

Introduction: Beyond IT

In 2002 during my first fieldwork trip to Bangalore, I met Nandan Nilekani, then the chief executive officer and one of the founders of Infosys Limited, the site of my fieldwork.¹ He argued that the best evidence of the emergence of India as a “powerhouse” is visible when software engineers migrate to the West. He presented a particular vignette: “When my boys go to the U.S. to work on a client site, they go through the immigration process with pride because even the immigration officer knows that he is not there to work at a gas station or a convenience store. He is there because the U.S. needs him to program software for them.” The skewed gender and class nature of the vignette aside, what this points to is the emergence of a new nationalistic narrative.

Such narratives were also palpable in the IT company I worked with, which was headquartered in Princeton, New Jersey, with an offshore office in Hyderabad, in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. The majority of the software engineers and developers were Indian, mostly on H-1B work visas from India. When my Indian colleagues learned about my research topic, they encouraged me by pointing out that I was doing something “valuable” for our country. They collectively agreed that if there is “one thing” of phenomenal importance in India now, it is the rise of the Indian information technology (IT) industry on the global scene. They were also gratified that software engineers like them would be at the center of my work. One notion

1. Infosys, one of the leading IT companies in India, was established in 1981 and earned \$8.25 billion in revenue in FY 2014.

that seemed to consistently underscore these preliminary conversations was that the IT industry flourished in a country otherwise relegated to underdevelopment, poverty, hunger, and corruption. Therefore, it is especially important that such success be celebrated and owned as a national pride.

It is rather interesting to note that the “pride” is primarily based on derivative work; that is, the majority of software development is designed to support the business processes of corporations in the West. The Indian IT industry has little to do with innovative work or program development. For instance, at the time of my fieldwork, Infosys had only one product, Finacle, developed for banking solutions. In February 2014 Infosys set up a subsidiary, EdgeVerve Systems, to concentrate its products, platforms, and solutions. The products and platforms currently account for only 5.2 percent of the \$8.2 billion of the revenue of the company.² When I wanted Nandan Nilekani to explain the dearth of investment in products, he mentioned that the company’s expertise lies in software development, and that is what Infosys is known to do well. In this context, Xiang Biao’s *Global Body Shopping* examines a possibly unique Indian practice called “body shopping” in the IT trade between India and other countries, especially in the West. Body shopping is a practice where “an Indian-run consultancy (body shop) anywhere in the world recruits IT workers, in most cases from India, to be placed out as project-based labor with different clients” (Biao 2007: 4).³ While Infosys is no longer a primarily body-shopping company, this practice lends perspective to the Indian IT industry in the global context. As Biao argues, it is noticeable that software development is also premised on low-priced, English-speaking labor available in India. These kinds of global practices are inherently produced through the realignment of historic unequal global relations. Second, the IT process rather than embedding Indian IT professionals in the global circuit in effect makes them more vulnerable, hence disembedding them.⁴

2. “Infosys Hives Off Products Business into Separate Unit,” *Times of India*, May 12, 2014, available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/tech-news/Infosys-hives-off-products-business-into-separate-unit/articleshow/34989367.cms> (accessed September 26, 2014).

3. For a detailed discussion about the rise of the Indian IT industry in the national and international perspective, see Heeks (1996), Kumar (2001), Lakha (1990, 1994), Lateef (1996), Parthasarathy (2004), Saxenian (2000), and Upadhyaya (2004).

4. A conversation about the importance of innovation to sustain the Indian IT industry in the global market is slowly emerging, led by the National Association for Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), the trade association for the industry. This is partly fueled by the economic downturn and partly by other countries rising as software development destinations. For details, see “Innovation—A Call for Action for the IT/BPM Industry,” available at http://www.nasscom.in/sites/default/files/uploads/mailers/2013/CEO_Forum_Decoding_Innovation_Post_event_24052013/docs/Decoding_Innovation_17May2013_Synopsis.pdf (accessed October 2014); and “Innovation Transforming the Growth Landscape: Capitalizing IP in Indian IT/BPM,” available at <http://www.kpmg.com/IN/en/IssuesAndInsights/ArticlesPublications/Documents/Innovation-Transforming-the-growth-landscape.pdf> (accessed October 2014).

Notwithstanding the shallow foundation on which the pride of Indian IT is based, the narratives are nonetheless vital ethnographic data. It is my argument that the IT pride is not limited to economics alone. It further, and perhaps more importantly, incorporates a strong ethical dimension. My colleagues at work narrated the success of IT as an ethical watershed for the nation-state. Adjectives such as “honest,” “good,” “not corrupt,” “reliable,” “educated,” “good background,” and so on, were often evoked to describe IT professionals, especially high-profile entrepreneurs.⁵ For a country, especially the state, generally known to engage in corrupt practices, where global business would not venture easily, things changed with IT; they argued, “We have become more trustworthy as a country.” In this view, the IT industry has carved out an ethical space that is distinct from and in disdain of the “corrupt” state. Two words that I encountered ceaselessly, which, as software professionals often reminded me, were at the core of global corporate governance and the market ideals, were “accountability” and “transparency.” The market rhetoric therefore goes beyond sheer economics; it is also a normative tool that ensures uncompromising honesty in economic transactions.

What does an ethnography of neoliberalism look like? This book is an effort in that direction. It is about the narratives, discursive practices, and contestations through which a neoliberal critique of public governance emerges, thickens, and is also subverted in contemporary India. The critique plausibly emanated with the success of the IT industry, but, as I demonstrate, it is more importantly a politically and ethically negotiated narrative that coalesced over time to become an identifying account mainly of the urban middle class. I emphasize the class characteristic of the narrative to show how, on one hand, neoliberalism privileges the middle class, and, on the other hand, also provokes a different kind of politics of rights among the urban poor. I argue for a constitutive relationship between the ideology of the IT industry and the emerging neoliberal ideology of the polity without privileging either. Hence, my attention here is on simultaneity rather than on causality. Simultaneity compels us to look beyond boundaries, of IT in this case, to explore sites that are now being folded into the neoliberal schema. This book is therefore also about going *beyond* IT. The “beyond” in this instance is a water project, known as the Greater Bangalore Water and Sewerage Project (GBWASP; henceforth, Water Project), that would not only privatize water supply but also required a beneficiary capital contribution from citizens, often referred to as “customers.” Water offers us the kind of “beyond” that unsettles the otherwise euphoric national narrative of IT. This “beyond” corroborates that the narrative is inherently embedded within and asymmetrically privileges the middle and upper-middle classes.

