
UNIT 34 RACE, CLASS AND ETHNICITY IN THE COLONIAL CITY*

Structure

- 34.1 Introduction
- 34.2 From Port to Presidency Towns
 - 34.2.1 Madras (Chennai)
 - 34.2.2 Bombay (Mumbai)
 - 34.2.3 Calcutta (Kolkata)
- 34.3 Race, Caste and Class
- 34.4 Health and Sanitation in the Divided City
- 34.5 Summary
- 34.6 Exercises
- 34.7 References

34.1 INTRODUCTION

Both existing and new towns and cities which developed during the period of colonial rule in India were primarily links in a colonial economy and were often in contrast to pre-colonial urban centres. New principles of social and spatial division made colonial cities distinct from earlier urban centres. The ideology and requirements of colonial rule recast, on the one hand, certain indigenous social and cultural traditions to significantly shape the new colonial cities. On the other hand, distinctly new ethnic, linguistic and racial elements came into play in the colonial city. So the development, or indeed decline, of towns and cities in the colonial period is generally a result of the needs of the imperial order.

In what ways did the dynamics of race, class and ethnicity shape urban spatial relations and control over urban space? The three main port cities, before they became Presidency Cities, were characterised by some stable sets of features, which as Partha Mitter has said do not amount to planning as such, at least until 1757. The main elements of fort, port, government residence, hospital, church, gardens, garden houses and parks were in place, but they were not linked in a master plan. To begin with were the fortified factories, set up in relatively undeveloped sites: Madras, 1639 (Fort St George); Bombay 1667 (Bombay Castle); Calcutta 1690 (Fort William). These were sites of economic and political power as evidenced in shared common features: a fort, an open esplanade around a fort, separate European and Indian residential areas, commercial areas, residential zones for immigrants – Asians, and Europeans, a peripheral manufacturing zone, and an outlying military zone. Over time, there were phases of building which added to the original nucleus, but it was dualistic in form from the outset, with separate regions for Europeans and Indians. There was considerable expansion of these enclaves in the middle to late 18th century, when new areas of ‘white’ and ‘black’ towns were added, administrative buildings

* Professor Swaraj Basu, Faculty of History, School of Social Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi.

multiplied and a degree of suburbanisation occurred. There was a more radical separation of European and Indian spaces, with central business districts consisting of European dominated commercial, managerial and administrative activities. There was also an identifiable intermediate zone where dubashis, ethnic groups like Parsis and Eurasians lived. The waterfront and the port became the centres of major commercial activity and thus Madras (today Chennai), Bombay (today Mumbai) and Calcutta (today Kolkata) emerged as three major urban centres in colonial India. Though the three Presidency towns reflected certain British ideas about race and class distinction, over time they also came to reflect indigenous social hierarchies relating to the uses and meaning of urban space. We will explain the influence of race, class and caste identity in shaping the pattern of habitation largely with reference to these presidency towns during the period of colonial rule. As we shall see, apart from marking these cities in spatially distinct ways, the new forms of segregation and difference had important and lasting influences on a range of other facets of urban life, such as health and sanitation.

34.2 FROM PORT TO PRESIDENCY TOWNS

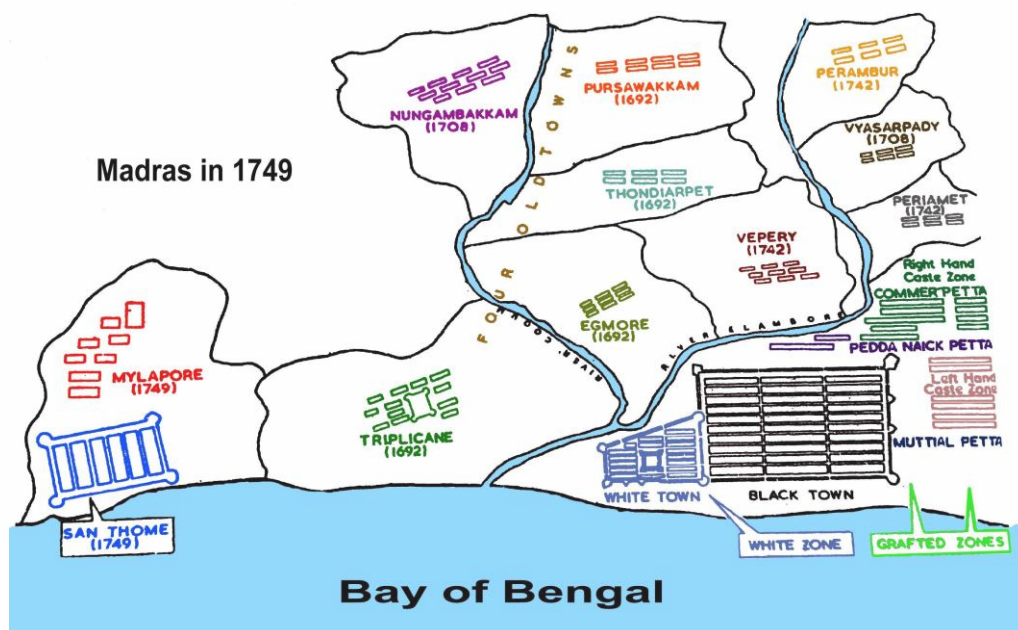
The growth of the Presidencies of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta in India were primarily a result of the East India Company's commercial need to develop land bases for its trading network. Though Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta shared some common features, the trajectories of their developments were quite distinct and deserve separate consideration.

