

Extracts from the Amendments to the Bombay Police Act, 1951 to ban Dance bars

AND WHEREAS the Government has received several complaints regarding the manner of holding such dance performances;

AND WHEREAS the Government considers that such performance of dances in eating houses, permit rooms or beer bars are derogatory to the dignity of women and are likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals;

AND WHEREAS the Government considers it expedient to prohibit such holding of performance of dances in eating houses, permit rooms or beer bars;

AND WHEREAS the Government considers it expedient to further amend the Bombay Police Act 1951, for the purposes aforesaid; It is hereby enacted In the Fifty sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows :-

Sec 1 This Act may be called the Bombay Police (Amendment) Act, 2005

Sec 2 : After Section 33 of the Bombay Police Act, 1951, the following sections shall be Inserted, namely :

Section 33A

(1)(a) holding of a performance of dance of any kind or type in an eating house, permit room or beer bar is prohibited

(1)(b) all performance licences issued under the aforesaid rules by Commissioner of Police District Magistrate or any other officer, as the case may be (being the Licensing Authority) to hold dance performance of any kind or type in an eating house, permit room or beer bar shall stand cancelled

(2) Punishment for violaton imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years or with fine upto to Rs.2 lakhs or both. Not less than three months and fine not less than Rs.50,000/-

Section 33B

Nothing in section 33A shall apply to the holding of a dance performance in a drama theatre, cinema theatre and auditorium or sport club or gymkhana where entry is restricted to its members only or a three starred or above hotel or in any other establishment or class of establishment, which having regarding to (a) the tourism activities in the State or (b) cultural activities, the State Government may by special or general order, specify in this behalf.



Faces covered to hide identity, bar dancers at a demonstration, March 2005



"We are only imitating those you admire!" bar dancers protest holding a placard of film star Aishwarya Rai in a dance sequence.

Source: www.indiatogether.org

Source: www.indiatogether.org



Source: www.zeenews.com+in.news.yahoo.com

Growing up in the 1980s, bar-codes meant something entirely different. One saw them marked enticingly on foreign goods, demarcating a space that was as alien as it was exciting. Now such bar-codes are much more familiar - used by many up-market stores signifying our assimilation into global patterns of regulating and tracking consumer transactions.

In recent years, in Mumbai, bar codes may be seen as signifying something different and yet perhaps related. I would like to extend for the purposes of this essay the meaning of bar-code to refer multiply and sometimes simultaneously to bar-codes on products, to the codes on credit cards and to notional regulations and 'codes' of conduct applicable in two kinds of 'bar' spaces: the about-to-become-illegal dance-bars and the up-market nightclubs and discotheque bars.

In this essay I am going to focus on three elements in relation to these two kinds of bars: firstly, the location of these bars, and secondly, the spatial divisions of the interior and their implicit structural power hierarchies, and finally the meanings that attach to these spatial demarcations and the codes of interaction within them.

The two kinds of bars seek a very different visibility in relation to the city. Dance bars make themselves as inconspicuous as possible. No bar announces itself as a dance-bar. The patrons are expected to know and / or find out by word of mouth. The board usually reads innocuously 'restaurant' or 'restaurant and bar'. Until last year many of them were named after gods and goddesses until the venerable government of Maharashtra decided that this constituted in their perception an act approaching blasphemy¹. These dance-bars tend to be

located in the seedy by-lanes of the city distinguished often only by their lack of distinguishing character.

Where the up-market bars are concerned, the intention is to be as visible as possible presenting themselves as catering to the newest range of fads and fashions for those of discerning taste. They are located in the more expensive areas of the city and usually offer valet parking, displaying little concern over the obvious presence of large cars outside. They are named to invoke a lifestyle that transcends national boundaries and often appear in urban night-life shows on television and on the page

threes of various newspapers.

The up-market bars represent the city's aspiration to become an important player in a globalised world of consumption while the dance-bars suggest its drunken under-belly to be pushed to the margins².

In both kinds of bars in the layout of the interior space the dance floor occupies a small almost insignificant space.

In the dance bars there is a clear definition of space between the space where the girls dance and the space where the customers sit. The bar dancers may transgress this space to collect tips from their customers but the customers may not do so. In fact in July 2004, the Maharashtra government attempted to physically

separate these spaces issuing a circular to the bars stating that the dancers should maintain a distance of 5 feet from customers, a 3-feet high boundary wall should be constructed around the dancers and the minimum stage area for eight dancers should be 120 square feet³. These represent efforts to discipline the transgressive spaces of the dance-bars. The space is demarcated by the notion of a public performance. The space of the dance floor then becomes the space of performance that the audience may not enter into bodily. There is another logic to this separation that is linked to the dance bar as a contaminated space and within the bar, the dance floor as the locus of transgression and therefore maximum pollution.

In the up-market discos the dance floor is not a sex-segregated space. It is in fact a space that is showcased as an arena where the sexes may freely intermingle - a celebration of heterosexuality and therefore of modernity. Also it is interesting to note that where the barcodes on credit cards can be used as legal tender, the other kinds of regulatory codes of particularly heterosexual conduct are less sharply defined. The presence of certain objects, in this case a credit card changes the tenor of the space connecting it to global financial transactions and in the process rendering actions and therefore the space in which they take place more respectable.

These spaces do not, if objectively viewed, appear to be very different from each other. Both have alcohol, music, dance, women and men. As columnist, Anil Dharkar points out, that just as a customer in a bar may set up a later meeting with one of the dancers so also a couple in an expensive restaurant may be as he puts it "setting up a later dalliance in a bedroom with a sea-view"⁴.

How then is meaning differently attached to these two spaces and relationships that makes one respectable and the other suspect? The main difference lies in the value attached to public and private spaces and relationships.

Technically both spaces are equally public or private. Public to the extent that they are open to the 'public' and private to the extent that the entry may be regulated by the owner and that there are charges attached to entry either directly (cover charge) or indirectly (food) or both.

However, the performative nature of the dance-bars renders any relationship between the customers and the dancers public. In contrast in the up-market bars both women and men are customers and their relationships are thereby cast in the realm of the private. In a context that grants legitimacy only to private erotic relationships, dance bars then become contaminated spaces of illicit interaction. On the other hand, in up-market bars the private nature of relationships renders spaces not just respectable but also in a global consumer sense almost sacred.

Respectability, morality and location/position in a global urban context then determine not just who can inhabit what spaces but also which spaces are legitimate and which are not.

Citation: Phadke, Shilpa, 'Decoding Spaces' in Architecture: Time Space People, June 2005, p.52-53.

See <http://in.rediff.com/news/2004/feb/27bars.htm> for article referring to this.

For a longer discussion of this argument see Shilpa Phadke, 'You can be Lonely in a Crowd: the Production of Safety in Mumbai' in Indian Journal of Gender Studies, New Delhi: Sage, February 2005

The Indian Express, July 29, 2004

Anil Dharkar, Mid-Day, August 25, 2004