

---

# UNIT 38 CITY PLANNING IN INDIA UNDER BRITISH RULE\*

---

## Structure

- 38.1 Introduction
- 38.2 The Early Years: Social Relationships and Urban Form in the British-Built Capitals
- 38.3 Urban Governance and Nationalist Responses
- 38.4 The Mixed Results of Improvement Trusts
- 38.5 Twentieth Century Nationalism; Patrick Geddes and the Rethinking of Town Planning
- 38.6 Summary
- 38.7 Exercises
- 38.8 References

---

## 38.1 INTRODUCTION

---

British planning for Indian cities laboured under serious internal contradictions. As a colonial power, Britain ruled India primarily for its own benefit, yet it had to address all the issues of urban administration that any government confronts: design and control of space; provision of water, sewerage, roads, street lighting; and police. What were the different kinds of resolutions that were found to deal with the governance of cities under colonial rule? How did they develop or change over time? The British introduced concepts of urban planning – based largely on emerging European ideals of health and sanitation: improved roads, spaciousness, order and beautification. They implemented these concepts most fully in the parts of the city in which they resided, and which they dominated, so-called ‘White Town.’ In the areas which were inhabited by Indians, and usually poor Indians, or ‘Black Town’, they implemented less and more cheaply, with minimum taxation and minimum expenditure. They attempted to persuade their Indian subjects to accept these imported ideals as their own, though never without opposition. British engagement with local leaders – sometimes cooperative and sometimes oppositional – was determined by the imperatives of colonial rule, and in the later phases, influenced by nationalist leaders who found a space and voice in municipal politics. The physical legacies, and hierarchies of British rule were writ large on the landscape. The administrative legacies of colonial rule were less tangible, but equally significant. They included: entrusting more power to appointed bureaucrats than to elected officials; subordination of city governments to state and national authorities; use of eminent domain especially for slum removal; a policy of low taxes regardless of civic needs; a pattern of patronage in contracting out urban services; and more emphasis on impressive design and architecture for government and the elites than on the basic needs of the ever-increasing immigrant urban masses.

---

## 38.2 THE EARLY YEARS: SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND URBAN FORM IN THE BRITISH-BUILT CAPITALS

---

The immense size and diversity of India produced different policies in different regions and at different times; even where policies may have been similar, their implementation and reception were frequently different. Even among the Presidency cities of Calcutta,

---

\* Professor Howard Spodek, Temple University, Philadelphia, U.S.A.

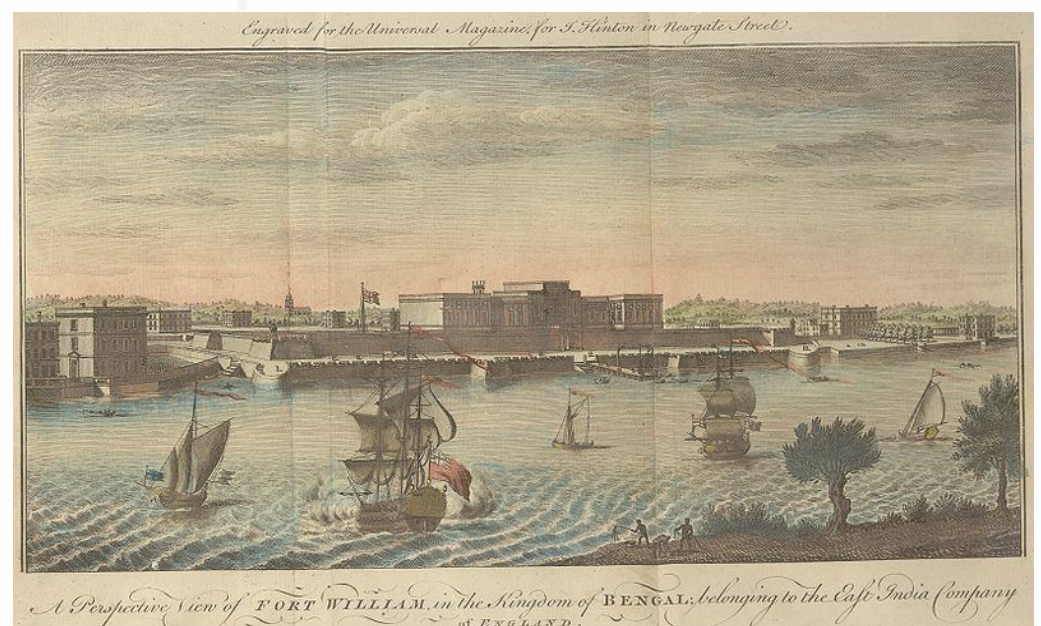
Madras, and Bombay, which the British largely created anew on rather minimal indigenous bases – long before they began to take control of already existing cities – differences soon appeared.

At the heart of each of these cities was an area dominated, designed, and occupied by the British: Forts named for St. George in Bombay and Madras, and for King William III in Calcutta. The British lived mostly inside the *fort* area, including the actual fort and the strongly defended area around it, sometimes called the *civil lines*. Here they built their homes, shops, and churches as well as their commercial and administrative headquarters, with some variations, since Fort William had few residential settlements while Fort St George was a veritable city in itself. The army was accommodated in a nearby area called the *cantonment* or *camp*. The much larger Indian area of the city was usually referred to as the *native*, or *black town*. As British control extended across India, such patterns of racial separation were repeated, although they never amounted to a system of apartheid.