34.2.1 Madras (Chennai)

Madras, today renamed as Chennai, had its origins as a colonial trading post of the English East India Company in 1639-40 and the Fort St. George was the nucleus of this new settlement. Madras was established as a base for the export of ready-made cloth to the European market. Initially the Company took a land grant of three square miles from the local Hindu Nayak ruler but later on with the growth of trade and increased Company activities, more territories were added.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the EIC expanded territorial possessions around Fort St. George and included 15 villages. By the mid 1700s, Black Town was demolished to improve the defenses of Fort St. George. A new Black Town was created, though it was a misnomer since Europeans occupied the space until the 1800s, (which was later called George Town). The expansion of colonial commercial and residential sites from the old White Town into the Black Town and the suburban villages obliterated the dual settlement pattern that had characterised Madras since its establishment in the mid seventeenth century, and that continued to shape many other colonial towns in British India. Yet, there continued to be important markers of class, race and ethnicity.

Black and white towns were separated in various ways. 'Eighteenth – and nineteenth – century Madras was an amalgam of three separate though overlapping societies: the suburban villages, which belonged to the pre-colonial agrarian society of Tondaimandalam; the predominantly Indian town centers, which had their own links with indigenous urban and rural society but which grew mainly in response to the new colonial trading settlement; and the colonial urban and suburban society which emerged during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and reflected British colonial interests and policies.' (Basu, 1979:218)



Source: Roche, Patrick A., (2010) 'Caste and the British Merchant Government in Madras, 1639-1749', in Banerjee-Dube, Ishita, (ed.), *Caste in History*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. 8; Originally published in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 1975, p. 387.

Madras attracted different indigenous social groups, and by the early 1800s one-fifth of Madras's total population belonged to the formerly 'untouchable' communities who constituted the majority of the unskilled labour force. There were Muslim traders from Kerala, trading communities from Gujarat, and many agriculturalist castes displaced as a result of conflict with the Mysore kingdom. These different social groups lived in distinct places in the city and were identified, and even administered, according to their ethnic identity. 'The defining character of Madras was not its concentration in a central business district but a distinctively distributed urbanization that long preserved features of the rural environment and a variety of neighbourhoods that retained special socio-spatial markers. The creation of this pattern occurred partially through the official establishment of suburbs such as Washermanpet (ca. 1720), designated for cloth washers north of the city, Chintadripet (1735), designated for weavers on an ox-bow of the Cooum River southwest of the Fort, and Royapuram (1799), designated for boatmen north of the city.' (Heitzman, 2008: 109). The urban poor of Madras always lived at a distance so that they neither posed a threat of caste pollution to local upper castes, nor any threat to Europeans. Over time, the Europeans gradually moved from the urban centres to the outlying districts of Madras where they established garden houses as symbols of wealth and authority. Local elites also followed their footsteps by building palatial houses near temples as sign of their newly acquired socio-economic status.

34.2.2 Bombay (Mumbai)

Bombay, the second of the English port cities, was originally a group of seven islands, situated off the west coast of India, and was acquired by King Charles II in 1661 as dowry when he married Catherine of Braganza (from Portugal). The East India Company got the control of it in 1667, and fortified its factory there, a structure which was later called Bombay Fort. Not much development took place in Bombay until the Company defeated the Marathas in the beginning of the 1800s. But by the mid-nineteenth century with the growth of the cotton market and later trade in opium the port in Bombay grew in importance and the city gradually acquired the status of a major metropolitan centre.

In 1838, the seven islands of Bombay were linked through an ambitious process of land reclamation. After the large scale construction of docks, wharves, warehouses, necessitated by the arrival of steam power, the east coast of Bombay island became one continuous strip of docks, wharves piers, jetties, and bunders.

