THREE. COLLECTIVE ASSEMBLY AND THE “ROAR OF THE PEOPLE”

Corporeal Forms of “Making Known” and the Deliberative Turn

As certain of these persons have persisted in attending daily at the Board of Trade office, the Board here explain that, under the existing Regulations each *Individual* weaver, if aggrieved, has the means of laying his Complaint before the Commercial Resident, or as the case may be of proceeding by an action in the Zillah Court, and with this protection held out to the weavers of Vizagapatam *Individually*, The Board cannot sanction Combinations of weavers for the purpose of Making General Complaints nor acknowledge persons stating themselves to be agents of such Combinations. The Board cannot dismiss this Petition without noticing the disrespectful *style* thereof to the authorities of Government. —J. GWATKIN, Secretary, Board of Trade, Madras, March 1, 1817

Why is it that we have students here forming action committees? When they came to me, I told them clearly that I was prepared to meet students but not an Action Committee. I do not accept action committees of students or workers or anyone else. —JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, prime minister of India, “Students and Discipline,” Patna, August 30, 1955

“This is an atrocity,” Kaloji Narayana Rao exclaimed, banging his hand on the table for emphasis. “This is an atrocity and exploitation. The Telangana person will never be in advantage in any field, spoken language or written language. Neither he can become a storywriter, nor a writer, nor a poet, nor an essayist. Nothing. In everything he will fail.” Five years before his death in 2002, I sat with the octogenarian activist in his front room one humid April afternoon. A long-standing advocate of the creation of a separate regional state of Telangana within the Indian nation as a response to economic and cultural domination by migrants from coastal regions of Telugu-speaking southern India, Kaloji emphasized the great harm caused by the Telugu Spoken Language Movement (Vyavahārika Bhāṣa Udyamam) of the early twentieth century. The movement, which sought to make written Telugu more closely resemble ordinary educated speech, has been widely historicized as a liberal effort to modernize the Telugu language and make literacy in Telugu (the most widely spoken language in southern India) easier to acquire, extending the written language to a broader population.[1] But Kaloji argued that the movement had instead perpetuated a widespread "atrocity" and "exploitation" of the residents of the more economically marginalized Telugu-speaking regions, particularly in the wake of the linguistic reorganization of India in 1956.[2] By defining the speech of dominant groups within the most agriculturally prosperous and economically powerful districts of Telugu-speaking south India as the new "standard Telugu," advocates of the Spoken Language Movement effectively placed those from the remaining regions under linguistic domination.

Kaloji was not alone in experiencing linguistic domination. During my fieldwork numerous residents of Telangana reported having their speech ignored or mocked by migrants from coastal Andhra. Sridevi, who grew up in the Telangana district of Mahbubnagar, described her experience in a botany class at Osmania University in Hyderabad. Even though Osmania University and the city of Hyderabad both lie within Telangana and she correctly identified a groundnut plant by using the term commonly used for the plant in Telangana, her answer was greeted with laughter from the professor and the rest of the class, most of whom were from coastal Andhra.

The experience of domination and humiliation described by Kaloji, Sridevi, and many others—not only linguistic but also economic and political—fueled the widespread assemblies, strikes, and other public performances that culminated in the creation of India's twenty-ninth state on June 2, 2014. Organized by the Telangana Joint Action Committee, the umbrella organization formed in 2009 to coordinate the efforts of a wide range of existing organizations, the Jana Garjana (People's Roar) assemblies and Sakala Janula Samme (All People's Strike) described in the introduction sought to hold elected officials to their campaign promises to bifurcate the existing regional state of Andhra Pradesh and create the new state of Telangana. These promises had been made and broken several times by different political parties.[3] The massive 2010 and 2011 public meetings—each involving more than a million participants—were just two representational performances in a long series of rallies, processions, long-distance pilgrimages to the site of a seat of power, road and rail blockades, walkouts of hundreds of thousands of government employees, mass resignations of elected officials, and a "Million March," all of which were framed in relation to six decades of earlier efforts by Telangana residents to seek recognition.

The imposition of an alien communicative standard on residents of the more economically disadvantaged Telugu-speaking regions of Telangana might not have been as devastating if it had not occurred along with another, even more significant, shift in communicative regimes. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, individual speech action, the voice of the autonomous individual, and new forms of deliberation and debate—both oral and printed—began to be valorized in ways that reframed the meanings of collective, corporeal forms of representation, communication, and mediation. This chapter examines the relationship between individual speech action and large-scale collective actions like the Jana Garjana assemblies and the Sakala Janula Samme and their respective roles within the world's largest democracy. It uses scholarship from South Asia along with analyses of everyday practice to argue that such collective performances are neither antithetical nor incidental to the functioning of India's democracy but rather play an essential role in how representation works in India today.

To build this argument, the chapter analyzes two of the most dominant Euro-American frameworks used today for understanding democratic politics: deliberative democracy and agonistic pluralism. Using the concept of "civility" as an entry point, I demonstrate that both theoretical approaches fail to account for the larger processes that, over time, have encouraged participation in collective actions—both in India and arguably elsewhere as well. The chapter argues that these frameworks ignore the very conditions that make individual speech audible and legible in the first place: political recognition and the responsiveness of authorities. As Sharika Thiranagama, Tobias Kelly, and Carlos Forment argue in their introduction to a special issue of *Anthropological Theory* on "Civility: Global Perspectives," liberal theoretical approaches emerging from the "development of bourgeois urban cultures of post-Enlightenment Europe" have dominated scholarship not only on democratic participation but also on civility.[4] Querying approaches to civility that explore "how people relate to each other where they would appear to have profound differences," Thiranagama and her coeditors show how these dominant accounts focus primarily on individual comportment in the face of difference: "the public citizen, willing and able to contribute to the wider good" or "free individuals" who "come together in a space of equality."[5] In using the work of Norbert Elias to trace the ways that this civility of the individual emerges not in the face of the disappearance of violence but rather in conjunction with its reorganization, they point to the importance of attending to the state's role in creating conditions of political recognition. They conclude by bringing histories of recent struggles for dignity and self-respect in the context of deeply embedded social hierarchies—including Dalit struggles and the south Indian Self-Respect Movement—into conversation with Étienne Balibar's reflections on the role of civility in confronting dominating forms of violence.[6] Responding to their call to provincialize civility, this chapter places ethnographic analysis of collective action in the context of postcolonial India into dialogue with both the redirection of attention toward the role of the state in creating conditions for civility and Balibar's privileging of collective political action over the comportment of individuals in his conceptualization of civility.[7]

The events that led to the formation of the new Indian state of Telangana in 2014 are just one example of how collective corporeal action has been used in India. Work stoppages and the collective emptying and filling of public spaces occur in India at rates much higher than in many other parts of the world. As fundamental features of everyday political practice in India, they offer a productive context for challenging understandings of collective action, civility, and incivility generated in Euro-American contexts (see figure 3.1).[8] Police records collected over one eleven-month period in 2011 from the ten districts of the Telangana region, for example, document 1,847 separate collective assemblies using public space in which criminal charges were filed—an average of five to six per day. This figure does not include legal assemblies for which permits were obtained or unofficial assemblies in which the police did not intervene, either out of sympathy or indifference.[9] More generally, the combined region of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh saw a dramatic increase from only four agitations in 2007 to 9,882 in 2015 (956 in Andhra Pradesh, and 8,926 in the new state of Telangana).[10] By comparison, the number of agitations in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh—the most populous state in India with a population more than five and a half times that of Telangana—increased from 1,156 in 2006 to 5,758 in 2015.[11]

