money is everything' is also a bitter one. These attitudes are based on the pragmatic understanding that money will not only buy one pleasure, security, bureaucrats to do 'work' such as

speeding up the processing of your files, guarantee admission to the desired college, but will also buy you social recognition. On this view, money and consumption are so essential and interchangeable in the battle for status that consumption seems to express little more than financial power.

This interpretation is borne out by the ways in which goods are hierarchically graded and esteemed because of an object's greater monetary value and not on the basis of distinctions of style, image or taste. Thus, foreign goods are deemed superior to indigenous goods, branded items are preferred over non-branded ones and expensive, exclusive brands are superior to popular brands. The obvious suggestion is that virtually everywhere so-called 'higher quality' products (imported, expensive and exclusive) are prized more than their presumably 'lower quality' counterparts. More importantly, the consumption practices described here strongly suggest that goods are as impersonal and abstract as the money they are bought with. In turn, such practices suggest that the perspective which argues that 'recontextualization' or cultural reworking or appropriation is central to contemporary consumer culture (Miller, 1987) is of limited use here.

This does not mean that this recontextualization is absent. People do imbue the goods they consume with new meanings. Consumption today does entail comfort, pleasure and participation in modernity and is desired. Moreover, goods certainly do communicate image and style. Motorcycles and scooters each communicate different identities. Jeans, sports shoes, skirts and cosmetics, to mention a few other examples, speak to and reinforce ideas surrounding youth culture and gender identities. However, these matters of style and fashion turn out to be far less important when people in Baroda talk about middle-class identity as construed through consumption. Instead, people focus on the consumption that a middle-class status demands, which is expressed as a simple calculation of social differences predicated on the market value of consumer goods.

The discourse about consumption is more than a means of articulating a class identity. In the following section, I want to explore how individuals through the talk about consumption describe, evaluate and dissociate from modern sociality, which in their estimation is at least partially shaped through the battle for status.

Ideals of Intimate Sociality

At the same time that status-seeking is taken as part of life, people characterize their involvement in the status struggle as half-hearted, at best. Pramod and Ila are a couple in their 40s. They both have jobs at a bank and lead a comfortable existence that includes a presentable, well-equipped home, a car, motorcycle, scooter and even a foreign holiday now and then.

Yet they dissociate themselves from the social value their society ascribes to these signs of success:

> Pramod: We were an underdeveloped country. Now we are a developing country. Since the last ten years, status is coming up: car, TV.
>
> Ila: A car, bungalow, a lot of money. If you have a lot of money, then your status is high. Whether you have good children, a good wife, credit in the society, [all that] is secondary.
>
> Pramod: Earlier, money was important, but it was spent on gold and land, not on luxury items.
>
> Ila: Now, one should have a washing machine, a refrigerator, motorcycles, a nice house, decorations.

Ila speaks here of the shallowness of the social identity that consumption gives. She repudiates the notion that it is not character that grants one status, but rather one's possessions. While this may appear to be a very general rejection of materialism, there is a sharp critique of consumption as inspiring and shaping a form of individualism that conflicts with ideals of community and family. Local discourse explains how the pursuit of self-satisfaction through consumption leads individuals away from intimacy with others, and perspectives like Ila's tend to express regrets about the deviation between urban middle-class life and ideals of community and the ('declined') joint family.

An excerpt from an article that appeared in *Nayaa Maarg*, a Gujarati magazine, in 1995, shows an example of this discourse as it discusses how a consumer relates to the natal village and what the village stands for. The article is an open letter to a visitor to Vishaalaa, an expensive restaurant near Ahmedabad, Gujarat's largest city. Stylized in the form of a 'traditional' Saurashtra village, with floor seating for patrons, and live 'traditional' entertainment, this restaurant caters to a wealthy clientele. In a range of classic studies and writings, the village and village society have been taken as central to Indian civilization by leaders of colonial power and the nationalist movement, anthropologists and others (see Béteille, 1980; Inden, 1990; among many others). In the article the author describes how consumption (the modern) conflicts with the emotional involvement with others that he glorifies as part of village life (the traditional). Regarding the matter of social intimacy, it is an articulate version of the opposition between village and city that I came across regularly. The village becomes in this opposition a symbol of true empathy, friendship and meaningful sociality in general.