Social segregation in the residential pattern was very visible in Bombay as in other Presidency towns. The city was initially divided into two distinct districts- one for the Europeans and the other for the local inhabitants. Between the European town and the 'Native' town there used to be an area earmarked as esplanade for defense. Mercantile communities of Gujarat initially formed a dominant group of local inhabitants and there were diverse religious groups among local inhabitants like Hindu, Muslim, Jain and Parsi. Rajnarayan Chandavarkar writes:

The opportunities opened up by Bombay's growth brought people into the city from the whole Presidency and indeed, further afield. It ensured that no single social group, whether defined by caste, language or religion, dominated its commercial or political life. Hindus, divided by caste and language, class and sectarian belief, made up about two-thirds of the city's population. But their strength of numbers did not ensure their social dominance. Parsis were among the largest property owners in the city and among its leading merchants and entrepreneurs from the late eighteenth century. They played a prominent role in the city's public life and its municipal politics. But they formed only about 5 per cent of the population. About one-fifth of the city's inhabitants were Muslims, but they were no more homogenous than the Hindus or Parsis and were divided by sect and caste, doctrine and language. (Chandavarkar, 2009: 17)

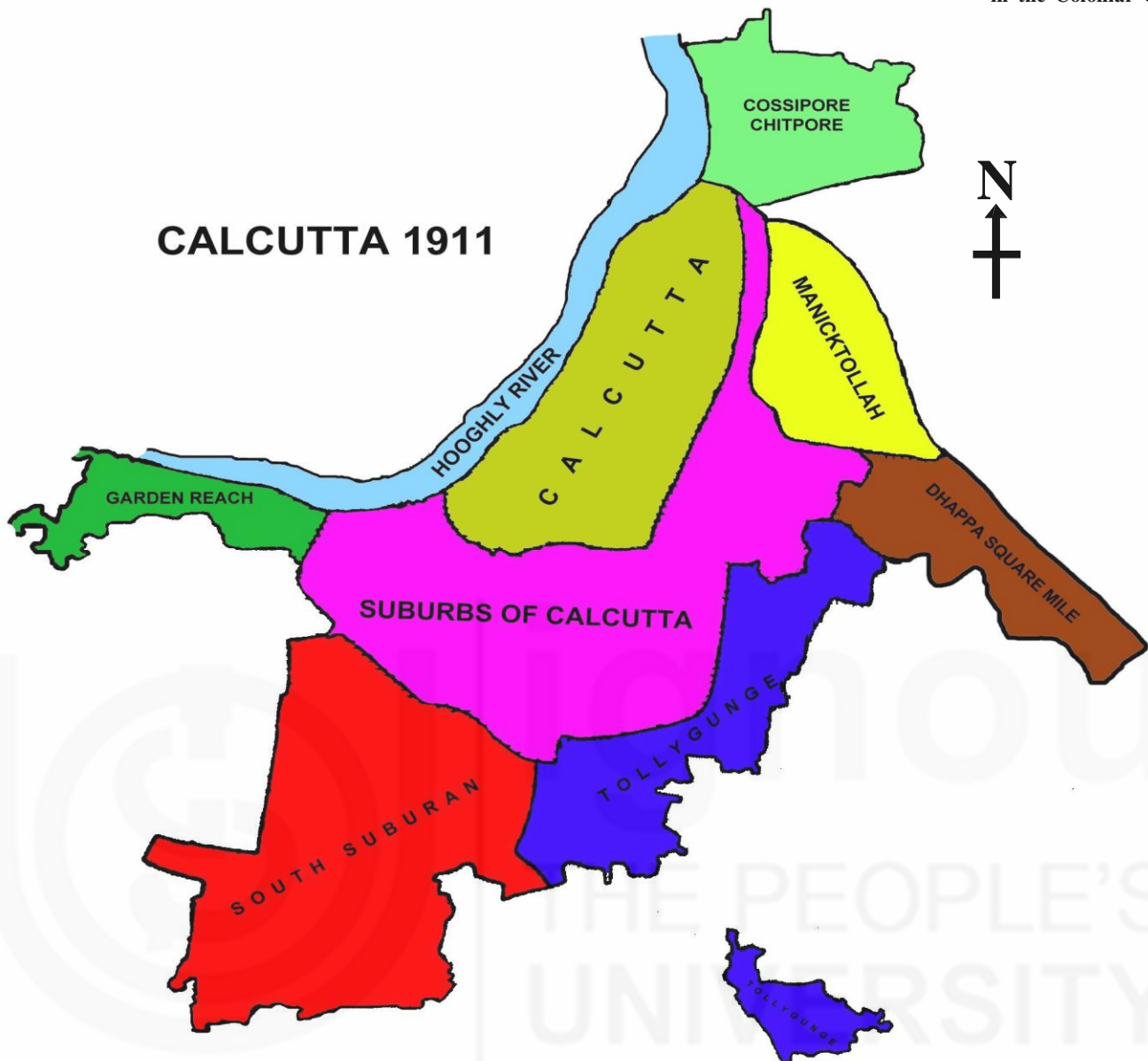
The original black or native town also began expanding in response to the needs of dockworkers, warehousing workers etc. Poor Marathi speaking people who were the main source of labour lived near the dock area and in the outskirts. Cotton textile mills begin to emerge near Native Town largely in the central part of the island. Meanwhile, Europeans and others went further away for housing in a process of suburbanisation that imitated Britain. Following the cotton boom during the civil war (1861-65), there was an explosion of commercial banking and trading activity, which while it was short lived, considerably expanded the city.