5. Smitha Radhakrishnan examines “background” in detail as a key word in the IT industry; she argues that the term oscillates between “claim to universality and relativity” (2011: 8).

In this newfound basis of class politics, belonging in the nation-state is once again fractured into bits, simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. Bits in its metaphorical extension—BITS, as in the digital vernacular—is a binary, it takes the value of either 1 or 0. Binary digits store information and are the basic unit of communication in computing. A logical value of 1 is considered a true statement, and 0 is a false statement. The market paradigm post-1991 is parallel to the 1 BIT as the logically true statement. It leaves the other existing option, the socialist-redistributive model, 0, as a false choice. In a modernist model such as this, the choice is obvious, legible, and privileged. Thus one gradually ceases to belong to the nation-state as a citizen based solely on birthright. Belonging is based on an active participation in the market and also in accepting the market as the only viable option for the polity to prosper. In another sense, it is the acceptance of the logical value 1 as the true statement of the BIT and discarding 0 as obsolete.

I gathered success stories through ethnographic work with IT professionals in Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of India, and collectively call them the “IT narrative.” The establishment of an Indian industry in the knowledge economy otherwise dominated by the West had an effect beyond fiscal reports. It has instilled a sense of confidence among the IT professionals that they can now offer better leadership to the country based on their experience of competing and succeeding on a global scale. My analyses of the success narrative of the IT industry generated the following set of values and principles espoused by entrepreneurs and software engineers. First, the IT industry in India succeeded not merely for the software knowledge and English-language skills available in the country but also because the IT companies meticulously adhered to the ethical corporate practices stipulated by global capital. Second, the success of IT offers a blueprint for governance, which can and *should* inform both private and public sectors. Third, the success narrative has lifted India from its enduring status as a poor developing country, and this opportunity ought to be utilized for a nationwide governance and institutional reform, especially for the state. Fourth, the reforms can be effective by incorporating citizens, who believe in the power of the market as a transformative tool, within the public administrative apparatus.

Together, I term the above set of values the *ethico-political* ideology of the IT industry to emphasize its ethical nature, but also to indicate how the emergent set of ethics has established a new politics of belonging to the nation-state. While this book deciphers the cultural drivers and historical contingencies that underscore and manufacture the IT narrative, more importantly it problematizes the cohesiveness and legitimacy of the narrative itself. The apparent tidiness of the narrative intrigued me for two reasons: first, its seemingly unproblematic passage from the economic/corporate/capitalist to the social/public governance realm. I ask what enables these successful corporate entrepreneurs to offer guidelines for renewing the nation, which

has two distinct domains—one relies on the market, the other on a fictive bond connected by birth and land. The question is not only about the passage of this narrative but also what makes IT possible at this particular historical juncture. Second, and I think more importantly, when we realize that the IT success narrative is one primarily of and by the middle class, it starts to fray at the edges. How does one account for class differences in a narrative that favors the market ideology? How does one understand the disenfranchisement of the poorer sections of the citizenry who are unable to participate in the market paradigm of change? What kind of class politics does this narrative provoke and suppress? In other words, who becomes the privileged citizen of the nation is now a question of whether one is “inside” or “outside” IT.

The inside and outside, as I show in this work, does not necessarily mean that one is employed in the IT industry. Relatively, it is an indication of an ideological divide of those who share and participate in the market ideals and those who do not, or rather cannot. Using ideology to depict the set of values is at once a simple and a difficult task. Linking this ethico-political narrative to the middle-class and upper-middle-class IT entrepreneurs and professionals is to suggest that ideology is “a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group” (Williams 1977: 55).

In the Marxian sense, ideology arises out of the material processes that organize economic relations, but it is nonetheless a “false consciousness.” Engels explained, “Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker, consciously indeed but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all” (quoted in Williams 1977: 65). Raymond Williams has argued that the separation of the consciousness as a “reflective” or a “second” stage poses a difficult problem for conceptualizing ideology since consciousness itself, he argues, is formed through material social processes (Williams 1977). While Marx underscored the importance of material and social history that enhanced the concept of ideology, moving it beyond scientific empiricism proposed by Destutt de Tracy, his negation of “what men say” and “men as narrated” or from language itself, as Williams contended, created an enduring conceptual uncertainty (Williams 1977). In emphasizing the IT narrative, I draw attention to ideology not only as emerging from the material social relations of software development, a process that spans the globe, but also what the IT entrepreneurs say and how they are being narrated, for instance, by the media, as the harbingers of the neoliberal market. Finally, how does language come to delineate the new set of values and principles or, in other words, the IT ideology?

In the context of a class analysis, a couple of characteristics are unique to the IT industry in India: First, its emergence independent of the older business model that was linked to family businesses or established corporations; second, the educated middle class, who were the main founders of IT

companies, drew on their social capital to establish a different corporate norm (Upadhyaya 2004). Both these characteristics were reflected in the narrative alongside class privilege. Further, Leela Fernandes has argued that there is a need to move beyond the obvious contribution scholars have made either “estimating the size of the middle class” or “analyz[ing] the middle class through the lens of consumption” (2006: xvii). Fernandes instead explores the political routes through which an entrenched connection among the middle class, consumption practices, and liberalization evolve while simultaneously arguing that the middle class is not a monolith.

Fernandes’s invitation is useful because it leads us to look at processes through which the middle class garners, retains, and normalizes emergent ideologies and practices. Therefore, what troubled me about the connection that I heard being formulated among IT professionals, IT’s middle-class proponents, and the nation-state was twofold. First, the narrative leap: If IT benefits the educated urban middle class, somehow it will be beneficial for India as a whole. Second, related to this, the high acoustics of the IT narrative was drowning out issues of inequality that were being introduced by the same 1990s liberalization policies that enabled the ascent of IT. Where do people from the lower social economic strata find their place in this changing economic terrain? Or, seen from a slightly different angle, if IT contributes 9.5 percent to the GDP,⁶ how does it become relevant for the entire nation relative to others sector with higher contributions, for instance, the manufacturing sector (15.2 percent in 2012–2013)?⁷ Moreover, even though the IT entrepreneurs I knew at Infosys upheld the class mobility offered by the industry, the education and soft skills one needed to secure a job in IT were middle-class privileges. Consequently, as I started this work in 2002, it soon became apparent that to tell the “success” story of Indian IT, one had to move “outside” the industry.