And yet, despite extensive attention to Gandhi's use of civil disobedience in Indian nationalist confrontations of British colonial rule,[12] the tools and frameworks for thinking about political action within India's contemporary democracy continue to be heavily influenced by Western political theory's attention to individuals as the operative political unit, either as voters or

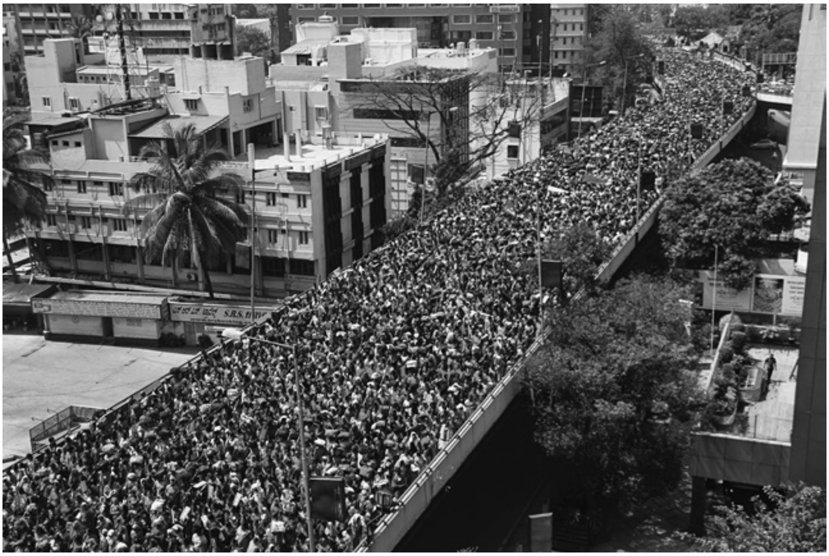

FIGURE 3.1. Thousands of *anganwadi* (rural government childcare) contract workers from throughout the state of Karnataka participate in a "Bangalore Chalo" (Let's Go to Bangalore) procession "to draw the government's attention to their long-pending demands," Bangalore, February 12, 2015 (photo: V. J. K. Nair/All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers and Helpers).

as individual contributors to deliberative processes.[13] Shaped by the specific historical genealogies and definitions that influenced the development of democratic forms in European and North American contexts, scholars continue to identify civil disobedience, general strikes, and other forms of collective political engagement in India as derivative imitations of collective forms that originated in the West only in the wake of industrialization (see chapter 4) or as ancillary to what is perceived to be the real stuff of democracy—elections.[14] Even scholars who have done the most to encourage serious attention to everyday forms of collective corporeal political engagement in India frequently historicize such actions under the signs of insurgency and violence, arguing that they belong to a domain separate from "civil society" or framing them as "rituals of humiliating the officialdom" that are "not oriented to a future"—thereby offering little purchase for considering them as fundamental parts of representational democratic practices or in relation to the concept of civility.[15]

It is for these reasons that closer attention to the everyday practices of India's "actually existing democracy" can help us generate new tools for analyzing collective action and its relationship to civility.[16] In what follows, I outline the frameworks offered by advocates of deliberative democratic models and proponents of agonistic pluralism, before analyzing ethnographic examples from southern India to identify and clear a productive space between the deliberative and agonistic models. As I demonstrate, both approaches see collective corporeal forms of action—both violent and nonviolent—as inherently adversarial in nature while not making similar assumptions about individual speech action. If individual speech action is portrayed as ranging from polite and constructive participation in deliberation to antagonistic incivility, collective action, as I show, is seen as running a narrower gamut beginning with agonistic intervention, which frames others as adversaries, and extending to antagonistic refusals that frame others as enemies.[17] Chantal Mouffe, for example, in her advocacy of a model of agonistic pluralism that can channel "*collective* passions . . . that can [otherwise] tear up the very basis of civility," writes, "*Antagonism* is a struggle between enemies, while *agonism* is struggle between adversaries."[18] There appears to be no space within either deliberative or agonistic frameworks to consider *collective* action as nonadversarial participation on a par with individual contributions to deliberation. Even representations of civil resistance or civil disobedience frame "civil" forms of collective action as adversarial, defined by opposition, rejection, or resistance to existing structures of authority and hegemony. Although not disavowing the important contribution made by agonistic pluralist approaches to the acknowledgment of conflict in the public sphere, I argue that together these two frameworks fail to capture a variety of practices and understandings that operate in India and elsewhere today. The relative density and routine nature of participatory collective practices in the former British colony of India, however, help make clearer the distinction I am drawing between hailing representatives of the state and rejecting them, enabling the wider application of this argument to other contexts in the world.

In framing collective political action as naturally contentious and adversarial, both deliberative and agonistic frameworks fail to account for examples of collective corporeal action that seek to "hail the state" as a way to be heard, recognized, and included—even peripherally—in processes of decision making. The examples that follow build on the argument in chapter 2 that positions collective forms of political action in relation to longer trajectories of efforts to be included within deliberative political processes. Understanding collective political action as a form of amplification and desire for inclusion moves it from its default positioning in opposition to individual speech action, situating it instead along a continuum of participatory forms of action. Without political recognition, I argue, it is difficult for civility to be legible. Approaches to the analysis of collective communicative action, then, need to be able to account for efforts to create the conditions necessary for civility to exist and thrive.

Deliberative Democratic Approaches to Civility: Individual "Soft Speech" as the Foundation of "Civil" Society

John Dryzek argues that "the essence of democracy itself is now widely taken to be deliberation, as opposed to voting, interest aggregation, constitutional rights, or even self-government," marking what he calls "the deliberative turn in democratic theory."[19] But he also observes that this has meant that "deliberative democracy's welcome for forms of communication is conditional."[20] This turn to a Habermasian emphasis on individual speech action and rational debate and deliberation as the most important site of political subjectivity has made civility a crucial foundation for deliberative encounters.[21] Colin Farrelly, for example, defines civility as "a willingness to listen to others, a commitment to resolve our disagreements via deliberation and a democratic process rather than through deception, manipulation or the appeal to violence." Characterizing civility as "a prerequisite for achieving a reasoned, negotiated compromise on how we are to live together as a society," he contrasts what he calls "civic liberalism" with current practices that "pit factions of society against one another in a struggle to win or retain political power."[22]