> I know you very well. When you left your village and came to the city you pushed and shoved to make your way into a bus. Taking your half-filled cups of tea and your *bidi*s (country-made cigarettes), you felt you enjoyed all the luxuries of the world. But one day a bicycle got into your hands, and after that, soon a moped, then a scooter and now you drive a *Contessa* [an up-market car]. Suddenly you have become rich. From an

> eight-by-eight foot room you got to live in a luxurious bungalow. You used to fancy the footpath queen but now you need a call girl. You couldn't afford to send your first child to kindergarten, but now that same child studies in an English-medium school, and you have hired two teachers as tutors. You used to get satisfaction from listening to songs playing on others' radios, but now a TV and VCR have found a place in your house. The ordinary *bidi* doesn't intoxicate you now so you take foreign cigarettes, along with foreign liquor . . . You have forgotten about your village in Saurashtra [a region in the western part of Gujarat]. It has been quite some time since you went there. The bond between you and that village has been broken, even though the values of that village are in your blood. There are some who have seen village life only on television, in the cinema, in stories heard by the roadside, in novels and poems, or from the mouths of folk singers. For such rich men, *Vishaalaa* restaurant has been established. Here, they can be entertained and offered the experience of Saurashtra. Proudly you tell others: 'we went to *Vishaalaa*'. You know it well, that to maintain your image in the face of the new society that has come up, you must carry the mark of having been there. It's not just entertainment that you get there. By going there, you also show others how much you love villages. . . . You know very well that this village, *Vishaalaa*, is a fabricated one, and the money you pay for your plate of food there could feed a family for fifteen days in that Saurashtra village you left behind. . . . The last time you went to Saurashtra you took me with you. In one house, we had the same delicacy we had at *Vishaalaa*. In that house, we couldn't hear that music we heard at *Vishaalaa.* But we could hear the sitar of the heart. Nobody there had dressed up, but we could see clear radiant faces. Without masks. . . . At *Vishaalaa*, the softness of the hands serving us was artificial, but there, true love was in people's hearts. . . . When we left, you did not put even a hundredth of what we paid at *Vishaalaa* into the hand of that little girl. You did not tenderly put your hand on her head. My eyes watered then, but the girl still smiled. I don't say that you are stingy. It's just that you have lost the heartbeat of life. Your life is artificial. (*Nayaa Marg*, 16 March 1995)

Whether visitors indeed come to eat at Vishaalaa to publicly prove their love of the village is uncertain, but the ideas expressed in this letter represent common sentiments found among city dwellers about the love and sense of oneness among people in the village, which they as urbanites have to do without. The author turns his Vishaalaa visitor into a heartless, unscrupulous opportunist who has made the city, its despicable mores and its artificial forms of happiness his own, and has forgotten the humaneness and true love that is found among villagers. The addressee is accused of having several immoral traits, but the key indictment is that adopting modern consumer culture goes hand in hand with the withdrawal of love for one's fellow man. The gratification of material desires corrupts and a major consequence of this moral depravation is a loss of humaneness. The author manages to expressly connect the long-standing idealizations of village life as authentic and of urban life as dehumanizing to the ills of consumption.

The newly rich, and the cultural development they espouse, represent for many middle class Barodians, a shallow and meaningless sociality. We may think here of the popular image of the 'five-star culture' of the 'five-star hotel', that island of luxury in the Indian landscape. These terms are often invoked in the talk about consumer aspirations and are meant to qualify

these desires as excessive. Another term people sometimes use to qualify a life built around consumption and wealth is 'artificial'. An artificial life is a life not built around meaningful relationships, but interactions based on shallow pretence and the ostentatious display of material success. Middle class individuals often point a finger at the upper class and call its members morally depraved, using terms like artificial to qualify the character of their targets.[4] However, this upper class depravity is only a stronger version of a depravity many in the middle class feel is part of their own lives as well.