The resulting matter that arises here is relationship among IT, the state, and neoliberalism. Would IT succeed without neoliberal state policies? Perhaps. Does the visibility of IT exclusively rest on a “failing” state? This question demands a more nuanced exploration. The contradistinction erected between the ethics of the IT narrative and the “corruption” of the state cannot be simply relegated to the chronological “failure” of the state and the “success” of IT; neither can we see the latter merely as a direct outcome of the former. Rather, the field of possibility within which the IT narrative rose and gained traction has to do with the confluence of global and national processes that began propagating the market over socialist-redistributive state agendas.

6. NASSCOM, “Impact on India’s Growth,” available at <http://www.nasscom.in/impact-indias-growth> (accessed April 6, 2015).

7. Available at http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2013-05-12/news/39203854_1_assochem-survey-100-million-jobs-manufacturing-sector (accessed May 10, 2013).

Undoubtedly, the Indian state, especially under the leadership of the Congress Party, has had a protracted and legendary scale of corruption, but to argue that IT's visibility solely depended on this is to miss the larger forces of neoliberal change that are sweeping the globe. The 2014 election is a case in point. The Congress Party lost the elections by a significant margin to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP); Nandan Nilekani, who ran for office on the Congress ticket, lost. There are local- and state-level distinctions of electoral politics in India, but it is also important to attend to neoliberal forces that increasingly undermine the legitimacy of the state as suitable for public governance. Therefore, this book does not argue for causality between the "success" of IT and the "failure" of the state. Instead it is an invitation to examine the complexity of neoliberalism, especially in India starting in the 1990s.

Neoliberalism as a concept is neither succinct nor analytically constant. There is also the accompanying intellectual dread that while neoliberalism could be a useful concept to capture the field of possibility, it may also be diluted as a mere placeholder in contemporary anthropological research.⁸ In a 2014 *Annual Review of Anthropology* article, Tejaswini Ganti identifies two ways in which anthropologists have primarily used neoliberalism: "one is concerned with policies and politics and the other with ideologies and values" (Ganti 2014: 94). I find David Harvey's formulation of neoliberalism especially helpful for my analysis here because it underscores the coupling of values and ideals within the public institutional framework.

Harvey writes:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial *freedoms* and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, *free market* and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices. (2007: 2)⁹

As we can see, freedom here does not quite relate to a democratic mandate and citizens' rights. Instead it is tied to the unfettered possibility of

8. In January 2013 the University of Manchester Group of Debates in Anthropological Theory discussed a motion titled "The Concept of Neoliberalism Has Become an Obstacle to the Anthropological Understanding of the Twenty-First Century." Interestingly the final vote went for support of the concept (Ganti 2014). Available at <http://www.talkinganthropology.com/2013/01/18/ta45-gdat1-neoliberalism//> (accessed October 6, 2014).

9. Emphasis mine.

securing private property, where the state *enables* a market structure that privileges the already privileged. “Freedom,” as Harri Englund notes, “is an essentially contested concept. Philosophical debates aside, the exportation of ‘freedom’ across historical periods and geopolitical areas have given the term new meanings, which are often ill-understood by those who have a specific agenda to pursue” (2006: 2). This idea of freedom, in addition, creates a new subjectivity that dissociates from the collective to settle on the individual as its point of reference. Nikolas Rose has written that “freedom is the name we give today to a kind of power one brings to bear upon oneself, and bringing power to bear upon others . . . and freedom is particularly problematic when we demand to be governed in its name” (1999: 96). This emergence has deep implications for a democratic regime since it signals, contrary to what some scholars have suggested, not the end of politics but a politics that is admissible only when filtered through a preset script of resistance and response.

Ganti makes another valuable distinction, that is, between “late capitalism” and “neoliberalism,” emphasizing two points of divergences. First, late capitalism is a chronological marker, whereas neoliberalism is an “ideological and philosophical movement . . . that emerges at a particular historical moment” facilitated by network of intellectuals (Friedrich August von Hayek, Walter Lippman, Milton Friedman, and others) and institutions (Mont Pelerin Society) (Ganti 2014: 91). Second, neoliberalism is characterized by a call for a prescriptive arrangement between the state and its citizens to reorganize capital and property (Ganti 2014). Neoliberal futures are hence aspirational and call for a discontinuity with past forms of welfare governance. The discontinuity is a normative stipulation for the market to masquerade as an impeccable logic of well-being. Above all, I take seriously Ganti’s (2014) suggestion that neoliberalism as an analytical concept helps us ground ethnographic work to think through processes of globalization that are otherwise diffuse and obscure.

IT professionals demonstrated a high regard for the market rather than the state as an underwriter for their well-being or, as they frequently expressed it, “the good life.” They often presented private property they had acquired, which was “unthinkable” for their parents, such as owning a flat by the time one was thirty, cars, high-end gadgets, shopping trips to the mall, dining at eclectic restaurants, international vacations, and so on, as markers of their well-being. Still, I often noticed that the narratives of personal success and possessions often elevated from the personal to the national level, somewhat surreptitiously and quite naturally. The intertwining of individual biographies and the national trajectory indicated a deeper belief in the potential of the market to alleviate India from the stigma of being a poor country. This, as Paul Treanor has suggested, reflects the “belief in the moral necessity of market forces in the economy, [and] is probably the first defining feature of

market liberalism.”¹⁰ In this sense, well-being as an experience was not necessarily confined to the IT workers. It was seen as a possibility for the nation as a whole, realizable only through the state being invested in the mechanism of the market.