The definition of civility as something on which deliberative democracy and a functioning civil society depend locates it firmly within the autonomous individual as a set of practices or style of comportment to be affirmed and cultivated as preparation for participation as an individual within deliberative processes. Edward Shils, for example, makes a distinction in his definition of civility between "the civility of good manners" and "the civility of civil society." The former, he writes, has been understood to mean "courtesy, well-spokenness, moderation, respect for others, self-restraint, gentlemanliness, urbanity, refinement, good manners, politeness . . . the description of the conduct of individuals in the immediate presence of each other." The latter "considers others as fellow-citizens of equal dignity in their rights and obligations as members of civil society; it means regarding other persons, including one's adversaries, as members of the same inclusive collectivity, i.e., as members of the same society, even though they belong to different parties or to different religious communities or to different ethnic groups."[23] Clarifying that the "civility of good manners" is included in the "civility of civil society," Shils characterizes civility as "a mode of political action which postulates that antagonists are also members of the same society, that they participate in the same collective self-consciousness. The individual who acts with civility regards the individuals who are its objects as being one with himself and each other, as being parts of a single entity."[24] Shils invokes Carl Schmitt's characterization of the political activity of a society "organized around the poles of friends and enemies" as the "antithesis of civil society" and as an accurate description only of "societies which are on the verge of or are already engaged in civil war."[25] He then uses this opposition to argue that "the effectiveness of the laws both in the state and in civil society—and the family—depends in part on the civility of individuals."[26] "Softly spoken, respectful speech is more pleasing to listen to than harsh, contemptuous speech," he asserts. "Civility in manners holds anger and resentment in check; it has a calming, pacifying effect on the sentiment. It might make for less excitability. Civil manners are aesthetically pleasing and morally right. Civil manners redound to the benefit of political activity."[27] Thus, it is soft speech, expressed by individuals, that best characterizes civility for Shils.

Richard Boyd also offers two versions of the definition of civility, distinguishing between the "formal" meaning of civility, or "the manners, politeness, courtesies or other formalities of face-to-face interactions in everyday life," and the "substantive" meaning, "the condition of being a member of a political community."[28] The former implies that "to be 'civil' is to speak or interact with others in ways that are mannerly, respectful or sociable," whereas the latter brings into focus the "attendant rights and responsibility" linked to membership in "the same political community, interacting on grounds of civic equality."[29] The analyses offered by Shils and Boyd are representative of liberal understandings of civility more generally in their emphasis on the individual as the site of civility—whether focusing on individual comportment, the rights and responsibilities of the individual as a member of a political community, or the regard that individuals hold for others. Viewed in this way, civility is recognizable in the behavior, comportment, and, most of all, the speech of individuals. "Respect for others" (including one's adversaries), "softly spoken, respectful speech," the holding of "anger and resentment [and other strong emotion] in check"—these are the marks of civility on which civil society is thought to be built. In this chapter, however, I demonstrate that placing attention on the speech and comportment of individuals ignores the very conditions that enable soft speech to be audible in the first place: recognition and responsiveness.

Rather than approaching civility as a quality of comportment or manners locatable within autonomous individuals and forming a precondition for democracy, as advocates of deliberative democracy do, I argue that we can approach civility as a condition created through recognition and the existence of a responsive state—one whose representatives entertain and give audience to the concerns and grievances of the governed and recognize them as political subjects. Viewing civility as an effect rather than a cause or precondition enables us to highlight both the discontinuities and the continuities of the relationship between state representatives and those who seek to interact with and be recognized by them. I define a responsive state, then, as one in which representatives recognize their authority as contingent on their ongoing relationship with and responsiveness to those whom they govern. Viewed in this way, some forms of apparent incivility—ranging from acts interpreted as disrespect to varieties of violence and disruptive behavior—appear structurally as the product of unresponsive, repressive, or inflexible authorities. In other words, only in a context in which authorities recognize and are responsive to the concerns, grievances, and conditions of life of its citizens, and offer structures through which these considerations can not only be expressed but also heard, can civility thrive. A goal of this book is to shift our analytic attention away from the comportment surrounding individual communicative actions to that surrounding the other end of the communicative chain: what Richard Burghart calls "the conditions of listening."[30] Although many proponents of deliberative democracy would agree in theory that "a willingness to listen to others"[31] is as important as "softly spoken, respectful speech,"[32] in practice, it is not at all uncommon for some people to find that their soft speech is more easily heard than the soft speech of others, usually for reasons that have little to do with the rationality of their arguments, as this chapter's examples illustrate.[33]

"The Conditions of Listening"

In his analysis of forms of political communication in Nepal, Burghart challenges from a different angle the assumptions behind an ideal of communicative speech action premised on equality. Burghart suggests that, in the context of South Asia, “the voice of authority . . . is a deliberately curtailed speech in which the words used are few, the amplitude in low.” He combines this with the observations that agency in South Asia is often “expressed by manual passivity and self-restraint” and that these features are imitated “in ‘big caste’ speakers, leaving rustic speakers to express through their vociferousness the necessity of their domination.”[34] There is substantial evidence that sovereigns and high-status speakers in South Asia traditionally did not speak in public and, indeed, did not need to do so to have their desires met and their concerns addressed quickly and efficiently. They might receive subjects and listen to the oration of supplicants, but it was a sign of their power that they did not need to speak. Bernard Bate demonstrates persuasively that political oratory—the speaking of higher-status individuals in public—emerged only in the early decades of the twentieth century:[35]

> This period also saw the transformation of practices among higher-status people who, in previous generations, had left loud, audience-directed utterances (in particular, drumming) to lower classes. The drum, a leather-bound object wielded by the lowest classes and castes, appears as the very paradigm of generalized interpellation in Tamil India, for millennia perhaps, a calling out to a social universe regardless of status or distinction. Its voice or “roar” [*murasu*] spoke to all without distinction, a feature that led *murasu* to become the name of some early Tamil newspapers, texts printed to be broadcast into the world. To be a leader, on the other hand, such as a king or even a district or village-level official, was to be relatively taciturn in speech, even silent; it certainly did not involve anything as vulgar as directly addressing a crowd.[36]

Political leaders, government bureaucrats, chief hostel wardens, and others of status inherited from these earlier sovereigns the power to receive supplicants and offer them an audience, but it continues to be a sign of their status that they do not need to speak in public, and when they do, it is more likely to be a public performance of their power than an effort to persuade an audience or contribute as equals to a shared dialogue and open debate.