Rakesh, an elderly man, speaks of the artificial character of sociality built on consumption: 'Nowadays people want to show off wealth [so]: they wear a 2,000 to 5,000 rupee *saaree*, but in the house they have nothing'. Rakesh's broader meaning is that the expensive *saaree* is an ostentatious symbol of wealth, but is in some cases only a façade. In Rakesh's view, through this type of consumption, individuals attempt to look wealthier than they are in order to obtain a higher status than they deserve. Harshad, a man in his 40s, feels he comes across many who try their hand at this:

> In routine life, they try to be show business people. For example in eating style, living style, social functions. They like to be showy people. They are not, actually. For example, in living style, even if they cannot afford they bring cream, shampoo, lipstick, this and that. That is an elementary example. And [they] always make such show when others are in contact with them. Show we are living at such a level. Do not like to be with limited needs. They will always show they cannot go to an ordinary restaurant. Will go to a superior restaurant. Believe they can wear only a 900 to 1,000 rupee dress. Even if they cannot afford, they want to be showy people. Would also compromise on the front of needs, also borrow money.

Trusha is a woman of around 50. Her family is doing well in business and lives a relatively luxurious life, compared to middle-class standards. But Trusha takes a stand against conspicuous consumption:

> Earlier, if a person had money, he would still live simply. Now, even if there is no money . . . they have this attitude that they can't do without three–five vegetables. I used to have neighbours in Bombay, they take a tiny bit of two vegetables, like, a hundred grams, and prepare that. So that they can pride themselves on being able to say that they are having two vegetables. Eating is just like taking *prasaad*.

Prasaad, the small quantity of food one eats after it has been sanctified by ritual presentation to the deities, is highly symbolic in nature. Trusha ironically suggests here that the small quantity of vegetables her neighbours eat is similarly marked, as they are made to symbolize partaking in a life of prosperity. Perhaps one can qualify statements like those of Trusha, Rakesh and Harshad as expressions of rivalry between claimants to socio-economic success. But we should also note the presence of an ideology that qualifies the pursuit of status through consumption as illegitimate in more ways than the one just described. Although the criticism of individuals who present a false front in public life is not explicitly connected to urban society, it is based on the generalized sense that conditions of anonymity

prevail in city life, in contrast to the close social networks that characterize village life. In a related vein, when talking about the consumer culture that expresses the shallowness of present-day social relations in the city, urbanites stressed that the emotional attachment found among villagers is not part of their lives. Again, there is no necessary connection drawn between their situation and consumption; rather, associations among city dwellers are broadly characterized as shallow, devoid of feeling and opportunistic, and the foundation of social relations is self-interest, not emotional attachment.[5]

The duality mentioned earlier permeates assessments of urban life, such that positive attributes of estate living are often balanced against and contradicted by its less favourable aspect, as the following claims demonstrate. On the one hand, the relative privacy that comes with city life is considerably appreciated, but speakers also point out that life on the estates is lived behind closed doors, and neighbours are often no more than mere acquaintances. One may value the relative anonymity and freedom of life on the housing estates, but that cannot be openly admitted. That is, keeping oneself away from others is seen as a negative character trait and a sign of arrogance and, in order to preclude such perceptions, justifications must be offered to account for one's behaviour. In order to legitimate their relative lack of involvement with relatives, neighbours and others, most turn to the defence that they have no choice but to keep to themselves because they have such busy schedules. Another factor is the great diversity in the urban population in terms of caste and regional background. On the recently developed housing estates, there are no intimate relations between families that cross generations, as can be found in villages and in the inner city. This may contribute to social distance among neighbours in societies, as people suggested. But people also gave another explanation: life is focused on work and education. People often told me how they appreciate living alongside 'educated' and 'hardworking' people like themselves who care about decency, rather than among 'uneducated, lower class' people in the inner city who are prone to fighting, drinking and loitering. But while a sense of mutuality in lifestyle and life purpose among neighbours on the housing estates engenders a positive sense of class identity, the idea of 'community' is not part of the equation. Taking these characterizations all together, the overall assessment of estate residents is that urban life is socially fragmented life and cannot be morally sound.

Then, too, the rapid rise in consumption is seen as contributing to the social fragmentation that comes with city life. Consumer culture diverts people's attention from social bonds and care for the needs of others and thereby contributes to self-centredness. In the words of Suresh, a retired journalist:

> The general feeling is that people have become insensitive. The economic condition has changed. Improvement. This is psychology. You improve your economic condition; thus you get a materialistic attitude. And your material improvement is related to your becoming more money-conscious. And then you become less sensitive to human problems: you do your work, leave others' worries alone. This attitude is increasing because of material improvement. And they believe that that attitude will help their improvement.