On the other hand, it was quite remarkable to see that in nearly all the conversations about “accountability” and “transparency,” seldom did anyone refer to its familiar humanistic merit. They were regularly cast in terms of corporate values and practices, which were also apparently new to Indians. I found it challenging to talk about these values in the familiar humanist domain in my discussions. While most professionals I interviewed acknowledged that these terms have long underscored collective life, they were reluctant to see these values now outside the corporation. Part of the reason, some explained, is that with a balance sheet lurking at the end of every financial quarter, one can see the tangible results—profit and loss—and hence the moral urgency to be accountable and transparent. Others were skeptical that such values could even work outside the supervision mechanism of the market, such as the “dashboard,” which I discuss later, that companies like Infosys use to track project timelines and employees’ productivity. In other words, the corporate governance paradigm was enumerative and protective. As Treanor reminds us, “Neoliberalism is not simply an economic structure, it is a philosophy . . . neoliberals tend to see the world in terms of market metaphors.”¹¹

One manager at Infosys explained the global relevance of “accountability” and “transparency” to me: “These could be daunting for people who are used to corruption, but this is what we have embraced as our core values. This comes to us naturally,” he continued. “IT has done an excellent job in showing that these values work in the global economy; otherwise why would big companies in the U.S. come to us?” Neoliberal changes have recast the developing world since the 1990s, and India is not exceptional in this regard. Nonetheless, the IT industry “naturally” espousing these values is a rather problematic statement in that a specific class with wealth and financial power is claiming a set of values as proprietary. Julia Elyachar begins her discussion of neoliberalism by stating, “Anthropologists have a good reason to hate neoliberalism” (2012: 76). However, rather than blaming neoliberalism for all that has gone astray in the contemporary world, she invites us to attend to the “political debates and conceptual conflicts” that underscore the present. Elyachar demonstrates the departures between Hayek’s formulation of neoliberalism and the ethnographic work on the same issue related to public infrastructure

10. Available at <http://web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/neoliberalism.html> (accessed March 27, 2013).

11. Paul Treanor, “Neoliberalism: Origins, Theory, Definition,” available at <http://www.web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/neoliberalism.html>, 9 (accessed April 6, 2015).

in Cairo. She links the two through the concept of “tacit knowledge,” something shared by anthropology and neoliberalism. Contrary to Hayek’s argument that tacit knowledge can only be harnessed in the free market and stems from the public sector, Elyachar discovered the opposite in Cairo. Similar to Elyachar’s demonstration of the *fahlawah* (street smarts or trickery) as important to the success of the public sector, state representatives working in the Bangalore slums often had to draw on the existing network of favors and vocabulary within the slum to convey the value of the project. Taken together the above theorizations signify the complexity of neoliberalism rather than it being a simple account of dispossession. Therefore, I document the struggles that are inherent in the social margins and the collective knowledge that is evoked, based on past experiences, to confront the powerful.

Alongside “success,” narratives of the “outside” were another related ethnographic data I collected during my fieldwork. It was an expression that IT workers habitually used to demarcate their lives and circumstances from those who continue to be external spectators of IT. The inside of IT is broader than the industry itself; it included the emerging middle classes who are participating in the neoliberal market in different professional capacities, such as in biotech, banking, real estate, and so on. IT in this sense stands as a metaphor for the arrival of the middle class. The outside comprises those who are unqualified to participate in or who are even undeserving of the “good life,” mainly because of their economic dispossession, such as the “urban poor” in my research. The outside offers us an analytic opportunity to interrogate the picture of change embraced by IT. Stated differently, rather than looking from outside IT, the outside is the window to look *into* IT. The IT entrepreneurs at Infosys assertively told me that their commitment to social change is not limited to the industry and is not even about the industry any longer; according to them, by the late 1990s the industry had established an “equitable” relationship with the state. The state, they stressed, was aware that supporting the IT industry was critical for India to gain global recognition. Therefore, Narayan Murthy (cofounder and chairman-emeritus of Infosys Limited), Nandan Nilekani, and others insisted that I definitely look “outside” IT, which is critical to their agenda of instituting market reforms in the state apparatus. In this sense, the outside is in fact not incidental or merely adjacent to the inside—that is, IT—but is at its core. Yet, what came across in my conversations at Infosys is that they perceived the outside as a homogeneous domain that is malleable and easily amenable to market transformations. Such a portrayal raised several questions. How does one account for the dichotomy between IT and the outside? And why is the outside necessarily perceived as “homogeneous”? What is at stake in this homogeneity when we think of a neoliberal schema?

The “outside” nonetheless posed an ethnographic challenge: What could be an ideal research site? As I was seeking a possible site, Infosys invited me to attend a citizens’ meeting to discuss issues that are affecting city governance. They thought I would be interested because Nandan Nilekani was one of the key speakers. I initially interpreted Nilekani’s involvement as a well-known denizen of the city. However, when I heard him speak that day, it was obvious that he was promoting the market ideals that would streamline governance and improve citizen engagement. He stressed the value of “accountability” and “transparency” while talking about a water project in the city. Both these values that have guided his experience with corporate governance, he argued, would be useful in organizing public governance, as well. He urged the audience to rethink their relationship with the state, particularly in relation to basic amenities such as water. Following this he mentioned an impending water project known as Greater Bangalore Water and Sewerage Project (Water Project) and the role of Janaagraha, a nongovernmental organization (NGO).

Janaagraha was organizing the citizens’ participation component of the Water Project that involved monitoring and holding the state accountable for any delay and/or corruption. The Water and Sanitation Program of the World Bank was funding this component. In the brief window I found during lunch that day, I introduced myself to Ramesh Ramanathan, the cofounder of Janaagraha, along with his wife, Swati Ramanathan. In order to gain a sense of the “unique” work his NGO is involved in, Ramanathan invited me to attend the “Monday Morning Meetings” at his organization, where they present updates on the various projects. He assured me that if I was interested in measuring change, his organization would be a good place since “we are a citizens’ platform and work on re-engaging citizens with the state after a gap of five decades.”¹² Nilekani and Ramanathan had worked together as part of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF). The BATF was a public-private initiative founded by the then chief minister of Karnataka, S. M. Krishna, to reform urban governance in Bangalore. Therefore, like Nilekani, Ramanathan trusted the market as the only tool that can bring about substantive changes both in the way the state functions and how citizens can involve themselves in governance as “stakeholders” of the nation. The Water Project, he stressed, would be a useful area to study the renewed engagement between the state and the citizens. At the end he said, “We do not need to reinvent the wheel if the market has succeeded in every other area.” Attending the citizens’ meeting that day led me to my “outside” infrastructural site.

12. At that time, the Ramanathans were reluctant to label Janaagraha as an NGO. They preferred to call it a “citizen’s platform” to indicate its urban dimension and also to separate it from the developmental paradigm, which is often seen as the domain of NGO work. I have discussed this active delinking that the urban middle class has embraced elsewhere (Dasgupta 2012).