Ethnographic evidence further substantiates this inheritance. Anastasia Piliavsky’s research in small-town Rajasthan illustrates that, far from promoting free and equal participation in dialogue and debate, public spaces are morally ambivalent spaces of potential exposure in which people from “reputable families” take pains to be extra vigilant about their words, actions, and appearances to tightly protect the images they project. Piliavsky writes, "The general rule for respectable people is that in the bazaar all personal expression must be subdued: one must not speak too much, gesticulate wildly, laugh loudly, or even smile broadly enough to show teeth."[37] Indeed, she observes, "Only 'bazaar people' loaf about in the streets—uncouth youths, rickshaw drivers, beggars, and other riffraff. Respectable people move quickly and cautiously across roads from one familiar place to the next."[38] This does not mean that political leaders and other high-status individuals never speak in public, but when they do, their speeches are sermons rather than "invitations to dialogue or contributions to debate."[39]

But when speaking in public can itself be seen as a sign of low status, this presents a significant problem for those without status who want to intervene in the political sphere. Or, perhaps more accurately, it presents a significant problem for existing theories of speech action and the public sphere. Burghart writes that if "the king or highest authority in the land has the voice of authority and is also the listener, then how is it for others who may wish to speak up? They cannot speak with authority. They cannot speak from a platform upon which they will be listened to." The dilemma for those from historically marginalized backgrounds is that, if they want to speak so they can be heard, they must do so in ways that mark their hierarchically low position—loudly, repeatedly, emotionally, even angrily—or they must find other ways to make known their grievances and achieve recognition. Burghart provides evidence of long-standing collective corporeal strategies for exerting power within asymmetrical relationships in South Asia, suggesting that in a political structure that reflects embedded social hierarchies, power can move in two directions: the person at the top depends on the cooperation and functioning of those below to be able to claim the right to rule. Those who are in distress or have a grievance alert the more powerful party to this fact by "making known" their distress, but not necessarily via speech. Burghart offers an illustration from his work in Nepal, in which engaging in a symbolic or token strike (*sanketi hartāl*) can make a grievance noticeable enough to attract the attention of the person at the top but not noticeable enough to draw public attention. By drawing the attention of their superiors to the fact "that there is some *taklīf* [problem]" and symbolically demonstrating that "the body politic no longer functions," participants create an opportunity for resolution or negotiation.[40] If those in authority do not respond, then they are failing in their obligations, and a moral space has been created for public criticism. This allows dependents to escalate their protest, air their grievance in front of a broader—now public—authority (the authority of public opinion), and pose themselves as obstacles to their superior's freedom of movement. This escalation is more easily achieved collectively, however, as petitioners in Telangana and generations of petitioners in structurally less powerful positions before them have recognized.

As Burghart concludes, "The very act of constructing a moral space for criticism . . . involves an attempt to communicate with the king, rather than simply an act of negation or rebellion. Therefore, as a form of consciousness it is rather more theatrical than critical."[41] This also helps explain why—despite the rise of democratic electoral politics in South Asia with its ideology of one person, one vote—efforts to reify authorities and their relationships with particular social bodies have been a common precondition for political action, offering a dramatic contrast to theories of collective mobilization as a rejection of or resistance to authority. The examples of collective assembly offered throughout this book illustrate the wide range of ways of "making known" in Indian history and support the argument for a theoretical and historiographic framework that recognizes not only speech actions but also the "conditions of listening" within the public sphere and the forms of communicative action that make hearing and recognition possible.

Repeated refusals of recognition can push those who are ignored or silenced toward forms of amplification that enable them to be heard more effectively. Scholars have pointed to the constitutive role of the state in mobilizing collective action. This happens, for example, when the state refuses to recognize caste violence or extend equal legal protections to socially marginalized groups. K. Satyanarayana observes that Dalit collective political mobilization in independent India was spurred by the failures of the state to prosecute upper-caste groups who carried out brutal mass killings of Dalits, including in "Kilvenmani (1968) in Tamil Nadu, Belchi (1977) in Bihar and Karamchedu (1985) in Andhra Pradesh." He argues that "a direct consequence of this modern violence in post-independence India is the emergence of dalit movements."[42] The failures of both the police and the court system to arrest and convict the perpetrators of this violence, as well as the perception that police have sided with them, have played particularly significant roles in mobilizing Dalit collective political organization.[43]

This parallels the pain, frustration, and exhaustion experienced by Black citizens in the United Kingdom and the United States in the face of unequal policing that have led to movements such as Black Lives Matter.[44] A corollary of my argument, then, is that violence need not necessarily be seen as the product or outcome of incivility. Instead, when violence emerges in the context of collective forms of hailing, my proposed shift in analytic attention can reveal it to be the direct result of unresponsive authorities who fail to recognize the concerns of particular segments of citizens or who criminalize or aggressively silence communication through their own initiation of violence.[45]

Agonistic Approaches to Civility and Collective Action: Collectives Pitted in Struggle

Although Farrelly does not explicitly label the model against which he defines civic liberalism—a model in which factions of society are pitted in struggle against one another—his description corresponds with what other scholars have characterized as agonistic pluralism.[46] On the surface, agonistic pluralism appears better suited than models of deliberative democracy for theorizing the widespread use of collective political practices, not only in India but also in other democratic contexts worldwide. Chantal Mouffe, for example, who focuses on "the creation of collective political identities," argues persuasively that "political identities are not pre-given but constituted and reconstituted through debate in the public sphere."[47] And yet, although advocates of deliberative and agonistic models of democracy disagree over which model offers a more "adequate understanding of the main task of democracy,"[48] which can most effectively "process the toughest issues concerning mutually contradictory assertions of identity,"[49] and how best we might "deepen or extend democracy,"[50] they also share a set of unspoken assumptions about the nature of individual and collective forms of communicative action. In the face of what both models recognize as a "rampant crisis of legitimacy affecting western democracies"[51] and "ever more prominent identity politics, sometimes in murderous form in deeply divided societies,"[52] both readily and quickly associate collective action—but not necessarily individual action—with strong passion and emotion, with identity politics, and with conflict and adversarial positions. For both models, collective assertions are inherently adversarial, if not also violent, passionate, and "murderous."

In agonistic models, Thomas Fossen writes, "Political action is conceived as contestation, and requires tension as a precondition."[53] Mouffe characterizes "a well-functioning democracy" in terms of its "vibrant clash of democratic political positions"—not individuals but positions—and "its recognition and legitimation of conflict."[54] "Political identities, which are always collective identities," writes Mouffe, "entail the creation of an 'Us' that only exists by distinguishing itself from a 'Them.'"[55] Approaching political subjects as inherently representing adversarial collective identities and as inherently engaged in struggle leads her to reframe the problem as one that "requires providing channels through which collective passions will be given ways to express themselves over issues."[56] In both her advocacy for an agonistic approach and in her critiques of deliberative democrats, then, she views "the field of politics" as the place not where individuals come together but rather where groups clash as adversaries.[57]

Although civility does not play a large role within the arguments of agonistic pluralists, it is not absent from their discussions. Robin Lakoff defines agonism as "the unwillingness to acknowledge a middle ground in debate—what Tannen calls The Argument Culture."[58] Tannen describes a culture that "urges us to approach the world—and the people in it—in an adversarial frame of mind."[59] Lakoff's invocation of Tannen points to her understanding of argument culture in opposition to civility, writing, "This is not another book about civility. 'Civility' suggests a superficial, pinky-in-the-air veneer of politeness spread thin over human relations like a layer of marmalade over toast."[60] Instead, she continues, "This book is about a pervasive warlike atmosphere that makes us approach public dialogue, and just about anything we need to accomplish, as if it were a fight." Such a culture, she argues, "rests on the assumption that opposition is the best way to get anything done" and produces conditions in which the goal "is not to listen and understand. Instead, you use every tactic you can think of—including distorting what your opponent just said—in order to win the argument."[61]

Mouffe, however, positions civility slightly differently, using it as a kind of limit-foundation essential to distinguishing adversarial (agonistic) politics from antagonism, in which opponents are regarded as enemies. In the former, opponents "share a common allegiance to the democratic principle of 'liberty and equality for all' while disagreeing about its interpretation," whereas in the latter, this common allegiance is not shared.[62] Invoking the concept of civility without explicitly defining it, she writes that in the absence of "a vibrant clash of democratic political positions," we must be cognizant of the risk "that this democratic confrontation will be replaced by a confrontation among other forms of collective identification, as is the case with identity politics. Too much emphasis on consensus and the refusal of confrontation lead to apathy and disaffection with political participation. Worse still, the result can be the crystallization of collective passions around issues, which cannot be managed by the democratic process and an explosion of antagonisms that can tear up the very basis of civility."[63] This emphasis on "positions," however, makes no distinctions between collective mobilizations that stem from a desire to advance *different interests* and those that simply seek *equal* treatment in the eyes of the law, as made clear by the examples of Dalit victims of caste massacres in India and Black victims of police violence in the United Kingdom and the United States.