Members of the middle class see a morally debased materialism as part of their own lives, and this emerges clearly in discourse on family life that explains tensions between young adults and their parents. The prevailing sentiment, expressed in media and in conversations, with younger and older individuals, is that: 'Young people forget their culture and their family'. Parents often complained to me about the pressure their children exerted on them to purchase brand-name clothing, mopeds, motorcycles and other such desired prizes. The young are accused of being a consumption-oriented lot, neglecting their duties for the sake of enjoyment. Much of the talk about a 'generation gap' among parents and adolescent children revolves around this issue.

Another facet of this generation-gap argument centres on the fact that elderly parents frequently live in residences separate from their sons, even though they have homes in the same town. The situation is commonly said to have become 'normal' only recently and a phenomenon that is so widespread that it is now useless to try and agitate against it, notwithstanding its objectionable features. Observers interpret the situation to mean that the spread of present consumer culture and the pursuit of wealth it demands lead to the collapse of loyalty of children to their parents.

The popular vernacular newspaper *Sandesh* started a special weekly column, 'Falling Leaves', in which locals can address issues of special concern to the aged. The social marginalization of the old by young people today is a regular topic of discussion. In these excerpts we see something of this sentiment.

> The old times are gone. What is the use of remembering it now? The youngsters will behave according to the new times. Of course it's their big mistake if they don't care for you at all, don't listen to you at all, don't take your advice when they should. But the elderly should understand that every generation enjoys different facilities, fashions and new entertainment. Why? Because there is more money nowadays. In olden times, there wasn't much money around. Whatever was there, was well used. Today's money is used for entertainment and outings. (*Sandesh*, 9 Sept. 1996)[6]

> In olden times, *Aasrams* were there for the purpose of philosophy, but now, *Aasrams* for old people are opening up everywhere in the cities. In those days, parents could bring up seven children in their single room in their village. Now, none of these seven children can, or want to, take care of the same parents. That is the wonder of time. What kind of era is this? (*Sandesh*, 11 July 1996)[7]

In Baroda there are two *aasram*s set up especially to care for the elderly. During the time of my fieldwork (1997), they housed no more than 60

persons. Thus, contrary to commonly made claims, very few elderly parents spend their final days in these homes. However, the larger point is not whether claims about elderly parents being pushed into *aasram*s is true or not, but that people observing their own life and society associate the material improvements in their circles with loss of family intimacy and loyalty. What we have to pay attention to is the assumption that consumption contributes to the depravity of modern middle-class life, as is apparent in urban lifestyles in general and within the family, in particular. Questions and ideas about a supposed 'decline' of the joint family as part of modernization have been an object of scholarly attention for years since the 1950s and continue to have currency in present-day urban middle-class circles in Baroda. In the final part of this article, I want to bring these ethnographic perspectives to bear on a few scholarly and popular understandings of the Indian middle class, the nation and consumption.

The Middle Class and the Nation

Discussions of 'consumerist' tendencies among the middle class in the English-language media in India are often framed in terms of crisis. The crisis is, also here, a matter of morality, and the discussion addresses the issue of the political role of the middle class. Journalist Praful Bidwai, for example, observed some time ago, 'If there is one single issue on which there is unanimity amongst the otherwise badly divided intelligentsia of this country, it is the profound nature of the moral crisis of contemporary Indian society' (1984). According to Bidwai, the continuing decline of the generations brought up under Gandhian principles of morality, combined with the consumption boom, meant that the top 20 percent of the population operated under quite different precepts, which held that 'whatever gives the individual maximum material pleasure is the moral good'. Not long after, as liberalization policies further expanded under Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Rajni Kothari similarly linked the abandonment of political ideals like socialism and the accompanying marginalization of the poor on the development agenda of the Indian state and the Indian elite, to the advent of consumer culture. In Kothari's words, this was a 'homogenized techno-culture inspired by the dream of economic development and its offer of consumerist lifestyles' (1991: 557). According to Kothari, the consumer culture of the middle class is opposed to all that stands in its way, including redistribution of resources and opportunities. And more recently, Pavan Varma's book-long assault on the lack of social commitment on the part of the Indian middle class contains similar apprehensions. Speaking of the effects of the liberalization policies on the middle-class attitude towards consumption, he claims:

> Material wants were suddenly severed from any notion of guilt. In a sense, it was the collective exorcism from the nation's psyche of the 'repressive' and life-denying nature of Gandhi's idealism, an exultant, exuberant escape from his emphasis on an austerity that could not be ignored but was inherently unemulatable. Liberalization provided the opportunity to make a break from the attitudes and thinking of the past, the moment to bring out in the open desires long held back, and to say: 'Now, at last, we can do what we had always wanted to do', without a sense of guilt, and, indeed, claim public approval for it. (Varma, 1998: 175)

This book attracted considerable attention in India, apparently striking a chord with part of the English-speaking public. There are several such publications in which journalists and other observers accuse the middle class of not engaging with the public good as it should.[8] In this view, consistently found in elite scholarly and journalistic circles in India, the middle class is in the grip of a moral crisis due to the advent of consumer culture; this moral crisis consists of an abandoning of Gandhian and Nehruvian ideals that advocate national self-reliance and commitment to a form of development that includes the poor and disadvantaged. In short, the point made is that solidarity with the poor and leadership of the nation towards prosperity for all are a middle-class responsibility, yet this responsibility is not assumed since it is incompatible with the middle-class orientation towards personal economic success and consumption.

This morality may be a matter of keen concern for these socially committed authors, whose audiences may take to ideals of social development and the idea that middle-class privilege obliges it to aid in the development of the nation. Local vernacular media that have the Baroda middle class as their audience, however, never discuss the 'moral crisis' that they too observe in these terms. Rather, there we find discourse very similar to that of the people who speak in this article.

When we compare the insights of the aforementioned authors with the perspectives of the Baroda middle class, two things are strikingly apparent. First, the idea that national development needs to incorporate and promote issues pertaining to the poor is not their chief concern. The people speaking here consider themselves well above the mean, both as individuals and also as a class, but they do not see their class privilege as obliging them to work for the greater good of the nation.

The second aspect of middle-class self-consciousness is that, while there is a recognition of a moral crisis, this sense of crisis is of a different order than the one identified by critics who focus on the consumerist class's abandonment of any commitment to national development and to the poor. 'Materialism' *is* morally problematic to the middle class in Baroda, but their emphasis is on how consumption is central to the shaping of an amoral sociality. To some extent, the Baroda middle class focus on intra-class matters appears to resonate with, rather than refute, the accusatory

discourse regarding middle-class self-seclusion from critical matters pertaining to wider society and the nation.

Furthermore, the moral problem of materialism that people perceive at the local level rests on a set of ideas centring on community, family loyalty and abstinence from material pleasures. In this regard, the discourse about consumption does not engage with much of the experience of modernity that is of major interest to social scientists, such as developments around the national and the global, media and migration being major players in these. An awareness of global interconnectedness is often suggested to be part and parcel of experiences of globalization, and that awareness is often suggested to find form and expression in cultural constructions that involve an imagination of community that takes into account some form of counterposing or connecting of the global and/or the nation in a prominent way. Arjun Appadurai stresses that we have to take into account the fact that, because of electronic media and mass migration, 'there is a peculiar new force to the imagination in social life today. More persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before' (1997: 53). This would certainly seem to apply to this middle class, and yet their reflections on their own globally inspired consumption practices do not draw on, for example, the global as transnational, or a reworked view of the nation as against, or shaped by, the global, but on a set of seemingly locally rooted ideas that pertain to the individual and his/her personal social world. The point about the global and the imagination has been the focus of scholars who have explored the role of mass media in the imagining of the Indian nation (see Mankekar, 1999; Arvind Rajagopal, 2001, on Indian television). On the specific issue of imagination and consumer goods, the imagining of the nation through consumption is also a recurrent theme. For instance, Arvind Rajagopal (1999) and Leela Fernandes (2000) show how advertising has played a role in the construction and mass-mediation of a Hindu national imaginary, and William Mazzarella (2003) shows how advertisers address the Indian consumer, by constructing a notion of Indianness as against and through notions of the global. Rajagopal, Fernandes and Mazzarella engage with consumers themselves in only a limited way. The specific encounters and interactions of the consuming public with the images that are produced for them are not these authors' primary concern.