1. An Eighteenth Century Sketch of Fort St. George, Madras by Jan Van Ryne

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fort St. George, Chennai.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fort_St._George,_Chennai.jpg)



2. Fort William, Calcutta

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fortwilliam\\_1760.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Fortwilliam_1760.jpg)

In some cities, where the British presence was great, very large areas of cantonment and civil lines were established alongside pre-existing Indian cities. Delhi, Bangalore, and Secunderabad, (adjoining Hyderabad) are examples. In other cities where the British presence was minimal, (e.g., Ahmedabad) the cantonment was proportionately smaller and it housed civilian as well as military personnel.



### 3. Lady Curzon Hospital, Bangalore Cantonment

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bangalore\\_LadyCurzonHospital.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bangalore_LadyCurzonHospital.jpg)

The British areas of town and the Indian appeared to be quite separate from one another. For example, Rajnarayan Chandavarkar, citing earlier texts, writes, ‘The major geographical division in eighteenth-century Bombay was ... between “its two distinct limits, the English and the Black”.’ (Chandavarkar, 1994: 40) Anthony King notes this racial segregation for urban India more generally, but he also reveals that divisions between white and black neighborhoods were often blurred. (King, 1976) Even within the fort, only some areas were white, others Indian. When Bombay tried to evict Indian businessmen from the fort area, around 1800, many refused to leave and the government admitted that it lacked the legal tools, the detailed land use and property records, to force them to go. (Dossal, 2010: 57-8)

A survey in 1812-13, showed that, in fact, Indians overwhelmingly outnumbered the British in the Fort area. Out of a total population of 10,801 listed as dwelling in the Fort, 250 were English, 5464 Parsis, 4061 Hindus, 775 ‘Moors’, 146 Portuguese, and 105 Armenians. (Dossal, 2010: 80) These groups, however, tended to be separated even within the Fort, with Churchgate Street functioning as an intangible line of demarcation that separated the British settlement to the south, characterised by ‘whitewashed English homes with covered piazzas’, from the ‘brightly painted and carved ethnic Indian houses to the north’. (Hazareesingh, 2007: 15)

Later, suburbs began to develop outside the fort walls. As Siddhartha Sen, Mariam Dossal and John Archer point out, the suburbs were even less racially exclusive than the fort areas. (Sen, 2010; Dossal, 2010; Archer, 1997) European officials and merchants as well as wealthy Indians, found themselves forming new elite neighborhoods together as ‘many Indian magnates began to move out of their wadis and mohallas to European dominated areas such as Malabar and Cumballa Hills, Breach Candy and Mahalaxmi.’ (Chandavarkar, 1994: 41) Conversely, some middle-class and poorer Europeans lived

in the predominantly Indian sections of town, such as the Tarwadi and Byculla neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, dangerous or offensive trades of tanners, catgut makers, fat-boilers, and indigo dyers were relocated to areas farther north, beyond the indigenous settlements.

Madras' experience was similar, although suburban homes were often larger and surrounded by large gardens:

Production and trade remained concentrated in the Black Town and adjacent areas, and administration and finance took over Fort St. George, while traders, financiers, officials, and other professionals and entrepreneurs, Indian and European alike, continued to lay out enclaves of private residential compounds around the south-western, western, and north-western perimeter of the city. (Archer, 1994: 45)

In Calcutta, although the fort was European, some of the land in the white town was owned by Indians and rented to Englishmen. (Chatterjee, 2012: 6) Later, in the nearby suburbs, such as Chowringhee, both Indians and Europeans established their own individual, sizeable family homes, set in their own compounds, in a 'distinct, discrete, predominantly residential quarter.' (King, 1976: 49; Cf. Sinha, 1978) Meanwhile, 'Ballygunge was another popular place of residence for the Europeans.... Well-placed and ambitious Indians with close connections to the government also settled here.' (Datta, 2012: 177)

In the port-capitals, the areas within the fort walls and immediately around them, were the sites of maximum inter-racial interaction. At least five recent scholarly works emphasise the patterns. Swati Chattopadhyay focuses on the British-built house in Calcutta. While it may have looked like a house in Britain from the outside, inside the two functioned quite differently. In England, houses were constructed to separate servants from masters. In their homes in India, however, British rulers and employers were constantly crossing the paths of their (numerous) servants. Chattopadhyay claims that the British were uneasy about the lack of privacy, but proud of their ability to command such a large retinue of servants, and to be reminded of this command at every turn. (Chattopadhyay, 2005)

Partho Datta provides descriptions of yet another style of urban integration: the street scene jumble of wealthy European homes interspersed with huts of their Indian servants:

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, warehouses, and I know not what. (Datta, 2012: 138)

The quote is from Calcutta, 1768, but Datta argues that this style of integration was ubiquitous and enduring.