"The Conditions of Listening" in Telangana

Kaloji Narayana Rao, with whom I opened this chapter, clearly recognized that only some people were entitled to "soft speech" that could be heard and recognized as speech within the public sphere. To illustrate the ways that this linguistic domination was accomplished, he described a child from Telangana who was asked to read from a Telugu primer. The child began reading and then abruptly stopped. Kaloji continued his story:

> Again he repeats, "*Rōzū kāki mētaku . . . Rōzū kāki mētaku . . .* [Every day the crow to the grazing pasture . . . Every day the crow to the grazing pasture . . .]." And then stops. I say, "Why is it like that you are not finishing the sentence? And what is that?" . . . I took away the book from him. It is written there, "*Rōzū kāki mētaku vellēdi* [Every day the crow went to the grazing pasture]." And no person, except for those educated classes of the two or three communities [from Coastal Andhra]—no child speaks as '*vellēdi*'. Different. Usage is different in different places. "*Poyēdi*." "*Pottadi*." The person from Warangal, or Telangana, will say *pottadi*. *Rōzū kāki mētaku pottadi*. He will never say "*vellēdi*." It is very difficult for him to say *vellēdi*, and write *vellēdi*. And when he writes in his examination, *pottadi*, the persons who are at the helm of affairs, and the teachers and the examiners, they say this is wrong. Principally, the child is correct when he writes *pottadi*.

But it is not simply that the language of the majority of the state began to be regarded as substandard and erroneous. Kaloji also pointed out the ways in which speakers from his region of the state had effectively been silenced, their voices made inaudible through their eradication from the public sphere:

> There is "Balanandam" [a children's program] on the radio.[64] "Balanandam"—in every week three, four, five times, and in every "Balanandam" session, twenty, thirty, twenty-five children partake. . . . But the person who is at the desk, who is in charge of the "Balanandam," lady or gentleman, they are from the coastal districts. So again, during these

> forty years, at least twenty to thirty lakhs of children [two to three million] were involved in, were a part of "Balanandam." And I tell you, a challenge, that not a single child, girl or boy, from these twenty-two districts, oh except those two or three communities from Krishna and Guntur [districts] has ever been heard on the program.
>
> So they have an advantage. For the last forty years they have led. . . . Of all the disadvantages created in the linguistic grouping . . . this is the greatest disadvantage. We have been thrown back hundreds of years. So for every radio program . . . in all those stations, any story recited, any poem recited, any essay, broadcast, any program, a drama, anything . . . is in the spoken language of the educated classes of the two districts [in Coastal Andhra]. . . . That, too, not the entire population of the two districts is represented. So this is the two or three communities, educated classes, groups against the entire population of the state.

Pausing for emphasis and looking at me to make certain I was following, he continued, "When the *grānthika bhāṣa* [classical Telugu language] was the standard for writing, there was no question of advantage for one group. The difficulty came when a standard spoken language that is *linked to a particular community* became the written language."[65]

It is perhaps not surprising, then, given the overwhelming feeling that their speech fails to be audible within the public sphere, that hundreds of thousands of residents of Telangana have taken to the streets to participate in the large collective assemblies known as jana garjanas to gain recognition and voice. As a result of former chief minister Chandrababu Naidu's efforts to transform Hyderabad into a "world-class" city in the 1990s, the city experienced rapid growth and multinational corporations established offices in its new knowledge parks and special economic zones. Yet the benefits of Hyderabad's rapid growth have been widely seen as flowing primarily to the migrants from the well-irrigated and prosperous districts of coastal Andhra who have dominated the city both economically and politically. This disparity has exacerbated long-standing feelings of exclusion and neglect among residents of Telangana and prompted the renewal of demands for the creation of a separate administrative state structure and more inclusive approaches to economic growth.[66] Thus, efforts to transform Hyderabad into a "world-class" city have been widely perceived as coming at the expense of the many for the benefit of a few. The "people's roars," strikes, and other collective actions of recent years have effectively functioned as referenda on the way that rapid economic growth was implemented in this region of southern India.

This uneven economic development illustrates one of the key limitations of the deliberative model of democracy: its inability to account for historical conditions that render some voices inaudible while proclaiming formal equality of access to the public sphere for all.[67] At the same time, however, it is difficult to argue that an agonistic model captures the meanings of the types of collective assembly that have emerged to amplify previously ignored or silenced communicative efforts, including deliberative contributions and decisions clearly articulated via the ballot box. Collective assemblies were ultimately prompted not by antagonism toward migrants from coastal Andhra, but by the repeated refusals of political parties to implement their clear promises and electoral mandates to create the new state of Telangana. Rather than pitting themselves against residents of coastal Andhra as adversaries, residents of Telangana saw themselves as seeking inclusion within the larger body politic dominated by migrants from coastal Andhra and as holding their elected representatives to their electoral promises. A series of formal policies designed to more fully integrate and incorporate residents of Telangana into the urban economic growth might have begun to address these concerns had they been implemented, but educational and employment opportunities created under the banner of affirmative action for natives of Telangana in 1975 routinely went unfilled. The failure of more recent efforts to compel their implementation further reinforced a feeling of being left out of the state's rapid economic growth.[68] Yet even when residents of Telangana took to the streets, their corporeal communicative actions were not addressed toward the migrants from coastal Andhra at large—those whom they perceived to have benefited most from the region's economic development. Instead, their collective assemblies were addressed toward the state—to their elected officials—not as adversaries but as authorities capable of carrying out their campaign promises to implement more equitable structures of representation, education, and state employment. Whether the creation of the new state in 2014 has, in fact, led to greater inclusion within the public sphere and to more equitable distribution of resources remains to be seen, but clearly, those who took to the streets in support of its formation believed it would.[69]

In contrast to the residents of Telangana who did not perceive the authorities as adversaries, there are forms of collective action and movements that *do* reject the sovereignty of the state. The People's War Group and other Maoist movements in India, as well as the Shining Path in Peru, are examples of groups that have rejected existing forms of authority and sought to set themselves up as alternative sovereigns, adjudicating disputes and dispensing justice independently of existing state structures.[70] Although these examples are beyond the scope of the current book, they enable us to see more clearly the civility of communicative action as an effect of being recognized and heard. Those who find that they are recognized and know they will be heard have the luxury of *appearing* to be more civil. They are enabled to speak softly, secure in the knowledge that their voices will still be heard, making them appear more rational and less emotional. Those whose voices are routinely ignored, however, find that they must exert increased effort to repeat themselves or engineer amplifications of their voices, making speakers appear louder, more aggressive, and less civil.