Yet the port and the railways affected the morphology of the city more profoundly than the autonomous development of the cotton textile mills: in fact, according to Frank Boaze, the cotton textile industry was developed due to its port. The population density was very high in the indigenous part of the town, which mixed residential and commercial uses, while richer elites such as Parsis migrated to the suburbs.

34.2.3 Calcutta (Kolkata)

The English East India Company, while in search of a better factory site in Bengal away from Murshidabad, the provincial seat of political power, selected a place on the banks of the river Bhagirathi. The place was comprised of three villages, Kalikata, Sutanati and Gobindapur which was controlled by a local zamindar but officially belonged to the Mughal emperor. The Company later on purchased the zamindari rights of these three villages and constructed a fortified factory there.

The settlement plan of Calcutta, the third port city, reflected not only the imperial ideology but also certain ideas about the local population. In one corner of the 'maidan' (open field), Fort William was constructed with all modern defense requirements and this symbolised the British might and supremacy. There was a clear demarcation between the 'white' town and the 'black' town. In between the 'white' and the 'black' town there was a buffer zone. The name suggests that 'white' town was for the residences



Source: Datta, Partho, (2012) *Planning the City: Urbanisation and Reform in Calcutta, c.1800-c.1940*, Delhi: Tulika Books, p. 173.

and offices of the Europeans, 'black' town for local population and an intermediate zone housed other communities like Persians, Armenians, Jews, Chinese, Persians and others. Thomas Twining who arrived in Calcutta in 1792 described the 'white' town in the following way,

A range of magnificent buildings, including the Governor's Palace, the Council House, the Supreme Court House, the Accountant-General's office, etc., extended eastward from the river, and then turning at a right angle to the south, formed the limit of both the city and the plain. Nearly all these buildings were occupied by the civil and military officers of the Government, either as their public offices or private residences. They were all white, their roofs invariably flat, surrounded by light colonnades, and their fronts relieved by lofty columns, supporting lofty verandahs. They were all separated from each other, each having its own small enclosure, in which at a little distance from the house, were the kitchen, the cellars, storerooms, etc. and a large folding gate and porter's lodge at the entrance. (Cited in Roy, 1991:29)

Within the ‘black’ town, caste affiliation, occupation and place of origin played a significant role in deciding the area of residence. There were zamindars, traders, officials working for the Company and a large section of people doing various kinds of manual work. This working population included domestic servants, barbers, water-carriers, washer men, coach-men, boatmen, palanquin-bearers, porters, etc. This class of people lived in thatched homes in neighbourhoods which were locally known as *basti* (slums) in the outskirts of the city. The quality of residences was a clear marker of the class of people living in a particular area. Swati Chattopadhyay however suggests that the distinctions between black and white towns was somewhat blurred both by the existence of elite Indians in the European areas, and poorer Indians in white areas.

H. Beverly, the Census Commissioner, wrote in his Report way back in 1881 that Calcutta was not an industrial centre but essentially a ‘commercial city’ because more than one-half of its population was engaged in commercial pursuits. The industrial class consisted mostly of ‘carpenters, bricklayers, thatchers, barbers, tailors, shoemakers, washer men, water carriers, and the like... The trade of Calcutta is one of buying and selling raw produce or goods manufactured elsewhere, a trade of exchanging the products of other countries or places, and not a trade of production.’ (H. Beverly, *Report of the Census of the Town and Suburbs of Calcutta*, 1881, cited in Datta, 2012: 129) Against this brief background of the development of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta we will now turn to how the ideas of race, caste and class shaped urban life in colonial cities.