Some scholars such as Raj Chandavarkar and Preeti Chopra have shown the contribution of wealthy Indian businessmen to the public life of some parts of Bombay, to which they made their claims on power and on space.

Bombay's mercantile elites acquired a grip on important and lucrative areas of the city's economy, including and indeed especially the cotton textile industry. By marked contrast with Calcutta and Madras, the city's elites swiftly acquired a significant share of local power. From the 1830s onwards, they were firmly entrenched in local government. ...As they battled for power within the Municipal Corporation where they gained, by the 1880s, greater representation on a relatively wide franchise, they took particular pride in public standards in the city. (Chandavarkar, 2004: 73)

Preeti Chopra speaks similarly of a 'joint public realm', 'distinct from concrete and imagined ethnic, religious, racial, and class enclaves', which was 'a spatial arena that was, in theory, owned by and open to all of Bombay's citizens and helped in the construction of an imagined common public.' (Chopra, 2011: xxi) By the end of the nineteenth century, 'wealthy natives, rather than the ruling race, seemed to control the economy and space on the island of Bombay,' (Chopra, 2011: 188) though this was confined to some elite areas of the city.

Finally, writing of Lahore in the late nineteenth century, and its integrated civil station, William Glover argues that the British wanted Indians to share in the suburban experience. The 'goal was nothing less than to create a new kind of person, and the material environment was thought crucial to the task.' (Glover, 2008: 199) In large measure they succeeded, for Prakash Tandon describes Lahore in the 1930s and 1940s as two cities, 'the Lahore of the Lahorias, people who lived inside the old walled city; and the Lahore of the ring of suburbs that grew after the city began to respond to the new peace and order. ... The two Lahores were quite different in appearance and character.' (Tandon, 1968: 183)

On the other hand, the British response to the revolt of 1857, especially in Delhi and Lucknow, two of the most rebellious of the cities, demonstrated that when the British saw their supremacy and rule under attack, they could retaliate with devastating, uncompromising power. The entire Indian population of Delhi was evacuated and allowed to return only group by group, Hindus in January 1858, Muslims not till the end of that year. Muslims who wanted their own property back had to pay for it. The poet Ghalib cried out in 1858: 'Where is Delhi, By God, it is not a city now. It is a camp. It is a cantonment. There is neither Palace, nor bazaar, nor the canal.' (as cited in Gupta, 1971: 63)

In Lucknow, many key buildings that had housed rebels were razed to the ground and others were seized for British control. Still others were destroyed to make way for wide boulevards intended, as in the Paris of Baron Haussmann of about the same time, to break up the close knit residential neighbourhoods where rebels could hide and escape British forces, and to create roads along which troops could be deployed quickly. New sanitation measures included not only water supply and sewerage, they also extended to regulation and health examinations of the Indian women who serviced the British troops sexually. The British also introduced new taxes and collected them more efficiently to make the city pay for the new construction, services, and police. (Oldenburg, 1984)

The descriptions of interactions of British personnel, policies and plans with Indian people and traditions, suggest that while clear divisions and hierarchies persisted even in the later stages of colonial rule, interesting 'hybrids' were created. Jyoti Hosagrahar has argued that Delhi's classical havelis, public spaces, roads, housing clusters, and conceptions of public health were all transformed, not into British forms, but into new hybrids as a result of being adapted to new uses. (Hosagrahar, 2005)

When the British moved their capital from Calcutta in 1911, they built New Delhi, a new city outside and separated from (Old) Delhi. In the capitals of India's large princely states, and in the center of regions with numerous smaller states, they built *Residency* areas to headquarter their local administration and troop garrisons adjacent to the existing native cities. Degrees of segregation and integration continued, although they differed by time and place.

### 38.3 URBAN GOVERNANCE AND NATIONALIST RESPONSES

Some cities found ways of coping with British rule. Ahmedabad provides an example of a pre-existing large and important city in which only a few British officers came to work and live.<sup>1</sup> When the British came to power in Ahmedabad, after the third Maratha War in 1817, they sought to ‘repair and restore some of the old, dilapidated structures.’ (Chauhan and Bose, 2007: 77) In 1830, they shifted their regional headquarters from Baroda to Ahmedabad, and established a cantonment in 1832, which contained residential facilities and administrative offices.

In 1830, the leading citizens of Ahmedabad received British permission to establish a Town Wall Committee to repair the town walls and to raise the funds through a small increase in town duties. Water was piped from the Sabarmati river to the center of town, at Manek Chowk, in 1849, with some pipes extended even to private homes; separate water pumps and latrines were installed for low castes. Later a *dharamsala* and a grain market were added. Deeming the surrounding area to be safe, some wealthier merchants began to build new bungalows for themselves in Shahibaug, the area between the city wall and the new cantonment, as early as 1840.