Turning Up the Volume

I turn now to a second set of examples involving efforts to implement more inclusive political structures in India and expand affirmative action policies for those from marginalized backgrounds. These examples link the argument of this chapter with that of the preceding chapter on seeking audience. Many in India today resent the entrance of formerly marginalized groups into public, political, and academic spaces. The growing visibility of Dalits, Indigenous peoples, and members of other lower-caste and minority religious communities has been experienced by some as a threat to their existing privilege. Tensions have repeatedly emerged in public settings when some from communities that have historically held positions of authority or privilege have sought to maintain their status and have displayed reluctance to acknowledge other voices. Members of dominant caste groups sometimes attempt to mark those from historically marginalized backgrounds as angry, uncivil, excessive, or otherwise inappropriate in their speech and actions while simultaneously claiming that their own position stems only from reasoned speech, hard work, and natural merit rather than from historically privileged access to land, wealth, education, and employment opportunities.[71]

As the above examples illustrate, those securely embedded within networks of power are able to engage in individual communicative actions, speaking softly or writing in moderate tones with the expectation that their voices will be heard and acknowledged. They can also use this ability to be heard as autonomous individuals to stake claims to rationality and civility, enabling those with access to networks of power to frame their power as the product of their individual style and form of communication, rather than as a function of their existing positions and social relations. This portrayal of their own communicative acts as reflecting a distinct "style" enables them to refuse to acknowledge those efforts to communicate that appear to reflect a different form or style. Marking such differences enables those with access to power to discredit communicative actions that are loud, collective, or repetitive; to dismiss them as emotional, excessive, disruptive, irrational, or uncivil; or to treat them as noise or noncommunication.

Rupa Viswanath, for example, writes about the first generation of formally appointed political representatives from the "Depressed Classes" (the term then used by the government for those historically treated as untouchable by orthodox Hindus) to the newly reformed Madras Legislative Council in 1919.[72] She illustrates the types of misrecognitions and failures to be heard that these historically marginalized speakers experienced, even in the Legislative Council. A. Veerian, one of the first representatives of the Depressed Classes, saw himself as responsible for representing the concerns of his constituents as he sought to ensure that existing legal reforms on paper were fully implemented in practice. When an employee of the Pachayappan Motor Service Company refused to allow two of his Depressed Classes constituents to ride on one of its buses, even though both had purchased tickets and the refusal clearly violated the Motor Vehicle Amendment Act, Veerian raised the issue in the Legislative Council. His efforts to draw the Legislative Assembly's attention to the company's violation, however, were met by willful misunderstandings of his words that both mocked and ignored the substance of what he was trying to communicate. When he persisted by sending letters to each and every person in the chain of command responsible for enforcing the law in question, rather than receiving administrative support, he received this reprimand from the district magistrate:

> Mr. Veerian wrote letters to Government, to the Labour Commissioner and to me, as well as to the Sub Inspector of Police on the same day (30th May 1925.) In his letter to the Sub Inspector he wrote, "Please let me know whether you have reported the matter to the District Superintendent of Police as well as to the District Collector and the President, District Board for cancellation of the license . . ." I think this opportunity might be taken to tell Mr. Veerian that he might restrict the scope of his epistolary exuberance . . . he surely need not write to the whole hierarchy of officials at the same time.[73]

Viswanath points out that the magistrate's response highlights excess—Veerian's "epistolary exuberance"—rather than the point Veerian is trying to convey and fails to take seriously his concerns and, by extension, those of the larger community. She observes,

> The bus incident was but one of roughly a hundred similar incidents that Veerian brought to the attention of the Council in the period between 1924 and 1926, each recorded in huge bundles of documents, most of which are in Veerian's own hand, and all displaying the same concern for the workings of the local state, and the same commitment to the duty of representatives to represent the specific interests, even of single aggrieved individuals, among the represented.[74]

But recognition of the legitimacy of Veerian's claim to speak for his constituents was slow to materialize; he was instead discredited and chastised for his representational efforts.

In chapter 2, I analyzed the mainstream representations of Dalit students at Hyderabad University as angry and emotional, but here I highlight both their use of collective action to amplify their efforts to communicate with those in positions of authority and the repeated refusals of those authorities to listen to or acknowledge these efforts. When their individual efforts to speak in hostel and student body meetings went unheard, the students resorted to collective petitioning and presentation of memoranda. When these too failed to elicit any recognition, they went en masse to seek a personal audience with the chief warden. Despite the refusal of the chief warden (and the university administration more generally) to recognize their communicative actions, it was the Dalit students who were marked as "uncivil."[75] When their soft speech failed to be heard, the students used their collective presence to attempt to compel the chief warden to grant them an audience. This effort was ultimately unsuccessful but nevertheless resulted in their being labeled uncivil, angry, emotional, and violent.

The negative framing of such communicative amplifications has a long history in conjunction with refusals to hear and acts of silencing. Those who are already marginalized are less likely not only to be heard when using ordinary "soft speech" but also to be granted permission to communicate collectively. The visible entrance of new groups into shared public spheres and their increased efforts to create and maintain visibility as political actors make some in positions of power feel uncomfortable.[76] For many of the descendants of the early postcolonial governing class in which English-educated elites and upper-caste Hindus were disproportionately represented, the rise of vernacular political movements and the active mobilization in shared public spaces of Scheduled Caste (SC) or Other Backward Class (OBC) groups have been disconcerting and have prompted resistance.

On March 26, 1999, for example, the Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi, a Dalit association in Andhra Pradesh, submitted an application to the Hyderabad commissioner of police requesting permission to hold a procession from Baghlingampally to the Dr. B. R. Ambedkar statue in celebration of Ambedkar's birthday on April 14. They assured the authorities that the procession would be carried out "with most discipline and very peacefully" and asked to be "permitted Mic[rophone] facilities to pass message[s] and drinking water points." The response from the commissioner of police, dated April 10, 1999, stated, "Your request . . . has been duly considered and rejected from the point of view of public order." The Madiga Reservation Porata Samithi responded by submitting a writ petition to the Andhra Pradesh High Court, arguing "that the right to assemble peacefully is [a] Constitutionally protected right under Article 19(1)(b) of the Constitution of India and also the right to freedom of speech and expression as well as the right to freely move throughout the territory of India are Constitutionally guaranteed rights." The lawyer for the Madiga association went on to argue that processions had been permitted for other groups, and so this one should be permitted as well:

> To a pointed question whether any such procession consisting of about 3 lakhs of people, was ever permitted or took place in the City of Hyderabad, the learned Advocate-General fairly answered saying that earlier on several occasions, such processions did take place and permissions were accorded and such processions were organised by various political parties and some social and religious organisations like Ganesh Utsavam [Festival] Committee of Hyderabad etc. As a matter of fact such processions took place earlier and the State permitted such processions.[77]

In the end, the High Court judge ruled, "The Commissioner of Police is not justified in issuing the impugned order," and he directed him to allow the procession to take place. Such a protracted debate simply to enable entrance into the visible public sphere is in marked contrast to the responses to other organizations, such as the Ganesh Utsavan Committee.