The study of infrastructure is not new but is developing as a more focused area of inquiry.¹³ In 2012 *Cultural Anthropology* curated a volume, which dwelt on how scholars have started theorizing the subject of infrastructure through ethnographic work.¹⁴ Theoretically this ranges from thinking of infrastructure as a “social-material assemblage” (Nikhil Anand) to how the ordinariness of infrastructure is “appropriated and recombined” by users (Jonathan Bach) and then how we can think of it through the mechanism of gift and reciprocity (Daniel Mains). Elyachar, on the other hand, is reluctant to theorize infrastructure yet because, she says, “At certain moments fuzzy concepts are more helpful to capture the number of interlinked issues.”¹⁵ My own theorization of water supply as a question of infrastructure relates to the above positions, but I am also interested in water being the paradigmatic case for the provision of basic amenities. Further, through this work, I underscore how the vocabulary of the market, such as transparency, rather ironically coincides with the nature of water.¹⁶

The Water Project was designed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and primarily involved the privatization of water funded jointly by the beneficiary citizen contribution, market bonds, mega city loan schemes, and the government of Karnataka. The continuity of the market narrative between IT and the Water Project was remarkably seamless and thorough as though they were identical areas of human life. Throughout my fieldwork I found it quite arduous to engage people both at Infosys and Janaagraha to attend to the specious similarities being drawn between IT, a capitalist enterprise, and water, a basic and sacred amenity. Though some partially acknowledged the difference, their overarching idea was that by creating a water market one can end the water woes that plague the city, and water scarcity was definitely a major infrastructure issue in burgeoning Bangalore. Such awkward and unexpected interrelationships have led to the rise of tensions, especially around basic amenities, that reflect deeper schisms in a social order that was already premised on caste and class hierarchies. The depth of neoliberalism, as Harvey writes, lies in the belief that “if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security or environmental pollution), then they must be created, by state action if necessary” (2007: 2). The Water Project, in this case, was a

13. Susan Leigh Star’s work was perhaps the first to dwell on this subject directly. See Star (1999).

14. “Infrastructure: Commentary from Nikhil Anand, Johnathan Bach, Julia Elyachar, and Daniel Mains,” Curated Collections, *Cultural Anthropology Online*, November 26, 2012, available at http://production.culanth.org/curated_collections/11-infrastructure/discussions/6-infrastructure-commentary-from-nikhil-anand-johnathan-bach-julia-elyachar-and-daniel-mains (accessed January 18, 2013).

15. Ibid.

16. See Dasgupta (2010).

state-initiated infrastructure project, but it was based on the public-private partnership model. Studying water, which is considered sacred in the Hindu imaginary, in its reincarnation as commodity opened up a new dimension to explore how the market shifts the meaning of citizenship and belonging to the nation-state. The new notion of belonging was gradually linking citizenship to consumption, where one can be acknowledged as a citizen only as a consumer of services and products.

Treanor makes a compelling argument in this context, that neoliberalism is “the desire to intensify and expand the market, by increasing the number, frequency, repeatability, and formalization of transactions.”¹⁷ To this formulation I would like to add that the desire for a new normativity based on the market was ethnographically deep. As I started charting the Water Project, besides the middle class I came to know slum residents, or “urban poor” as they were officially categorized, who would be included in the new initiative. The urban poor were now being asked to pay toward the project cost, which was adjusted according to the square feet of their dwelling and also for the water they would eventually consume. The urban poor characterized these payments as “unacceptable demands” by the state since historically they received free water as a public service to those below the poverty line. The resistance to the market ideals started mounting as I began my work in the slums.

Over the past decades, the involvement of NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) in development projects has become an established norm, which is often labeled as “participation” of the beneficiaries in making decisions about projects’ designs and their implementation. International donor agencies, such as the World Bank, have been influential in setting this new paradigm in motion. Part of this initiative was meant to counter the critique of the top-down model of the projects. However, on the other side, with the spread of neoliberal values, the states in the developing world increasingly came to be portrayed as “corrupt” institutions with a severe lack of “transparency” and “accountability.” This kind of dismal portrayal of public governance was disseminated by the agencies like the World Bank and was eagerly embraced by the rising middle class, particularly middle-class NGOs, who were looking for an ideological sponsor to confine the role of the state as a guarantor of the market economy. Scholars have noted the record rise of NGOs and CBOs recently in countries like India. Baviskar writes, “Among the social groups and associations that are considered to make up the civil society, NGOs have become especially prominent in the last two decades” (2001: 1). Thus, we need to ask whether we can substitute civil society in the Gramscian sense with NGOs’ and CBOs’ contributions. Though these organizations stand apart from and yet are able to impact the state, can they represent class

17. Paul Treanor, “Neoliberalism: Origins, Theory, Definition,” available at <http://www.web.inter.nl.net/users/Paul.Treanor/neoliberalism.html>, 9 (accessed April 6, 2015).

interests equitably? Or do these emergences indicate a new form of class politics that is otherwise disguised in the name of the collective good?

Sharma and Bhide (2005), examining the World Bank-funded Slum Sanitation Program (SSP) in Mumbai, have argued that the participation of the slum dwellers was minimal despite the involvement of well-established NGOs, such as the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC). I encountered a similar situation while working in the slums of Bangalore, where one resident commented, to the ironic amusement of others, “Yes, we will participate, because we are good at it.” Therefore, rather than rushing to evaluate “empowerment” achieved through participation, which we often see in development agency reports, it is important to examine the politics of “participation” itself.

Another recent issue that has surfaced in the development sphere is the increasing donor participation of countries like India, China, and Brazil, which were previously recipients of aid. As Emma Mawdsley has argued, the fracturing of what was previously a domain of the Western powers has led to a complex situation. She contends that this calls for a recalibration of “international relations and political economy of development” along with a departure from the traditional analytical binaries such as “North-South,” “East-West,” “developed-developing,” “First-Second-Thirds Worlds” (Mawdsley 2012: 3). Elsewhere I have argued that Janaagraha’s participation in the Water Project was intended to delink participation from the sphere of development and claim it for the market (Dasgupta 2012). As I discuss later, Janaagraha was even reluctant to include the urban poor as a separate module in the participation structure. Their primary argument was “citizens” is already inclusive and does not necessitate a separation by class. They finally agreed to do so only when the Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) of the World Bank made it mandatory for them to receive the funds. Such reluctance to involve the poor based on class location or even labeling the Water Project as a “development project” within a donor-recipient country like India, signals the contemporary complexity of the field that Mawdsley discusses in her work.