Ahmedabad’s early local initiatives were, however, somewhat unusual. Nationally, more sweeping legislation for urban governance was required. The East India Company passed the Improvement in Towns Act (Act 26 of 1850), which called for contributions to support Municipal Commissions that would introduce urban improvements. Ahmedabad adopted the act in 1856, as did some towns in the Bengal presidency, also in the 1850s, and some in the Punjab in the 1860s.<sup>2</sup> By the 1860s, a new regime of municipal record keeping and control over building activity in towns and cities was inaugurated through the new Municipal Committees, (Glover, 2007: 13-14) which focused largely on providing urban facilities and services and enforcing building bye laws. (Ansari, 1977: 10) Initially, persons nominated by the British rulers governed these municipalities. Later, especially after 1882, the municipalities were opened to more members elected from the city’s Indian population as well.

Through his Resolution of 1882, Viceroy Lord Ripon extended the principles of local self-government to all municipalities under British rule. The Chairman, however, was the municipal commissioner, usually a British official. Civic improvement was only one part of the agenda; shifting the burden of tax collection from the British to Indians was another. Most citizens did not want to pay the taxes, especially when they perceived no benefit for themselves. Many authors such as Mariam Dossal (on Bombay), Narayani Gupta (on Delhi) and Susan Lewandowski (on Madras) have noted the shortage of municipal funds and the almost total lack of concern for parts of the city into which poor immigrants moved.

Urban government after the Ripon reforms required a series of compromises between ‘financial austerity and political necessity ... No Indian town or city could approach the economic resources of a Leeds or Birmingham in the nineteenth century.’ (Leonard, 1973: 251) There was enough in the budget, however, ‘to make it worthwhile for local contractors to become politicians and win election to the Municipal Council ... Urban services ... expanded most in road construction and lighting ... highly visible

<sup>1</sup> Information on Ahmedabad is cited from Gillion, Kenneth L. *Ahmedabad: A Study in Indian Urban History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), unless otherwise specified.

<sup>2</sup> Personal communication, Narayani Gupta, April 10, 2012.

improvements that had great appeal for urban voters, cost relatively little and provided an important administrative role and patronage for politicians.’ (Leonard, 1973: 246)

Vested interests multiplied and even the highest municipal officials often felt frustrated. Arthur Crawford, Municipal Commissioner of Bombay, 1865 to 1871, complained:

Kessowjee Naik brought his dyers back to their old quarters. I prosecuted them, but was defeated. [He] spent money like water, eminent physicians swore solemnly that dye-pits were beneficial to health! Even the Press was “nobbled” by sums so large that their Editors could not resist the bait. This infamous success emboldened a powerful German firm to open a large steam Dyeing Factory close to Parbadevi Temple, whose refuse waters polluted the fair sands of Mahim Bay. ... An English firm ... dumped down on DeLisle Road a bone crushing and bone manure mill nearly opposite Cowasji Jehangir’s College in Parel Road. (as cited in Dossal, 1991: 203)

Crawford lamented that he had neither the time nor the resources to fight back and members of the Bombay Association of rate payers forced his transfer in 1871. (Dossal, 1991: 213)

More attention was paid to the commercial infrastructure of colonial cities, which had their own administrative authorities, separate from the municipal government. In Bombay, for instance, three wet docks for large ships, the Prince’s Dock, the Victoria Dock and the Alexandra Dock, were built between 1875 and 1914. India’s first oil terminal was opened at Sewri, and new wharves, depots, warehouses and railway sidings were added to handle the millions of tons of cargo annually shipped through Bombay. (Hazareesingh, 2007: 18)

In general, then, until the end of the nineteenth century, the British were concerned mostly with their own areas of the city – the administrative headquarters, the cantonment, the civil lines, and the industrial and port areas. They planted some new buildings and institutions in the native cities, drove some new roads through old neighborhoods, supplied some new water and sewerage, but did not, indeed could not, fully engage with the city as a whole.

---

## 38.4 THE MIXED RESULTS OF IMPROVEMENT TRUSTS

---

In 1898, following the plague that broke out in Bombay in 1896, the first Improvement Trust was initiated in Bombay (Ansari, 1977: 10). The trust was created for three reasons. First, the disastrously poor sanitation in Bombay threatened the city’s international trade. Already in 1867, at an international conference on cholera convened in Constantinople, French and Egyptian representatives called Bombay a ‘cholera nest’. (Dossal, 1991: 203) They threatened to close their ports to ships passing through Bombay. The threat became a reality in 1896 as ‘plague initially closed the ports of Europe to ships from Bombay, disrupting the city’s export trade and virtually paralyzing its commercial life.’ (Hazareesingh, 2007: 27) The Trust was to bring Bombay into compliance with international health standards.

Second, the Trust was to save lives through improving housing standards. ‘The establishment of the Bombay Improvement Trust in 1898 was the outcome of a firmly entrenched belief that plague was, in the first instance, the direct result of overcrowding in poorly ventilated and filth-ridden dwellings.’ (Kidambi, 2007: 68) Mortality rates, 1896-1900, reached 65.4 per thousand, and remained at 64.1 per thousand, 1901-05. This was more than double its rate in the previous decades. (Klein, 1986: 729) Workers fled. The population of the city which had been 821,764 in 1891 (Klein,

1986: 729) plummeted to 400,000 in 1897-98 (Dossal, 2010: 159), although, the city recouped its losses by 1911.