Such efforts to impede political action by marginalized groups have not been restricted to Telugu-speaking southern India, but are common throughout the country, as an example from neighboring Tamil Nadu illustrates. Writes S. Viswanathan, "On 6 August [1998] in Chennai, what was perhaps the largest ever mobilisation effort by dalit organisations in Tamil Nadu was severely curtailed by state action. . . . The severe restrictions placed on the dalit rally were in marked contrast to the attitude of the authorities towards the several caste-based processions and rallies that have taken place in the last few years in Tamil Nadu."[78]

Such restrictions on the efforts of marginalized groups to organize collective forms of representation and political mobilization are also portrayed in Indian fiction. In his short story "Bhūmi" (Land), first published in 1978, Telugu writer Allam Rajayya narrates efforts to organize a poor people's association (*garībōlla sangam*) or agricultural laborers' association (*raitukūli sangam*).[79] The landless laborers in the story explicitly model their association (*sangam*, also *sangham*) on the many civil society organizations already in place for *doras* (landlords, members of the owning classes, or members of dominant caste groups). The story identifies by name these various associations established by members of the dominant owning classes (*dora sanghālu*): an Association for Palm Sap Tappers, Association for Contractors, Association for Manufacturers of Clay Tiles, Association for Rice Millers, Association for Motor Drivers/Transporters, Association for Rent Collectors/Village Officers, Association for Village Council Presidents, and even, in cities, an Association for Lions (the Lions Club).[80]

Yet, in response to the formation of an Association for Agricultural Laborers (raitukūli sangam), the members of the village's dominant caste go on a rampage, beating up those who have joined the new organization, capturing four laborers, and imprisoning them in the village landlord's compound. When the landless villagers gather and approach the compound to inquire after the four imprisoned laborers, the landlord opens fire on the crowd. The police arrive, and at first, the villagers are relieved, thinking that the police have come to bring about justice. They quickly realize, however, that the police have instead come to defend the landlord. The gathered petitioners are thus characterized by the landlord and the police as a violent mob seeking to attack the dora. The narrator of the incident, an old man from the village, comments, "All guns are of the same caste [*kulam*], the same community [*jāti*]. I think perhaps the gun was born only to use on people like us!"[81]

The type of upper-caste opposition to lower-caste political organization and the formation of associations by nondominant groups captured by Allam Rajayya continues to be of concern to human rights advocates. A 1992 report describes numerous incidents of violence committed by landlords to discourage the formation of collective associations of landless agricultural laborers (raitukūli sanghams) that seek to advocate for minimum wages and labor rights.[82] The report also documents police assassinations of sangham leaders.[83] What appears as legitimate political organization or as the adoption of collective political strategies that are widely available to dominant groups—such as the formation of associations—seems threatening when adopted by marginalized individuals who have begun to come together into organized groups. One common defense mechanism adopted by those in dominant positions has been to reframe such actions as criminal. This porosity between representations of the "criminal" and the "political" and their relationship to political recognition are discussed in greater detail in part II.

Colonial and Postcolonial Continuities: Framing Individual Civility and Collective Incivility

British colonial administrators responded to the forms of public assembly they encountered in India by trying to define collective communicative efforts as "illegal assemblies," "mutinies," "sedition," or "conspiracies," even when acknowledging that they were often orderly, peaceful, and disciplined, at least until British troops were sent in to disperse them. In Bengal, for example, the refusals of peasant cultivators to continue planting indigo led to widespread "disturbances" from 1859 to 1862, which were characterized by the British as another "mutiny," occurring soon after the uprisings of 1857–58.[84] Toward the end of August 1860, in the midst of the growing controversy over indigo cultivation, John Peter Grant, the lieutenant governor of Bengal, traveled by boat from Calcutta to conduct an inspection tour of the Dacca Railway. While traveling up the Koomar and Kalligunga Rivers, he writes, "Numerous crowds of Ryots [peasants or tenant farmers] appeared at various places, whose whole prayer was for an order of Government, that they should not cultivate indigo."[85] According to a newspaper report, as Grant's boat "was passing the Salgamudia factory of Thomas Kenny, two hundred [indigo cultivators] assembled on either side of the river, joined hands and called out for justice with a loud lamentable groan. Grant directed his steamer to anchor, and some headmen were taken on board. All the petitions taken were referred to the local authorities, but many ryots were not satisfied and followed his ship to Pabna."[86] On Grant's return along the same two rivers a few days later, he was astonished that "from dawn to dusk . . .

for some sixty or seventy miles, both banks were literally lined with crowds of Villagers, claiming justice in this matter."[87] He writes that they "must have collected from all the Villages at a great distance on either side" and clearly interprets their collective presence as an effort to attract the attention of the government and express "their feelings and their determination in language not to be mistaken."[88]

As their foothold in the subcontinent grew by the early decades of the nineteenth century, the East India Company (EIC) struggled to establish legal, ideological, and policing structures that could keep at bay the influence of collective forms of assembly. This process may have contributed to what appears to be our collective amnesia regarding the scope and effectiveness of earlier forms of what the British identified as "combinations." Leaders of the newly independent India in 1947 largely inherited both the ideological perspective on collective assembly and the legal and policing systems established by the British, with many of the laws established during the nineteenth century still in effect today.[89] The success of the collective methods mobilized by Gandhi and other nationalist leaders created a dilemma for postcolonial leaders like Nehru, independent India's first prime minister, however, since he regarded collective actions in ways reminiscent of the attitudes of colonial officials. He described those who take part in demonstrations "in the name of politics," for example, as "immature," "childish," and inappropriate for "an adult, mature, independent nation."[90] But the memory of the effectiveness of these collective methods helped keep alive practices that may have had antecedents in earlier understandings of the responsibilities of those in positions of authority.

Yet, the continuities between colonial and postcolonial administrative attitudes toward collective assembly further contribute to our historical amnesia, so that even historians of India suggest that mass civil resistance emerges "in Europe in the ferment of the post-French revolutionary period" from "the sphere of civil society—the site of a free association of individuals in public bodies, associations and the like—which were valorized in the political thought of the Enlightenment as providing a means for checking and correcting the excesses of state power and governmental authority."[91] But at the same time, this history of collective assembly has also been placed firmly in the past, positioning it as premodern in opposition to individual speech action. For example, Nehru rejected collective "action committees" in the early postcolonial period, contrasting them with "modern" individual students (who represent only themselves), with whom he was willing to meet, as illustrated in this chapter's epigraph.[92]

His refusal to recognize representatives of collectives sounds much like the colonial insistence on entertaining "individual" petitioners rather than representatives of "combinations." J. Gwatkin, secretary of the EIC Board of Trade, for example, refused to recognize those who claimed to be agents of "combinations" of petitioners, writing the following in 1817:

> As certain of these persons have persisted in attending daily at the Board of Trade office, the Board here explain that, under the existing Regulations each *Individual* weaver, if aggrieved, has the means of laying his Complaint before the Commercial Resident, or as the case may be of proceeding by an action in the Zillah Court, and with this protection held out to the weavers of Vizagapatam *Individually*, The Board cannot sanction Combinations of weavers for the purpose of Making General Complaints nor acknowledge persons stating themselves to be agents of such Combinations. The Board cannot dismiss this Petition without noticing the disrespectful *style* thereof to the authorities of Government.[93]

Not only were such efforts at collective representations deemed inappropriate but they were also regarded as disrespectful and as reflecting a distinct "style" of representation.