34.3 RACE, CASTE AND CLASS

Colonial rule according to Partha Chatterjee was predicated on the rule of colonial difference, i.e. colonies such as India could not but be exceptions to the rule of law which the British strenuously upheld as the ideological justification for its rule. What this translated into in the city space was what Anthony King has broadly understood as the divided city: one part, European, administrative and military in function, the other, indigenous, residential, commercial and in some cases, industrial. Racial distinction was sought to be established and maintained without hesitation as the necessary condition for colonial rule; in almost all cases, as we shall see, the colonial port cities, and many others as well, long bore the marks of this division. Segregation in the city space performed important roles in colonial society, quite different from earlier forms of segregation that might have prevailed in Indian cities. Within the ‘colonial city’ a specific urban form was engendered, by the complex power relations exercised by an alien power over an indigenous population: it included the colonial settlement, namely the cantonment or the civil lines, and the indigenous settlement, namely the Black Town, the native quarter (as in Madras, Calcutta) or sometimes even the densely settled old historic quarter (as in Delhi, Lucknow, Ahmedbad or bearing both features (as in Bangalore).

Given that the colonial administrators for the most part, and especially after 1857, preferred to rely on local caste/ethnic structure to govern the urban populations, caste and community identities retained their significance in structuring access to, and uses of, urban space and opportunities. Apart from differences of race and class there were stratifications which were spatially materialised, since there was a strong overlap between caste and class at the lower levels. Ideas relating to race, class and caste decided allocations of urban space and the patterns of social relations. Though race played a crucial role in determining city space and amenities for the ruling race, colonial administrators were initially unwilling to intervene in the socio-cultural customs of indigenous people and therefore the local people carried forward their socio-cultural practices in the new urban settlements which were reflected in the residential patterns.

Caste not only determined space and its uses, but also decided what kinds of opportunities would emerge from this hierarchical structuring. However, these were not mere replicas of kinship and village networks, or caste networks, though they could form the basis for the new arrangements in the city.

What was common in all the Presidency towns was the line of demarcation between the European settlement and the settlement of the local people. A sense of superiority in terms of racial distinction, cultural distinctiveness and concern for hygiene and health played an important role in making distinct settlement patterns. The distinct settlement areas not only signified socio-cultural difference but also symbolised the authority and power of the dominant and the dominated. Living in segregated neighbourhoods strengthened ethnic bonds. Writing on control of urban space in colonial Madras Carl H. Nightingale observed that Indian practices of caste and religious segregation made the division of Madras much easier in the 18th century:

As in other South Indian cities, the rival Right Hand and Left Hand Hindu caste alliances in Madras lived on separate streets in Black Town, as did “untouchable” Pariars and Muslims. Many Hindu residents of Madras no doubt preferred to live far from what were seen as sacrilegious practices of the British, such as eating beef or hiring Pariars as household servants – although mercantile interests just as doubtlessly led many to suspend some such pieties...

The British company was not above using Indian caste politics for its own ends. For many years, governors relied primarily on members of the higher status Right Hand caste alliance as the company’s principal *dubashes* and suppliers. When the British sought better prices by allowing merchants from the Left Hand to bid on contracts, they provoked an enormous battle that centered on fights over the neighborhoods allotted to each caste. Governor Pitt finally forced caste leaders into seclusion to negotiate a clear division of Black Town, complete with a system of boundary stones, and the British got their cheaper cloth....The very residential structure of cities could also symbolically tell key parables about the unequal order of white and black. Madras’s gleaming White Town and its dowdier Black Town, for example, impressed travelers on their way to the newer city of Calcutta, which adopted similar designations in somewhat different political circumstances. A more ambiguous version was also debated at Bombay, and later British colonial cities further adapted the pattern. (Nightingale, 2008: 54-55, 70)

Susan Neild Basu’s study of the development of Madras city refers to the continuity of many features of the pre-colonial order along with the changes of the colonial era. This is viewed ‘as a process of accommodation between local and colonial influences.’ While there are different interpretations about why existing caste divisions were preferred in the residential settlements of the new Presidency towns they definitely contributed to the polarisation of urban life.

Patrick A. Roche in an article titled ‘Caste and the British Merchant Government in Madras, 1639-1749’ observes that:

The colonial city of Madras was largely the creation of British commercial interests; yet, like most indigenous cities, it has provided a representation of the social order both in its spatial arrangements and its social structure.... The British value system, centring on “colour” and “religion”, worked through a *process of assimilation* to create a “colour-caste” which led to the particular spatial and social features of “White Town”. A *process of integration* – involving the acquisition and absorption of ancient villages and temple centres – established the “orthogenetic-indigenous” sectors in Madras. Since colonial commercial interests were not directly linked to the social organization of these

sectors, the British adopted a *laissez-faire* policy that ensured the continuance of spatial and social features along traditional caste lines. (Roche, 2008: 3-23).