Ira Klein points out that there was no building code in most of Bombay, and cites the official census reports of 1901 for evidence of the grim housing conditions of the period. Worse, close to 100,000 labourers had no homes at all. (Kidambi, 2007: 38) Klein analyses the problem as follows:

Since the Western rulers believed that laissez faire methods were most efficient for development, they were not particularly concerned about tremendous disparities in wealth, crowding or urban blight; . . . . Bombay's leaders did not conceive of the urban environment as a separate entity to be protected for health, comfort or beauty; rather it was viewed as a resource for development, disposable as a market commodity. (Klein, 1986: 727)

The Bombay Improvement Trust was therefore charged with invoking the power of eminent domain to destroy slums and improve the living conditions of the poor. The Trust focused on physical planning: creating new streets, decongesting crowded localities, reclaiming land for urban expansion, and constructing housing for low income residents. These improvements were also intended to enhance the city's image as a center of imperial and commercial power. (Ansari, 1977: 9)

Why an Improvement Trust? Why not carry out these activities through the existing Municipal government? A third goal of the Trust was to keep key urban development powers in the hands of appointed officials, who could proceed 'unencumbered by accountability to representatives of local self-governing institutions.' (Kidambi, 2007: 72) As Improvement Trusts were subsequently extended to other large cities across India – Agra, Kanpur, Nagpur, Delhi, Calcutta – they extended the frictions between the elected municipal governments and the appointed trusts concerning division of functions and responsibilities. 'This initiated the process of multiplicity of authorities that became a major issue of governance after independence.' (Ansari, 2009: 52)

In pursuing its goals of improving or destroying slums and making available better living conditions for the poor, the Bombay Improvement Trust was a failure. At least in the short run, the Trust was actually reducing the supply of low cost accommodation, and doing it without concern for those evicted. Thousands of houses were destroyed without alternatives being provided. In order to let light and air into homes, the Municipal Corporation had rooms inside houses destroyed to create interior *chowks*. To create this space, some residents were displaced; in some cases the homeowners added storeys to their houses. The result was more overcrowding. The remaining houses rose in price, so the poor could not afford them. They left or they cramped even more tightly into the remaining space. Meanwhile, the Trust was unable to provide adequate new housing on the city's outskirts. Poor residents also could not pay the systematic collection of rent demanded by the Trust; they often preferred private owners with whom they could negotiate or delay payments.

Living conditions in the overcrowded tenements in the central districts of the city continued steadily to deteriorate. By 1911, fearing financial losses, the Trust began to raise rents. In effect, by knocking down buildings in the slums and raising building standards, the Trust had evicted the poor and created middle class housing in its place. (Kidambi, 2007: 71-110)

The dilemmas of the Trust revealed just one more example of the conflicts over land that characterised Bombay (and other cities). 'Conflict over land had a long history and been so acute that the planning efforts were marginalized and vested interests determined incremental growth in the island city. In this situation, the state had never been dominant nor determined enough to ensure that planning initiatives were actually implemented.



The essence of Bombay's history lay in the conflict between serving the immediate needs of vested interests and the long term benefits for society as a whole.' (Dossal, 2010: 164)

Although health conditions were less severe, the physical conditions of Calcutta housing were even worse than in Bombay. Calcutta had the highest percentage of slums of any city in India, 'divided into great "blocks" of buildings, ranging over 20 to 270 acres (but most commonly about 100 acres) consisting of streetless dense building. The total area covered in this way in the city in 1912, [the year after the Calcutta Improvement Trust was established] was 2,200 acres covering an area of three square miles.' (Meller, 1979: 338)

The first chairman of the Calcutta Improvement Trust, E.P. Richards, wrote a devastating 259 page report 'On the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta and Contiguous Areas.' Revealing his frustration in dealing with the lack of planning, he said:

A casual glance at the Calcutta plans shows instantly that the city, as a whole, actually possesses no streets. There are but two small areas in Calcutta having the normal street system which is found throughout the whole area of almost every city in the world. ... 2,500 acres are provided only with highly irregular lanes and passages. It would require the creation of 110 miles of ordinary 30-40 Ft streets to bring Calcutta into line with even the old built-up sections of European cities. (Moorhouse, 1971: 263; for a fuller discussion of Richards' report see Datta, 2012: 233-53)

The Calcutta Improvement Trust was to concentrate on the populated centres of the city, thus restricting its source of income, as there was little vacant land to sell off for development. The CIT saw its mission mostly as destroying slums, or at least opening them up to circulation of traffic and ventilation of air.

The concepts advocated by the National Housing Reform Council in Great Britain, and apparent in Britain's first piece of town planning legislation, the Housing Town Planning Act of 1909, began to influence Indian planning, but the gap between British ideals and Indian realities was too great. The new British legislation called for purchasing land on the outskirts of cities and developing it for the respectable poor with a steady wage; they would then abandon their inner-city homes for the next generation of the poor. 'It was an idea based on the possibility of rising real incomes for the poor, orderly and controlled administration, and the efficacy of private initiative. ... Conditions in Indian cities could not have been more different.' (Meller, 1979: 336)

Industrialisation in India was minimal through most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Town planning in the late 1880s and 1890s was more 'a matter of asserting the Imperial presence by the construction of impressive buildings for colonial rulers and their officers.' (Meller, 1979: 331) In municipalities, very little professional expertise existed for drafting and implementing town planning. (Meller, 1979: 341) The key personnel in India were sanitary and civil engineers, who cleared slums or built straight roads through them; filled up tanks to get rid of mosquitoes; and made sure civil lines were well taken care of with water and sewerage services paid for by taxes on the entire city population. Social planning was virtually non-existent.