The middle class as the central locus of the construction of modern Indianness, and thus the imagining of the Indian nation, is a recurrent theme in scholarship, yet it does not seem to figure explicitly in the discourse on consumption in which middle-class Baroda residents are engaged. This is not to suggest that one should be surprised to see that people do not manifest exactly the same preoccupations about the 'global' in the local that social scientists do, and do not deploy the conceptual

apparatus of anthropologists and other social scientists. It does suggest, however, that the aforementioned preoccupations and conceptual apparatus do not suffice to understand the day-to-day experience of modernity among this middle class. While consumption has become part of the normality of people's lives, one has to make considerable effort to draw from the current discourse an unambiguous link between middle-classness, globalized consumption practices and national identity. As a matter of fact, the overall impression is that the nation is a non-entity in the imagining of middle-classness rather than a central feature of the mutually defining concepts proposed by theorists (the nation as middle class/the middle class as the nation). The moral discourse around the new standard of normality with regard to consumption refers not to ideas of nationhood, but opposes consumerist middle-class culture to ideals of self-restraint and proper social living through *abstinence* from consumption, community and family intimacy. These are taken as matters pertaining to the lives of individuals and families, and as class-specific issues, not as questions regarding the nation, Hindu or otherwise.

But with all the media focusing their energies on the Indian middle class, through advertising, political propaganda and television programming that takes the nation into account, how is it that members of this middle class in Baroda frame their perspectives on their own consumption activities without even an echo of the impact of national identity? The most straightforward and general answer to this riddle could be that consumers defy advertisers and others who seek to connect with the Indian public for their own purposes. However, the results from this research suggest something else. In various journalistic and scholarly writings, the middle class has been characterized as inclined to support Hindu nationalism. It has been suggested that this special relationship exists because Hindu nationalism offers the middle class a refuge from an uprooted, confused urban life (see e.g. Nandy et al., 1997; for a review of the literature see van Wessel, 2001a). The distress of modern life *is* apparent in the discourse under discussion and Hindu nationalism does articulate a particular moral discourse against consumption, framed in terms of Indianness against the West (Blom Hansen, 1999). However, this facet of Hindutva does not seem to surface in the talk about consumption. Consumption and the distresses that are felt to be synonymous with it are seen as unavoidable features of modern life. In other words: the Hindu nationalist 'solution' to the discontents of modernity that is on offer is not as attractive as critics would have us believe. And I would suggest that this is so because the solution on offer does not speak to all the problems of modern living that people perceive to be present in their lives.

A few comments on another interesting 'absence' in the discourse on consumption discussed here may help to clarify the argument I seek to make. When middle-class people in Baroda talk about the role of

consumption in their lives, the pursuit of pleasure, fantasy and style do not figure prominently. This does not mean that people do not enjoy their goods, as indeed they do. Recent literature on consumption shows how it is possible to interpret consumption of goods in India in terms of pleasure, fantasy and style (see Breckenridge, 1995; Mazzarella, 2003). When we look at the ways advertisers address the Indian middle-class consumer, and the way business journals discuss the battle for the favours of the Indian consumer (see e.g. Chowdhury, 1998; Morais, 1998), the enjoyment of goods is similarly central, and the discourse on morality seems completely irrelevant. So, it may seem that the moral discourse on consumption heard among middle class Barodians is at odds with much of the present body of knowledge we have on middle-classness and consumption. But to what extent is this really so? I certainly do not wish to suggest that a whole body of work on this subject 'got it wrong'.

The point I seek to make here is a different one. We should note that the statements people made relate to broad categories like 'modern life', 'society' or 'culture'. And it was particularly when these broad categories came up during conversations I had with people that this discourse surfaced. While taking up issues of this nature, people often focused on consumption, adopting a moral stance. The discourse they mobilize speaks to and about the experience of middle-class social living. In talking about adverse aspects of consumption and the pursuit of identity through consumption, people bring up idealized images of times, conditions and institutions from the past that still have a place in their moral universe, such as the caring, joint family; a close-knit community life in which character defined a person and not money or goods; the purity of heart and empathy of village culture; austerity as a part of life and as an ideal state. And they bring these up specifically to speak of the seriously flawed nature of their day-to-day lives.