Based on the above theoretical framework, some questions that arose in my discussion with the slum residents were the following: What does it mean to pay to connect to the main water pipe? Isn’t it part of the government’s responsibility? Why do we have to pay for water now? What has changed? Is the government no longer going to take care of the poor? Finally, where is the water going to come from, since the river (meaning Cauvery) is so far away? These questions unequivocally displayed the core problems of market reforms. Together—the slum dwellers and I—were led to a space where the otherwise “impeccable” logic of the market endorsed by IT was fraying at the edges. Answers were difficult to come by, but the questions mattered. Even when some state actors were confronted with these questions, they were

befuddled. Contrary to the expectation of the IT narrative, the state was not receding or reincarnating itself to make way for the market. Rather, what was emerging was a state that was muddling through the new set of practices that had descended on it.

My meeting with local councilors, who often used water to garner votes in the slums, revealed that they were grappling with the new ideology and government processes that they themselves barely understood. This was further demonstrated in my work with the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (Water Board),¹⁸ a para-statal agency bestowed with the task of supervising the implementation of the project. In several meetings I attended at the Water Board, engineers who had years of experience working in the slums of Bangalore were hesitant about charging the urban poor for water. The urban poor, on the other hand, were deeply aware of this kind of predicament faced by administrators and elected councilors. Nikhil Anand, in his work on water supply in Mumbai settlements, argues that strategies to secure water invite us to “move beyond binary theorizations of haves and have-nots that are commonplace in writings about cities, especially those in the Global South” (2011: 543). To think of reassigning water as a commodity under privatization initiatives therefore is not merely about an added financial burden for the urban poor. Such changes further indicate the recession of final frontiers, water in this case, that long enabled the urban poor to engage, even minimally, in the power structure. The urban poor resistance to water privatization is not archaic; it is, as Raymond Williams helps us reflect, “residual.” The residual is not “archaic” because it not “wholly recognized as an element of the past” (Williams 1977: 122). In bringing the urban poor within the ambit of my analysis, I want to suggest that despite their otherwise marginal locations, their resistance is constitutive of the neoliberal discourse.

As I completed this manuscript, the contemporaneity that framed my ethnography somewhat changed. However, the changes, rather than negating, have come to reinforce the neoliberal system that I set out to study. There are four issues that I feel compelled to address to resituate this work. First, the current global economic downturn and its effect on the IT industry in India; second, the increasing role of IT entrepreneurs like Nilekani in public governance and seeking public office and losing in the 2014 election; third, the increasing middle-class “capture of the state” that is congealing as a wider urban middle-class ethos rather than being confined to organizations such as Janaagraha; and, fourth, the 2014 election itself that catapulted the Hindu fundamentalist party, BJP, to power at the center by a 53 percent

18. I still selectively use BWSSB while referring to formal acts and policies.

majority ending the coalition government phase, the norm for some decades now. Apparently these events seem disconnected and somewhat contradictory because Nilekani's defeat may seem to be the demise of the IT ideology that endorsed the market for public governance. However, when we consider that Narendra Modi, the current prime minister of India and the leader of the BJP, won on a platform of the "Gujarat Model of Development," which favors the neoliberal agenda and is protective of what Modi himself has termed the "neo-middle class," a more complex picture of the market-based ideology emerges. The ideology now signals a wider emergence of a new middle-class "capture of the state" to endorse marketplace consumerism. Further, as I show in Chapter 3, while IT professionals may not endorse aggressive Hinduism, sympathies for a lighter version of Hindu nationalism, or "Hindutva Lite,"¹⁹ was quite common, just like it is among middle-class India now.

The recent global economic downturn has undoubtedly affected the IT industry in India since most of the clients of the industry are located in the United States and Western Europe. Based on these findings, *The Hindu* reported, "For the first time in 47 quarters, Infosys, hitherto the bellwether of the sector, missed its revenue growth guidance. Its guidance for 2012–13 is just 8–10 per cent growth in U.S. dollar terms compared with the industry association National Association of Software and Service Companies' (NASSCOM's) guidance of 11–14 per cent."²⁰

Though Infosys reported increased revenue in the April–June quarter in 2014, according to the *International Business Times*, the future projects of the company are not as promising compared with the past since the company reduced its earnings per share guidance for 2012 to 2.97 from its \$3.03 projection last year.²¹ The *Wall Street Journal* further reported that countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Mexico pose a serious threat to the outsourcing industry in India.²²

Despite the economic slump, IT entrepreneurs continue to significantly carve out their space in public governance. As they had mentioned to me during my fieldwork, both Murthy and Nilekani had keen interest in reforming the state and having India embark on a new path as a nation worth reckoning within geopolitics. Nilekani contested the 2014 election from the Bangalore South constituency on a Congress ticket but lost to his opponent, BJP candidate Ananth Kumar. In his speech, while conceding defeat, he pointed out

19. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for suggesting this apposite term.

20. "Uncertain Times Ahead for Indian IT Sector," *The Hindu*, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-business/uncertain-times-ahead-for-indian-it-sector/article3440366.ece> (accessed October 2014).

21. Available at <http://www.ibtimes.com/indias-it-outsourcing-industry-faces-strain-global-economic-downturn-853539> (accessed October 29, 2012).

22. Available at <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304765304577478193970187310.html> (accessed October 29, 2012).

that “I am disappointed . . . This is my first election. I’ve learnt a lot in this election . . . I will not quit politics. I will continue working for the Congress. I will not only work for issues related to my constituency, but will continue working for Bangalore.”²³ His intention of engaging in public governance is not merely a matter of an election speech but points to his long-standing involvement with the state.

In 2009 Nilekani stepped aside (not down) from his official corporate position in Infosys to serve as the chairman of the new Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). The UIDAI would implement the Aadhaar Scheme, to endow citizens with a unique identification number and also maintain a database of citizens’ biometrics and other biographical data. The idea was originally proposed by Infosys as a governance tool, particularly by Nilekani, and it is thus not surprising that he was supervising the initiative. The Aadhaar number is a tracking device similar to the social security number in the United States, but the official narrative states that it is meant to address election fraud and widespread embezzlement of funds that are especially targeted toward poverty alleviation. Tracking populations, in a Foucauldian framework, is a mark of governmentality, and inducting an entrepreneur to administer the system is indicative of a deeper change in the notion of belonging and citizenship, something I argue in this book. Nilekani’s role in the state now reiterates my central thesis to understand the extent of the IT success narrative beyond the domain of the industry. However, in 2014 Nilekani stepped down as the chairman of the UIDAI to run for office in the nationwide elections.