---

## **38.5 TWENTIETH CENTURY NATIONALISM; PATRICK GEDDES AND THE RETHINKING OF TOWN PLANNING**

---

The Bombay Town Planning Act of 1915, the first town planning legislation in India, gave the Bombay Municipal Corporation powers to prepare Town Planning Schemes

for urban development or redevelopment and present them to the Governor in Council of the City of Bombay. It called for zoning, building regulations, acquisition of land for public purposes, and the collection of funds for local improvements. The need was felt especially strongly because of the chaotic growth of Bombay's textile mills and the workers' housing that surrounded them.<sup>3</sup> The initiative vested in the local authorities, although the State Government could in special cases direct the local authorities to undertake Town Planning Schemes. (Ansari, 1977: 10; also Ballaney, 2008)

Other provinces followed, UP in 1919, Madras in 1920. All the plans were physical in orientation. Some entrusted the responsibility to local governments, some to Improvement Trusts. Some were limited to municipal limits, some to peripheral areas, some included both. Some enabled local governments or authorities to draw up planning acts. Most of the town planning legislation called for the use of eminent domain; compensation for the land acquired would be negotiated, but government had the final say.

The Bombay legislation was different, calling for land pooling where possible. Each landowner to be affected by the acquisition for public facilities would surrender a part of his land to the government, and keep a part. The land remaining after the government's acquisition would be re-parcelled out in proportion to the value of each person's land to the whole. It was presumed that landowners would approve of this process because the value of their land, even though reduced in size, would nevertheless increase by virtue of the new road or other facility introduced into the area. No one was completely dispossessed; the value of the land increased; the government did not purchase land or become a landlord. In the short run, this method was time consuming, requiring a great deal of consultation with the landowners, but, in the long run, it created less resentment and fewer protests. Nevertheless, after some time, the process of land pooling gave way to the use of eminent domain, even in Bombay Province. Eminent domain appeared so much easier to use. (In the last decade, however, Gujarat has returned to using land pooling.) (Ballaney, 2008)

The five development plans prepared in 1915 for Ahmedabad by the 'Consulting Surveyor' to the Bombay Government, Arthur Mirams, demonstrate the intersecting interests of British town planners, the colonial government, and the Indian nationalist movement, which was creating its own urban agenda. In 1915, Ahmedabad was the home of Mohandas Gandhi, just beginning his rise to leadership of the nationalist movement, and also of Vallabhbhai Patel, Gandhi's principal lieutenant in Gujarat. Patel served for many years as an elected member of the Municipality, and for several as its President. If Mirams' plans were to be implemented, the Municipality would have to be persuaded.

The town planning schemes for restructuring and bringing electricity and increased water supply and sewage lines to Jamalpur and Kankaria, areas just adjacent to and outside the walls of the old city, were generally popular and passed easily. On the west bank of the Sabarmati River, however, farmers objected to new development plans that took away their land. Vallabhbhai Patel, who felt that the city had to expand, persuaded them to comply. On the other hand, Patel felt that the plans for pulling down the city walls and replacing them with a ring road and an electric tram line were too expensive. In addition, he appreciated the symbolic importance to the Muslim community of retaining the walls, which had been built in the time of the Gujarat Sultanate, and of preserving

---

<sup>3</sup> The overall proportion of urbanization in India was not rising very fast, however, from 10.8% in 1901 to 13.9% in 1941, the last census of India under British rule, to 17.3% in 1951. The aggregated numbers are more impressive, from about 26 million in 1901 to about 44 million in 1941 to about 62 million in 1951. The largest cities were growing fastest.

the Muslim cemeteries at their base. This project languished for two decades before it was implemented, without the tram line. Later, Patel also opposed plans for a road through the walled city, on grounds that Indians hadn't been consulted; road construction was therefore put off until 1933. Social and political considerations were also part of the agenda of the Indian National Congress and in 1924 the INC presided over the election to the Ahmedabad Municipality of Kacharabhai Bhagat and two other dalits, its first 'untouchable' mill worker representatives. (Spodek, 2011: 76-77; 100-01)

In 1915, Patrick Geddes arrived in India, at first as a guest of Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras, who asked him to bring to India his innovative Cities and Town Planning Exhibition. Geddes stayed on in India until 1924, the last six years as a professor of Civics and Sociology at the Bombay University. A remarkable man who has influenced town planners for a century, Geddes believed that 'the town planner was the propagandist, the inspirational genius who would raise the consciousness of the whole community...' (Meller, 1979: 343-44) He managed to get the Madras Government in 1915 to appoint the first official town planner in India, H.V. Lanchester, architect and editor of *The Builder*. (Meller, 1979: 343)

Geddes' ideas were influential but not immediately implemented. His concepts were too romantic, too organic, too rooted in planning with and for the community rather than in physical planning of buildings and roads by professional engineers. Geddes saw British planning as the problem, not the solution. 'Geddes was totally scathing about the expensive and unrealistic activities of the British engineers and sanitarians with their belief in wide, open thoroughfares, wholesale destruction of slum areas, flushed sewers, etc; whilst Improvement Trusts rarely had the powers to make a comprehensive impact on the total environment of the city.' (Meller, 1979: 345) Geddes proposed cheap and ameliorative solutions.