Comparing the condition of the middle class of Baroda with that of the middle class in Kathmandu, detailed by Mark Liechty (2003), some interesting similarities and differences can be noticed. Like members of the middle class in Baroda, those in Kathmandu often speak of consumption in moral terms. And as in Baroda, the talk about consumption pertains to intra-class comparison and the phenomenon usually referred to as 'keeping up with the Joneses'. However, the striking characteristic of the Kathmandu middle class moral discourse on consumption is the attempt to *create* shared values within that group. As Liechty notes:

> In Kathmandu the middle class are those people struggling to rescue a socially valid 'traditional' Nepali morality from its associations with the provincial vulgarity of the urban poor, while at the same time attempting to define a 'suitably' modern-but-still-Nepali lifestyle of moral and material restraint distinct from what they view as corrupt elite lifestyles of foreignness and consumer excess. (2003: 61)

By contrast, in Baroda, class membership is constantly devalued and

discounted as a site for making or sustaining moral values. Liechty describes how the middle class in Kathmandu is involved in the construction of a class that 'hangs between the high and the low'. Though it is not always successful in the keeping up of moral boundaries, it can still be said that the middle class 'tells the tale of its own propriety' (Liechty, 2003). Similarly, members of the middle class in Baroda (as I discuss elsewhere: 2001a, 2001b) define middle-class identity in terms of moral and cultural superiority in relation to higher and lower classes. But this construction is not made around consumption of modern goods. Another point of difference from the middle class in Kathmandu is that Barodians constantly deny that propriety and morality can actually be put into practice in 'society'. It can be spoken about, as we have seen, and within an inner realm (which may include the self and others close to the self) this morality can be sustained (cf. Das, 2000). Ideas about the moral qualities of consumption, ideals of the merits of abstinence from material culture and of family solidarity are thus drawn from collectively held notions about these topics, but only to construct and sustain individual identities, not larger entities like the middle class or the nation.

What should we make of this difference between the middle classes of Kathmandu and Baroda when we consider them as experiences of globalization? Is the middle class in Kathmandu able to appropriate globalization, whereas the middle class in Baroda is, or feels, powerless to do so? The question that is pertinent in the present discussion is: powerless against what or whom? The point here is that moral discourse on consumption addresses the condition of sociality in the middle class. With its critique of consumption the middle class criticizes the social conditions of middle-class life rather than anything else. Among members of the middle class in Kathmandu, local patterns of consumerism are less about desire for things than about desire for sociality. 'Consumer desire is ultimately a desire to keep open the channels of dialogue with one's class others, to be acknowledged as a participant in the joint production of class practice' (Liechty, 2003: 116; but see also Miller, 1987, who states that this is a general attribute of modern consumer culture). Indeed, this can also be said to be the case in Baroda. The importance accorded to the possession of goods has a lot to do with achieving common ground with class equals. However, the sociality that results from being on this common class-ground is seen as cold and lacking in meaning. This middle class critique of consumer culture echoes the views of Simmel (1950) on the inability of modern man to fully overcome the abstraction and anonymity of modern culture. Consumption does not contribute to a shared sense of community, but rather denies community to middle-class social existence. Consumption is culturally interpreted, through local idioms, as part of competition for status based on individual socioeconomic success—a form of status that can be achieved by anyone regardless of character, and in relative anonymity. The competition

involved in consumption, disregarding virtue and negating the power of social control, does not contribute to a sociality people can recognize as legitimate.

But is consumption indeed a class predicament? Is it imperative for people to consume in order to be someone in a class world that holds no other opportunities for meaningful social life? That is a question that is hard to answer. As a researcher I could easily see how also in this middle class, personal relations with relatives, friends and others are very much present and significant. But certainly it would not make good sense to privilege my own understanding of people's lives over their own. Even if people were actually discussing only a factor in their lives rather than evaluating the whole of it, their understanding of their position regarding consumption was meant to say something about their lives and their agency in their lives. But if indeed this consumer culture is a class predicament, does this make people cultural dupes, hapless victims of capitalism? We do see that people feel duped by the anonymity and materialistic, one-sided nature of part of their social lives in which status competition on consumption apparently seems to play so large a role. On the other hand, the discourse people put forward to make sense of consumption and their lives in the urban middle class draws on a local repertoire that is perceived as morally sound. In the opportunity it provides for people to dissociate themselves from consumer practice, in that it allows speakers to construct and present themselves as being '*in* the world but not *of* it',[9] this discourse imparts agency to the individual who can use it for self-affirmation. That the repertoire leaves little room for a more society-affirming perspective is another matter.