Rajanarayan Chandavarkar (2009) has shown that by the early twentieth century, urban space in Bombay was clearly divided along class lines, which was also made visible in the types of residential houses available in that city. With the proliferation of cotton mills in the city and despite the growth of new suburbs, mill workers usually lived close to the factory areas. In his opinion, the planning and development of the city was thought of in 'terms of separate spaces for different social classes'. This notion of social separation played a significant role in planning the infrastructure and hygiene of the city. Compared to Bombay, central spaces of Calcutta were not industrialised, as the jute industry flourished from the late nineteenth century mostly outside the city of Calcutta. But the large public works attracted a large number of casual labourers who formed the bulk of city's population. There was continuous migration to the city not only from various districts of Bengal but also from outside Bengal in search of work in the city. The poor in the city came mostly from the underprivileged and the lowest strata of the social hierarchy. The poor people without the means to build houses in the city lived in temporary huts which gave birth to slums in the city. Slums existed in both the 'white' and the 'black' towns. As Nathaniel Kindersley wrote in 1768 from Calcutta:

Here is not as in Madras, a black town near for the servants of the English to reside in; therefore Calcutta is partly environed by their habitation, which makes the roads rather unpleasant; for the huts they live in which are built of mud and straw, are so low that they can scarcely stand upright in them; and, having no chimnies, the smoke of the fires with which they dress their victuals, comes all out at the doors, and perhaps more disagreeable to the passenger than themselves...Everyone who can procure a piece of ground to build a house upon, consults his own taste and convenience, without any regard to the beauty or regularity of the town; besides, the appearance of the best houses is spoiled by the little straw huts, and such sort of encumbrances, which are built up by the servants for themselves to sleep in; so that all the English part of the town, which is the largest, is a confusion of very superb and very shabby houses, dead walls, straw huts... (cited in Datta, 2012: 138)

34.4 HEALTH AND SANITATION IN THE DIVIDED CITY

Writing on public health under the British colonial rule, Radhika Ramasubban argues that the health care system developed under the colonial rule was marked by residential segregation and the indigenous people did not receive the desired medical attention. David Arnold has also pointed to the fact that much of government expenditure on health and sanitation was for the Europeans and not for the local population. In fact there is agreement among most of the researchers worked on health and sanitation in British India that the public health policy itself made a clear distinction between the needs and habits of Europeans as opposed to the local inhabitants.

The growing population in the cities and the consequent problem of public health and hygiene especially during the plague epidemic of 1896-8 forced colonial officials to pay serious attention to remedial measures in order to protect the health of Europeans and the local inhabitants. In formulating the policy to address problems of health and sanitation, it was not only the material interests of the colonial state, the perceptions of colonial rulers and the prevailing social divisions and customs in local society that significantly shaped the discourse on 'improvement'. An inadequate water supply, drainage and sanitation, and the spread of epidemics compelled the government not only to think of

formulating effective mechanisms for public health and hygiene but also to develop municipal authorities to address the issues of city governance. The introduction of Indians on municipal boards, especially after 1862, was intended more to stifle nationalist aspirations, rather than resolve urban problems; furthermore, municipalities were to raise the funds to pay for new policing arrangements in cities. As a result, white areas were prioritised for water and sanitation interventions, and boards were starved of essential funds. (Gupta, 1981; Dossal, 2010) we must note however that in the initial stages, there was also the reluctance of elite groups to accept piped water supply or underground sanitation, and therefore were unwilling to pay for such general services which would benefit all sections of society, as Kenneth Gillion has shown for Ahmedabad. (Gillion, 1968)

In Calcutta, the settlements of local people were considered as major threat to health of Europeans. James Ranald Martin in his 'Notes on the Medical Topography of Calcutta', published in 1837, commented that the 'natives' were yet to learn that 'cleanly habits and pure air are some of the most precious gifts of civilization... The institution of caste is of itself an enormous injury to public health'. (cited in Datta, 2012: 93) Martin found a direct link between cleanliness of the 'native' town and the spread of diseases. Partho Datta has observed that 'Martin's view, that a combination of smell, dirt and dense buildings were somehow incompatible with civilizational values, was a reflection of the deep current of reformism popular among the governing classes in England and increasingly in Calcutta. One outcome of this view was that Indians were typified as unchanging, passive and helpless, needing to be worked upon to raise them from their moribund state.' (Datta, 2012: 98)

We find a reflection of Martin's perception even among later colonial officials. C. Fabre-Tonnerre, Health Officer for the Calcutta Municipality wrote in 1872 that many of the epidemics that broke out in Calcutta first appeared in the northern part of the town inhabited by local people. The link between disease and dirt, local habits and customs was predominant in the perceptions of Europeans. Naturally, the colonial government initiated policies to develop sanitation and public health facilities in Calcutta but the primary focus was on the area inhabited by the Europeans. The beneficiaries of the governmental development initiatives first were the Europeans, followed by the indigenous middle classes, and only lastly the poor. There was a marked difference in terms of population density between European and indigenous settlements and the congestion and lack of adequate civic amenities in the area of indigenous settlements had an impact on the quality of life, particularly in regard to health and sanitation.