A few of the princes invited Geddes to make new plans for their capital cities, and some did establish Improvement Trusts. Geddes' ideas endured, but they had to wait for a time and place in which community, rather than zoning, would be the focus of planning. A few European trained urban planners came to India after Geddes. Linton Bogle, a graduate of the first British university department of civic design at Liverpool, came and wrote a treatise on *Town Planning in India* in 1929, following his experience as Chief Engineer of the Lucknow Improvement Trust. Bogle wrote of the need to address the appalling conditions in the slums. He used public health indices – a death rate of 501/1000 infants under one year of age in Bombay; 464 in Cawnpore; 330 in Calcutta – to emphasise the need for immediate action. He cited the dense overcrowding in the large cities, the lack of space for recreation and play, the need for larger residences. Bogle was an engineer, and most of the remedies he proposed took the form of physical planning, including zoning and increased room for wider roads. (Bogle, 1929) In his introduction to Bogle's manual, Radhakamal Mukerjee, of the University of Lucknow, proclaimed the need for social planning as well as engineering, in part because all of the industrial cities had enormous surpluses of male population who might be seduced by 'the thought of running away to liquor shops and brothels where there is more room space, more light, and more company.' (Bogle, 1929: 5)

Depression in the 1930s and then World War II brought about a pause in Indian planning, as elsewhere. The construction of New Delhi as a new national capital, which continued even through the depression, was a major exception. Otherwise,

the only important event from the point of town planning around this time was the publication of a report in 1946 by the Health Survey and Development Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir Joseph Bhore. It recommended the creation of a Ministry of

Housing and Town Planning in every Province, well equipped Provincial Directorates of Town Planning, appointment of an expert in the Central Ministry of Health to advise on and scrutinize Town Planning Schemes in different provinces seeking financial support from the center, and creation of Improvement Trusts in all large cities. (Ansari, 1977: 11)

Independence in 1947 revealed the limitations of town planning up to that point: shortage of professionals, non-existence of comprehensive town planning legislation in almost all the States, and lack of organisation of town planning departments. In 1951, the Institute of Town Planners, India, was created with 19 members (290 in 1971; 600+ in 1979). The central and state governments began establishing planning legislation and town planning departments at the state level. The preparation of Master Plans for major Indian cities began in the 1950s as a coordinated set of proposals for the physical development of the whole city rather than for parts of it – as the Town Planning Schemes had been – and going beyond problems of crisis management into consideration of future as well as present needs. (Ansari, 1977: 11) A new era, with new problems, was seeking new solutions, but, for better or worse, it began with the ambiguous legacy of the previous century.

---

## 38.6 SUMMARY

---

Town planning emerged in England as a response to the problems posed by the industrial city in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In India, the construction and reconstruction of cities for reasons of governance, and to reduce threats posed by epidemics, was more piece meal and partial, hampered by indifference to the problems of indigenous zones of the city, inadequate finances, and ineffective legal measures. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of professional town planners, the growing nationalist interest in municipal politics, and the interventions of indigenous elites altered the scenario. Many Indian cities, however, continued to bear the marks of a legacy of cities divided on racial and class lines, and planned (or not planned) accordingly.

---

## 38.7 EXERCISES

---

- 1) How did British India confront urban issues with regard to design and control of spaces, health and sanitation?
- 2) Critically examine the altered social relationships and urban forms in the British built capitals.
- 3) How did nationalists respond to the opportunities for new urban governance in the colonial period?
- 4) What role did the ‘Improvement Trusts’ play in the improvement of health and sanitation in the cities during the colonial period? Were the Improvement Trusts at all needed?
- 5) Mention the chief features of Town Planning Acts. What was their significance?
- 6) Write brief notes on Geddes’ and Bogle’s ideas of town planning.

---

## 38.8 REFERENCES

---

Ansari, Jamal H., (1977) ‘Evolution of Town Planning Practice and System of Urban Government in India’, *Urban and Rural Planning Thought*, Vol. XX, No. 1 (January), pp.9-23.

Ansari, Jamal, (2009) *Revisiting Urban Planning in South Asia: Regional Study*

Prepared for *Revisiting Urban Planning: Global Report on Human Settlements 2009*, <http://www.unhabitat.org/grhs/2009> (accessed 16 November 2012).

Archer, John, (1997) 'Colonial Suburbs in South Asia, 1700-1850, and the Spaces of Modernity', in Roger Silverstone (ed.), *Visions of Suburbia* (London: Routledge), pp. 26-54.