NOTES

1. See *Far Eastern Economic Review* (14 Jan. 1993, 2 Feb. 1995, 17 March 1994); *India Today* (15 April 1995); *Business Today* 4 (1996); *Fortune* 5 (1997); *Japan Economic Journal/Nikkei Weekly* 32(16–18) (1994).
2. First of all, I leave alone questions of caste, such as that of social and cultural implications of the upward mobility of OBCs (Other Backward Castes). But a further complication is that many of the people heard here do not use English as their first language and are therefore excluded from much of elite culture that English-speaking members of the middle class can make part of their lives. We may also have to take into account that the diversity in the Indian middle class is partly geographically distributed. Gandhian thought may in some ways have more currency in this Gujarat town than in some other places, for example. Also, Baroda is a provincial town rather than a metropolis, and this may figure in its middle class' cultural make-up. Certainly many people I spoke with would be able to relate to the idea that things newest and most modern would be readily found in Bombay, rather than in Baroda.
3. Some quotes from interviews are translated from Gujarati. Some interviewees

spoke in English. In those cases the speakers' original wording has been maintained as much as possible.

4. Upper-classness is largely defined in terms of wealth and the lifestyle wealth can buy, with, e.g cars, a bungalow, perhaps a swimming pool and socializing at parties and clubs. But also, in the eyes of this middle class, the liberty not to take much notice of moral ideals of restraint in sexual behaviour and consumption of substances, the disregarding of which could undo the reputation of a middle-class family.
5. It is not that the city dwellers idealize village life completely. Village life is also described as 'backward' in terms of social customs like the seclusion of women, and the supposed closeness among villagers is also described as having undesirable aspects such as the greater likelihood that personal conflicts will arise.
6. The longer excerpt includes the following observations:

> When old couples and old friends get together at a temple they talk to each other about the flaws of their sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren. This very much increases the gap between the old generation and the new. Whenever the occasion arises, they complain that in their time, there were no such buildings, there was no TV, phone, washing machines, flour mills, expensive clothes, this fashion, these outings, entertainment, restaurants. We never went out to eat. We went on foot everywhere, but today's youngsters won't do without a scooter. Mothers-in-law often complain that their daughters-in-law don't cover their heads with their *saaree*, don't even want to wear a *saaree*, and waste money on clothes, lipstick and talcum powder, and don't want to work—that's why a help is kept. 'The daughter-in-law goes out on Saturdays and Sundays. We are alone and have to eat at home. They don't take us out and don't listen to our advice . . . How much longer do we have to live like this? We can't stand it any more. It would be better if god took us'. Such complaints are made by the elderly. But they should behave according to the new era otherwise the distance between the old generation and the new one will increase. The old times are gone. What is the use of remembering it now? The youngsters will behave according to the new times. Of course it's their big mistake if they don't care for you at all, don't listen to you at all, don't take your advice when they should. But the elderly should understand that every generation enjoys different facilities, fashions and new entertainment. Why? Because there is more money nowadays. In olden times, there wasn't much money around. Whatever was there, was well used. Today's money is used for entertainment and outings. As long as they are young, they will enjoy.

7. The full excerpt includes the following:

> Modern man has gone mad after materialistic pleasures. In search of peace he goes to the clubs, arranges picnics and parties. But he whose inner self is not at peace, is not satisfied, and will never get satisfaction anywhere. Materialistic pleasures and *Zee TV* [the most popular private television channel in India] are destroying the texture of the feelings and sentiments of the joint family. And so, a modern young man wishes to separate from his parents the instant he marries. In olden times, *Aasrams* were there for the purpose of philosophy, but now, *Aasrams* for old people are opening up everywhere in the cities. In those days, parents could bring up seven children in their single room in their village. Now, none of these seven children can, or want to, take care of the same parents. That is the wonder of time. What kind of era is this?

8. See *Sunday* (26 Feb. 1995): 'Breaking the Social Contract. The Middle Class'

Love Affair with its Own Enrichment Endangers Indian Society'; *Times of India* (17 June 1995), 'Middle Class Matrix. Upmarket Greed, Downmarket Deprivations'; *The Hindu* (5 Nov. 1995), 'Comfortably Numb'.

9. The phrase is partly taken from Nandy (1983: 109; emphasis mine), who adds that this has been 'one of the major psychological responses of Indian spiritualism to the West'.

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