Though municipal bodies were created under the control of the Europeans and the local affluent classes to address health and civic problems of urban people, there was a visible bias in municipal spending which favoured Europeans and colonial elites and resulted in a differential development of residential zones. In fact, the improvement trusts that came up in Bombay and Calcutta in 1890s took initiatives for sanitation and slum clearances but such initiatives had very little impact on the lives of the poor in the cities.

How did the various initiatives taken for the improvement of urban environment reshape or alter racial, caste and class biases in Indian cities? Chandavarkar argues that 'That formulation of social policy for an urban complex which was expanding rapidly was not only governed by selfish, material interests, but also by perceptions of how the poor live, the habits and customs of the "natives"'. There was a dominant perception that bad hygiene and the threat of disease was largely because of dirty habits and lack of cleanliness among local population, particularly those who belonged to lower social order. H. Coneybeare wrote:

it could not be expected that any town containing half a million people can be without a dirty quarter, and this is particularly the case in India where the connection of caste has a tendency to concentrate sweepers and others of low caste in one locality. Municipal improvements can only provide the means of cleanliness to those who are willing to avail themselves of them. . . (cited in Chandavarkar, 2009:48)

The same perception was echoed in the observation of Burnett-Hurst that ‘...it is no exaggeration to say that the masses are utterly unacquainted with even elementary ideas of hygiene and sanitation, and little improvement can take place until they have been educated to a different standard of living.’ (cited in Chandavarkar, 2009: 50) Chandavarkar therefore argues that there was conscious effort on the part of colonial rulers to construct an image of India whose society and citizens have different habits and therefore demanded a different set of policies to achieve improvement. The plague in Bombay in the 1890s and the response of the colonial rulers to this calamity provides another example of the colonial discourse on hygiene and sanitation. Even after the medical discovery of the theories of the plague, Prashant Kidambi has explained that in 1902 Bombay’s health officials and medical practitioners were convinced that plague was a disease of locality and not an epidemic caused by outside sources. It was the unhealthy condition of ‘native’ quarters which has caused this disease. The plague was ‘a disease of locality and does not occur in epidemics by being introduced from without and spreading only by personal contact or by means of affected material into unaffected localities’. (Kidambi, 2007:56)

Ranchodlal Chotalal, who was nominated Chairman of the Municipal Committee of Ahmedabad in 1883 wrote a memo listing the improvements needed in the city: better water and drainage, new thoroughfares, more open spaces, better hospitals, the encouragement of people to live outside the wall, and a ban on selling further land for building in the crowded parts of the city. He concluded that ‘The most important duty of the Municipality is to look after the public health.’ Yet there was widespread opposition to his plans, some of which stemmed from personal and caste-based prejudices about the perils of underground drainage: there was Brahman and Vania opposition to the use of piped water for instance. None of these were forms of opposition that were unknown in England when new water, sanitation and public health measures were being introduced for the first time. However, colonial officials did not agree that such facilities were essential in India: in the words of a former Collector, Sir Theodore Hope in 1886, Ahmedabad should have nothing to do with underground drainage since it was costly, still in its experimental stage in India, with mistakes being made even in England, and “too far advanced for the present stage of average intelligence and civilisation of the population of towns in the Bombay mofussil.” Only in the early 1900s did Ahmedabad get piped water and underground sewage.

The racial attitude was further spatialised in specific ways through the passage of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1868. The objective behind the Act was to protect the British officers from venereal disease, for which Indian prostitutes were seen as the important cause. They were therefore kept under strict surveillance, isolated in Lock Hospitals and periodically sent away from areas visited by European soldiers. Long after the Contagious Diseases Acts were repealed in England and in India, after 1888, measures of segregation were continued under Cantonment Rules. The arrival of European and Japanese prostitutes in Indian cantonments produced new anxieties among colonial officials about the possible threats to racial distinction, which in some instances were sought to be retained by expelling these women from specific cantonments as well. (Tambe, 2009; Ballhatchet, 1980) Yet, any act which aimed to protect only British citizens and devolving on the municipality as a whole was considered untenable, and

therefore in Bombay, as Ashwini Tambe tells us, the Contagious Diseases Act was suspended since the municipality refused to pay for its implementation. The rule of colonial difference was reflected in most measures that were taken to address the issues of health and hygiene in the colonial city. (Tambe, 2009)

A number of scholars who have studied the Indian city under colonial rule have revealed the ways in which caste and ethnicity were given renewed meaning and importance in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Labour historians such as Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, Shashibhushan Upadhyay, Chitra Joshi and Dipesh Chakrabarti, among others, have shown that while they might not have had the same meanings as in the places of origin, the ties of caste and community provided new migrants with important resources to survive in their new urban locations, of Bombay, Kanpur and Calcutta. (Chandavarkar (2009), Upadhyay (2004), Joshi (2003), Chakrabarti (1989) Even the new sites of work, at the factory or the mine, did not always dissolve the distinctions based on caste and often strengthened and revived them, though new opportunities for self definition of lower castes were also being opened up. (Nair, 1998) In fact, both factory managers, and landlords of housing colonies in these working class areas found it more useful to leave the solidarities of caste/ethnicity in the neighbourhood untouched, for either administrative or financial reasons, thereby placing the burden of transforming the lives of the urban poor as a whole on the poor themselves.