Nehru, similarly, equated the formation of "action committees" with "hooliganism":

> The United States, the UK, the Soviet Union, China, Japan and Germany are all part of the international system. But I would like to ask if you have heard of the people or students of any of these countries, whether they are capitalist, communist, or socialist countries, behaving in this hooligan-like fashion? Have you heard of action committees being appointed? I would like to have one example of such things happening anywhere else in the world, in Asia, Africa, America or Europe. Then why is it that we have students here forming action committees? When they came to me, I told them clearly that I was prepared to meet students but not an Action Committee. I do not accept action committees of students or workers or anyone else.[94]

In this statement, Nehru also reinforces the belief that collective action is an expression of anger and antisocial "hooliganism" and that processions and the shouting of slogans represent a style that is the opposite of self-control and discipline and that belongs firmly in the past. "We learned to control our passions and convert them into a great organized strength instead of frittering it away in useless ways," he wrote of India's progress, which was acquired "step by step" as "we learnt to be organized and patient and to put a brake on ourselves at full speed."[95] "Gone are the days when we expressed our anger by shouting slogans and taking out processions," he proclaimed. "We are on the threshold of the nuclear age in which terrible forces of destruction are being amassed. India is not lagging behind in the field of atomic energy. It is next only to a few countries like the United States, the UK, France, Canada who are leading. India has made great progress in this field. But we cannot go very far unless the people learn to exercise self-control and discipline."[96]

Like the colonial rulers who preceded him, Nehru placed individual speech action within a temporal trajectory that framed it as representing modern political behavior, using it to signal India's arrival in the fraternity of modern nations. "It is all very well for you to shout slogans. But you must think how it affects India's reputation and stature in the world," he proclaimed.[97] "The days when revolutions like the French Revolution were wrought on the streets are gone. Nowadays, revolutions are of other kinds."[98] His comments relegated public collective assemblies and processions through the street firmly to the past. At the same time, despite widespread efforts to marginalize and delegitimize forms of collective corporeal communication—both in India and more globally and fueled by new legal, ideological, and policing regimes—they were never entirely successful in eliminating the collective practices that offered time-tested models for effectively engaging and communicating with officials, authority figures, and others in positions of power.

Collective Assembly as Amplification and the Politics of Recognition

In exploring the possibilities of a civility defined by its capacity to set limits on extreme violence, incivility, and humiliation, Étienne Balibar coined the term *antiviolence*, which he conceptualizes as "a politics that is neither an *abstraction* from violence ('nonviolence') nor an *inversion* of it ('counterviolence'—especially in its repressive forms, state forms, but also in its revolutionary forms, which assume that they must reduplicate it if they are to 'monopolize' it) but an internal response to, or displacement of, it."[99] He goes on to ask, "How well does the word *civility* designate the political action that specifically pursues such 'antiviolence'?"[100] In answering this question, he points toward *collective* rather than individual action, invoking the Hegelian conception of *Sittlichkeit*—the third of Hegel's three spheres of right—as the best equivalent of "civility" and describing *Sittlichkeit* as "a profoundly political concept that encompasses the 'state' and 'nonstate' spheres of *collective action.*"[101]

There is substantial evidence that many in southern India (and elsewhere) see collective assembly even today not as the opposite of individual speech action or as resistance or adversarial conflict, but rather as a mechanism for turning up the volume and intensifying the effect of individual communicative action, particularly in contexts where participants have not gained recognition as political subjects. The Telugu terms that are most often used to describe outdoor political meetings are the nouns *garjana(m)*, literally a "roar," and *bhērī*, also the word for "kettledrum," used especially for making public announcements.[102] In neighboring Tamil Nadu, a common Tamil term is *murasu*, also meaning "drum" or "tabour" and also used in the sense of a "roar," or of voicing or broadcasting. *Murasu* also appears in the names of Tamil newspapers and television stations.[103] As Laura Kunreuther suggests in her analysis of a related South Asian concept, *āwāj* (voice), such terms point to "aspects of democracy that are often disavowed or aggressively disparaged in mainstream discussions of a rational public sphere and the political ethics of communication." They reveal categories of meaning "which cannot be fully understood within the classic frames of the [deliberative, rational] voice of publics or the unruly [irrational] noise of crowds."[104] These terms emphasize the idea that a collective public meeting can be a method to amplify individual voices, making a "message heard within the polyphony of perspectives that can constitute ongoing, collaborative deliberation . . . in a transmission of sound that is at once mass-mediated and acutely embodied."[105] Although it may be easy to ignore a single voice, it is much more difficult to ignore the sound made by thousands of voices together. Indeed, authorities could not ignore the growing collective embodiment of support for the creation of the separate state of Telangana.

Recognizing the ways in which collective embodiment can be continuous with efforts to make individual speech actions heard within the public sphere can help us reframe debates on how to "deepen or extend democracy" most effectively, thereby resolving some of the stalemates confronted by discussions of deliberative and agonistic abstractions of democracy and clearing space for a new analytic frame.[106] Acknowledging efforts to "hail the state" and finding ways to give audience to and amplify these efforts can lead to strategies for more effectively incorporating marginalized voices into democratic processes, both individually and collectively. In contrast to the deliberative and agonistic models of democracy, this chapter demonstrates the importance of recognizing civility not as a feature of individual comportment and as a precondition for democratic participation, but rather as a product of structures of authority that facilitate the recognition of political subjects and give audience to their voices.[107] Those who find that they are recognized then have the luxury of *appearing* to be more civil. They can speak more calmly and quietly, secure in the knowledge that their voices will still be heard, thereby making them appear more rational and less emotional. Those whose voices are routinely ignored, however, find that they must exert increased effort to repeat themselves or engineer amplifications of their voice, making speakers appear louder, more aggressive, and less civil. Rather than assuming that speakers are active and listeners are passive, we would do well to follow Richard Burghart's recommendation that we instead investigate "how a people who are listened to gain a voice."[108] Whether documenting a "loud lamentable groan" or a "great roar of the people," theories of idealized Habermasian communicative action premised on the individual speaking subject, as well as agonistic approaches that see all collective action as oppositional or as a rejection of sovereignty, have clouded our ability to recognize efforts of the already marginalized to participate within democratic processes. Our existing theories contribute to their silencing, converting their communicative acts into passion, anger, or noise or simply making them unrecognizable. In the next chapter, I review the much longer history that connects colonial and postcolonial efforts to frame collective political action as disrespectful, uncivil, and the opposite of individual speech action.