Nevertheless, Nilekani’s involvement was not unprecedented. The involvement of IT entrepreneurs in public governance has been an emerging social practice for nearly two decades now. For instance, the construction of the new airport was a major topic of discussion at Infosys while I was doing fieldwork mainly because Narayan Murthy was its chairman at that time. The old Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, or HAL, airport,²⁴ which I used during my fieldwork, was located in the southeastern part of the city. Being of modest scope, it was able to handle a decent volume of air traffic. However, the new airport, which would be built outside the city, was intended to expand the capacity of air traffic in and out of Bangalore. It was promoted as a major stride in transforming Bangalore into a global city, and companies such as Larsen and Toubro, Siemens, and Unique Zurich Airport were consulted for the airport design. In 2005 Narayana Murthy resigned as the chairman after being criticized by H. D. Deve Gowda (former prime minister and then coalition

23. Available at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/Election-results-2014-I-concede-defeat-to-Ananth-Nandan-Nilekani-says/articleshow/35227480.cms> (accessed September 15, 2014).

24. Since 2008 the old airport has been used by HAL and the Indian air force for testing purposes only.

leader of Janata Dal–Secular [JDS] with the Dharam Singh–led Congress) for the delay in the construction and also on issues of land. The controversy over land allocation for the airport brought out issues that were related to land use in general for urban development. The Joint House Committee investigated the airport where Murthy, along with others involved, has been accused of a “poor quality of workmanship” and the absence of an ambience that reflects the specific “culture and glory of Karnataka” (*Economic Times*, December 22, 2009). Even the discourse that framed his resignation is quite revealing.

In a letter Murthy wrote to then chief minister Dharam Singh he mentioned his angst that the time and effort he had put in for five years were not acknowledged.²⁵ What he did not reference in the letter or his press statements was the related allegation JDS brought about Infosys’s application for 845 acres of land in the peri-urban area of the city to expand its facilities. JDS wanted an investigation into how land was being distributed to IT companies and, based on that, whether Murthy was ethically qualified to represent the private wing of a public-private infrastructural project.²⁶ At Infosys, Murthy’s resignation was construed as “unfortunate” not because it was seen as his loss, but because of the state’s inability to retain and appreciate, as one engineer affectively put it, “an ethical and globally renowned entrepreneur who was willing to go beyond his duties as a citizen to end corruption and serve the nation.”

When I mentioned the land issue to the engineers, it was once again cast as the state’s reluctance to appreciate IT’s contribution to the nation. Murthy’s chairmanship, as the IT industry justified, aligned well with his “mentor” position to oversee innovative work both in Infosys as well as in public infrastructure. In terms of expertise, it is quite difficult to see the connection between the two—software and airport—other than that they are both based on neoliberal tenets. It was, however, known that since the airport would be a critical node in global capitalism, Narayan Murthy was the obvious choice considering his presence in worldwide business. However, Narendra Pani (2006) reminds us that the new airport was just one of many instances of the neoliberal urban reform agenda in Bangalore. The S. M. Krishna government, Pani argues, would identify a set of infrastructural projects and then locate private investors for them. This kind of approach is based on arriving at a technical fix rather than addressing collective urban issues. Therefore, land that was obtained as part of the airport project was based on market acquisition in place of equitable price.

S. M. Krishna, especially in founding BATF, aggressively extended public governance to the private sector to reorganize the city. Nilekani, who headed BATF, worked alongside Ramesh Ramanathan, an ex-banker from London

25. *Hindu Business Online*, October 21, 2005.

26. *Ibid.*

and New York, Devi Shetty, a prominent surgeon, and others to reform the urban infrastructure that would facilitate the flow of global capital. Janaki Nair has aptly described the coalition of IT entrepreneurs and other professionals charged with the new task of renewing Bangalore as the “captains of the new economy.” She argues that the focus of reform was “roads rather than public transport, garbage and pollution rather than public housing” (2005: 336). Matthew Gandy (2008) has noted similar middle-class politics, particularly in reference to water supply in Mumbai. Gandy attributes the dismal state of water supply to the slums to the “extent to which the Indian state has been ‘captured’ by the middle classes so that its political agenda has been consistently diverted from the universal provision of basic services” (2008: 121). Added to this are middle-class “opt-out” strategies, such as bore wells, pumps, and tankers to access water outside the state provisions, and “environmental improvement,” that is, to “clean up” the city for the “respectable citizens” (Gandy 2008). While the Hindu national Shiv Sena movement altered the urban landscape of Mumbai, in Bangalore, the middle-class “capture of the state” was especially emboldened by state representatives, such as S. M. Krishna.

The middle-class “capture of the state” has become a constitutive phenomenon in Indian politics visible in affective events such as the hunger strike by Kishan Babu Rao Hazare (better known as Anna Hazare) in April 2011 to institute the Lokpal Bill (anticorruption bill) alongside the rise of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP; Party of the Ordinary Man) formed in 2012.²⁷ Both address the question of corruption and both involved overwhelming participation by the urban educated middle class. The middle-class exasperation about state “corruption,” the need for “transparency,” and the involvement of citizens in public governance has strengthened over the years, with the AAP sweeping the Delhi Legislative Assembly Election in 2013, though they later lost the 2014 general elections. In the meantime, Janaagraha, an organization that proudly claims it is the “citizens’ platform,” had extended its work beyond Bangalore with Ramesh Ramanathan being named as one of the members of the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNURM). The organization, among other things, now manages a nationwide initiative titled “I Paid a Bribe,” where a person can anonymously report an incidence of corruption. The website offers a visual image of “India’s Corruption Monitor,” which dynamically calculates the total amount paid in bribes, the number of reports filed, and from which cities. The moral undertone is obvious; citizens and

27. Arvind Kejriwal, a former civil servant in the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), was a prominent Right to Information (RTI) activist and a close associate of Kishan Babu Rao Hazare in that initiative. However, they later split over the question of political engagement through the electoral process, and Kejriwal went on to form the AAP. For a detailed discussion of AAP, see Roy (2014). For an analysis of the connection between the Anna Hazare movement and the contemporary middle class, see Sitapati (2011).

state officials who refuse to engage in bribery are adulated as “Bribe Fighters” and “Honest Officers,” respectively.²⁸