A few small scale experiments were tried by individual administrators to alter the social habits of the lower castes by planning the physical space within the city. One such example was the small colony called Knoxpet which was established in Bangalore in 1923 with the intention of raising the Chuckliars or leather workers to a 'proper social and sanitary standard'. New principles of planning and building space were thus introduced which aimed to transform living styles and the social status of the lowest castes in the city. (Nair, 2005)

34.5 SUMMARY

The cities of Madras, Bombay and Calcutta developed primarily to serve the commercial interests of the growing British colonial empire in India. The men who came as representatives of the British colonial empire were influenced by the ideas and interests of the mother country. The notion of racial superiority that they had as 'white' men played a significant role in maintaining the difference by adopting segregated residential settlements. The space segregated as 'native' town was inhabited by different local social groups and their residential areas represented their caste and religious differences. Poor people belonging mostly to lower castes and engaged in different menial works lived in the outskirts of the city or near the industry/factory in slums. While threats of disease compelled the colonial government to initiate measures for the health and hygiene of urban residents, ideas of racial difference thwarted the possible success of any measures right from the outset. Over time, even the involvement of a sizable section of Indian urban elites in municipal politics, after 1862, and nationalist leaders, in the 20th century, did little to redress the entrenched differences of class and race in the Indian city, and deepened the hold of such affiliations of caste and ethnicity, which gave people, especially those from lower castes and classes, a sense of security and belonging.

34.6 EXERCISES

- 1) In what ways did the dynamics of race, class and ethnicity shape urban spatial relations and control over urban space?

- 2) Critically analyse the emergence and growth of Presidency towns during the colonial period.
- 3) Can colonial cities rightly be understood as divided cities? Justify.
- 4) Were the divisions within cities also the basis for new antagonisms and solidarities?

34.7 REFERENCES

- Arnold, David, (1993) *Colonising the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century India* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Ballhatchet, Kenneth, (1980) *Race, Sex, and Class under the Raj: Imperial Attitudes and Policies and Their Critics, 1793-1905* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980).
- Basu, Susan M. Neild, (1979) 'Colonial Urbanism: The Development of Madras City in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh (1989) *Rethinking working-class history: Bengal, 1890-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan, (2009) *History, Culture and the Indian City* (Delhi: Cambridge University Press).
- Datta, Partho, (2012) *Planning the City: Urbanisation and Reform in Calcutta, c.1800-c.1940* (Delhi: Tulika Books).
- Dossal, Mariam, (1991) *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities: The Planning of Bombay City, 1845-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Gillion, Kenneth L., (1968) *Ahmedabad; a study in Indian urban history* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).
- Gooptu, Nandini, (2001) *The Politics of the Urban Poor in Early Twentieth-Century India (Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Gupta, Narayani, (1981) *Delhi Between Two Empires 1803-1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Heitzman, James, (2008) *The City in South Asia* (London and New York: Routledge).
- Joshi, Chitra, (2003) *Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and It's Forgotten Histories* (Delhi: Permanent Black).
- Kidambi, Prashant, (2007) *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890-1920* (Aldershot: Ashgate).
- Nair, Janaki, (2005) *The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore's Twentieth Century* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Nightingale, Carl H., (2008) 'Before Race Mattered: Geographies of the Color Line in Early Colonial Madras and New York', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (February).
- Ramasubban, Radhika, (1991) *War on Disease: Bombay's Survival Kit* (Bombay: Colloquium India).

Roche, Patrick A., (2008) 'Caste and the British Merchant Government in Madras, 1639-1749', in Ishita Banerjee-Dube (ed.), *Caste in History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Roy, S., (1991) *Calcutta: Society and Change, 1690-1990* (Calcutta: Rupa & Co.).

Tambe, Ashwini, (2009) *Codes of Misconduct: Regulating Prostitution in Late Colonial Bombay* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press).

Upadhyaya, Shashi Bhushan, (2004) *Existence, Identity, and Mobilization: the Cotton Millworkers of Bombay, 1890-1919* (Delhi: Manohar).

