



# Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay.

*Thomas Blom Hansen*

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When Bombay changed its name to Mumbai in 1995, it was the culmination of a long process that transformed India's primary symbol of modernity and cultural diversity into a site of intense ethnic conflict and violent nationalism. *Wages of Violence* is a startling account of how the city's atmosphere, dominant public languages, and power structures have changed since the 1960s.

The book centers on how Shiv Sena, a militant Hindu movement, has advanced a new, "plebeian" political culture and has undermined democratic rule in India's premier city. Drawing on a large body of archival material and conversations with people from all walks of life, Thomas Blom Hansen paints a vivid picture of this dynamic and violent movement.

Challenging conventional views of recent trends in Indian politics, Hansen shows that the xenophobic public culture of today's Mumbai has deep roots in the region's history and its contested identities. We are also given revealing insights into the city's Muslim communities and the authorities' understanding and control of the ethno-religious subcultures in the city. Hansen argues cogently that Shiv Sena's success represents the violent possibilities of the "vernacularization" of democracy in India. Unfolding at a juncture where the globalization of India's economy is having a deepening impact on the lives of ordinary people, this is a story that resonates with the directions urban growth is taking both elsewhere in India and beyond.

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