However, one of the issues that remain constant in my work and in the work of other scholars who have examined urban middle-class activism is the dominance of the supposed middle-class value of “honesty” and the preeminence of the class based on education achievements. Roy, in analyzing the “party-building” strategies of AAP, writes, “Sooner or later (party workers would) return to the ‘problem’ of the slum voter,” who, by participating in “vote buying” to mitigate their harsh conditions, are key to their own misery and, more importantly, in undermining the power of democracy (2014: 51). Like the Anna Hazare movement, where corporate employees participated widely, the AAP, whose leadership was often engaged in “management speak,” and Janaagraha, as I show through my ethnography, were not only spaces marked by and for the educated middle class; the pedagogical and didactic mission to elevate the urban poor, with little effort to understand their social context, was an unwavering pursuit. Together, these indicate the preeminence of the middle class not simply as a growing consumer class but one that is invested, directly or indirectly, in the “capture of the state,” which has mostly emerged from a sense of “minoritization and victimization” (Khandekar 2013) by the Indian state despite being law-abiding and taxpaying “honest” citizens.

Corruption was a dominant theme in the 2014 elections, especially regarding the incumbent Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA). The electoral pundits in the media and the BJP-led NDA (National Democratic Alliance) made recurring references to the coal scam, the 2G Spectrum provision, the commonwealth game fiasco, the Aadarsh Housing scam, and so on. The final victory of the BJP by a majority is therefore often attributed to the BJP’s assurance of a corruption-free nation. However, Chhibber, along with his colleagues, has argued, “There is a crucial difference in how voters think about corruption and how political parties and leaders represent this issue in their campaigns. Voters care more about the corruption they encounter on an everyday basis, whereas parties make the issue a spectacle” (Chhibber, Shah, and Verma 2014). The everyday experience of corruption through which notions of the state congeals is well documented in ethnographic work, as well (Gupta 2005). Even when we look at the “I Paid a Bribe” initiative, the focus is not necessarily on larger scams but the mundane, everyday nature of soliciting, offering, or refusing bribes. It is plausible that the everyday experience of corruption may have resonated with the larger anticorruption tenor of the BJP, which may have led to the win. Regardless, the urban middle class is the single most powerful mouthpiece against corruption considering

28. Available at <http://www.ipaidabribe.com/bribe-trends#gsc.tab=0> (accessed September 16, 2014).

the perceived or real integrity of its members. Narendra Modi proactively attended to this constituency during his campaign. Later in July his government's budget offered substantial concessions in income tax, savings, and housing loans that disproportionately benefited the middle class ("Onwards to the Neo-economy" 2014).

The other related aspect of the 2014 general election was the definite and obsequious penchant for neoliberalism. Modi is supposed to have won by endorsing the "developmental" agenda, drawing on the "Gujarat Model of Development," the state where he was the chief minister.²⁹ However, scholars like Jean Dreze (2014) have shown that when we consider Human Development Indexes (child well-being, food, shelter, schooling, health care, sanitation, and so on), Gujarat ranks nine out of the twenty in the state list, far behind Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south. Gujarat, Dreze (2014) contends, is at best in the "middle" and definitely not the "model." Yet the question remains, as Soundaraya Chidambaram (2014) has pointed out: How does the electorate comprehend development—is it only a matter of GDP or are social inequities taken into account? It is my argument, which aligns with the ethnographic evidence that I present here, that the middle-class capture of the state has shifted the politics of governance and belonging in India to privilege public-private partnerships where the state is required to take a progressively minimal role. Returning to the 2014 budget, it has eased the flow of both foreign and domestic capital primarily through the promotion of public-private partnerships.³⁰ Overall, the contemporary shifts further reinforce the economic and political processes that brought visibility to IT and organizations like Janaagraha.

Finally, with BJP coming to power, a party that has strong ties with Hindu fundamentalist organizations, such as the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangha (RSS),³¹ dedicated to the promotion of Hindutva, the concern over whether India is now officially entering the "saffron" (color of Hindu nationalism) phase is legitimate. As an ideology, Hindutva was originally formulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1923 as a treatise titled (then published anonymously) *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu*. Hindutva, in Savarkar's exposition, is not necessarily a religious identity; it is a historical confluence of "Hindus, a Nation," a territory on the banks of the Sindhu' and a race united by the "Common Culture," the common *Sanskriti* (civilization). However, this bond between the land and the culture was interrupted by "foreign invaders," starting with the invasion of Muhammad of Ghazni in A.D. 1001, which led to the conversion of a segment of the population to Islam, who then irrevers-

29. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/the-gujarat-model/> (accessed September 17, 2014).

30. See "Onwards to the Neo-economy" (2014) for a detailed discussion of the 2014 budget.

31. See <http://www.rss.org> for details about the organization.

ibly ceased to be part of the land (Jaffrelot 2007). Savarkar's "othering" of the Muslims is one of the prime tenets of Hindutva and underscores the fervent narratives and practices of the RSS and the BJP to quite some extent.

Interestingly, Modi was strategically silent about Hindutva during his election campaign, instead highlighting the "development" plan. This has attracted rather than distract scholars about the future of the nation since Modi is a certified RSS activist (Teltumbde 2014). Anand Teltumbde has argued that rather than taking the rigid approach, Modi is embracing a "soft approach towards Hindutva by systematically saffronising [*sic*] institutions, as he did in Gujarat," citing the instance of appointing Y. Sudershan Rao, a historian who is known to have sought the virtue of the caste system and determine dates of the epic *Mahabharata* (Teltumbde 2014: 11). Teltumbde also points out that Hindutva aligns well with neoliberalism, which he terms "Saffron Neoliberalism." Both are designed to privilege the already privileged, the Hindus and upper classes, respectively (Teltumbde 2014). The link between the urban middle-class Hindus, for instance, in Infosys and Janaagraha, and Hindutva is not the kind espoused by RSS, but it aligns rather well with Modi's approach, which as I mentioned earlier, can be thought of as "Hindutva Lite." During my ethnographic work I seldom encountered overt references to Hindutva, but the underscoring narrative upheld what was often seen as an intrinsic connection between Hinduism and science. The pride in the success of IT among software developers in Infosys or middle-class activism in Janaagraha were anchored to a vision that had little space for the "other," the "other" being Muslims or the lower classes. In a national political context that assembles Hindutva, science, and the neoliberal market in an unprecedented synthesis, the shifting grounds of public governance that I document here have reached a new level of legitimacy.