Ballaney, Shirley, (2008) *The Town Planning Mechanism in Gujarat, India* (Washington: World Bank Institute).

Bogle, J.M. Linton, (1929) *Town Planning in India* (London: Oxford University Press).

Bombay, Government of India, (1925) *Bombay Town Planning Act, No. 1 of 1915. Town Planning Scheme: Ahmedabad No. 1 (Jamalpur) (Final)* (Poona: Yeravda Prison Press).

Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan, (2004) 'Introduction: From Neighborhood to Nation', in Neera Adarkar and Meena Menon, *One Hundred Years One Hundred Voices: The Millworkers of Girangaon: An Oral History* (Calcutta: Seagull Press), pp. 7-80.

Chandavarkar, Rajnarayan, (1994) *The Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India: Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Chauhan, Muktirajsinhji and Kamalika Bose, (2007) *A History of Interior Design in India. Volume 1: Ahmedabad* (Ahmedabad: SID Research Cell, School of Interior Design, CEPT University).

Chatterjee, Partha, (2012) *The Black Hole of Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Chattopadhyay, Swati, (2000) 'Blurring Boundaries: The Limits of "White Town" in Colonial Calcutta', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. LIX, No. 2 (June), 154-79.

Chopra, Preeti, (2011) *A Joint Enterprise: Indian Elites and the Making of British Bombay* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Chopra, Preeti, (2007) 'Refiguring the Colonial City: Recovering the Role of Local Inhabitants in the Construction of Colonial Bombay, 1854-1918', *Buildings and Landscapes*, Vol. XV (Fall), pp. 109-25.

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

Dossal, Mariam, (1991) *Imperial Designs and Indian Realities. The Planning of Bombay City, 1845-1875* (Bombay: Oxford University Press).

Dossal, Mariam, (2010) *Theatre of Conflict, City of Hope: Mumbai 1660 to Present Time* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).

Gillion, Kenneth L., (1968) *Ahmedabad: A Study in Indian Urban History* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Glover, William J., (2007) 'Construing Urban Space as "Public" in Colonial India: Some Notes from the Punjab', *Journal of Punjab Studies*, Vol. XIV, No. 2 (Fall), 211-24.

- Glover, William J., (2008) *Making Lahore Modern: Constructing and Imagining a Colonial City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).
- Glover, William J., (2005) 'Objects, Models, and Exemplary Works: Educating Sentiment in Colonial India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. LXIV, No. 3 (August), pp. 539-66.
- Gupta, Narayani, (1981) *Delhi Between Two Empires, 1830-1931: Society, Government, and Urban Growth* (Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Gupta, Narayani, (1971) 'Military Security and Urban Development: A Case Study of Delhi 1857-1912', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1, pp. 61-77.
- Hazareesingh, Sandip, (2007) *The Colonial City and the Challenge of Modernity: Urban Hegemonies and Civic Contestations in Bombay City 1900-1925* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman).
- Hosagrahar, Jyoti, (2005) *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Routledge).
- Kidambi, Prashant, (2007) *The Making of an Indian Metropolis: Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890-1920* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate).
- King, Anthony D., (1976) *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).
- Klein, Ira, (1986) 'Urban Development and Death, Bombay City, 1870-1914', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 4 (October), pp. 725-54.
- Legg, Stephen, (2007) *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Malden, MA: Blackwell).
- Leonard, John, (1973) 'Urban Government under the Raj: A Case Study of Municipal Administration in Nineteenth-century South India', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 227-251.
- Lewandowski, Susan J., (1975) 'Urban Growth and Municipal Development in the Colonial City of Madras, 1860-1900', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 2 (February), pp. 341-60.
- Meller, H.E., (1979) 'Urbanisation and the Introduction of Modern Town Planning Ideas in India, 1900-1925', in K.N. Chaudhuri and Clive J. Dewey, (eds.) *Economy and Society: Essays in Indian Economic and Social History* (Delhi: Oxford University Press), pp. 330-50.
- Moorhouse, Geoffrey, (1971) *Calcutta* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson).
- Nair, Janaki, (2005) *The Promise of the Metropolis. Bangalore's Twentieth Century* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press).
- Oldenburg, Veena Talwar, (1984) *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856-1877* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).
- Sachdev, Vibhuti, (2011) 'Paradigms for Design: The Vastu Vidya Codes of India', in Stephen Marshall, ed. *Urban Coding and Planning* (London: Routledge), pp. 83-100.

Sen, Siddhartha, (2010) 'Between Dominance, Dependence, Negotiation, and Compromise: European Architecture and Urban Planning Practices in Colonial India', *Journal of Planning History*, Vol. IX, No.4, pp. 203-231.

Silverstone, Roger, (ed.) (1997) *Visions of Suburbia* (London: Routledge).

Sinha, Pradip, (1978) *Calcutta in Urban History* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay).

Spodek, Howard, (2011) *Ahmedabad: Shock City of Twentieth Century India* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

Spodek, Howard, (1973) 'Urban Politics in the Local Kingdoms of India: A View from the Princely Capitals of Saurashtra under British Rule', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 2, pp. 253-75.

Tandon, Prakash, (1968) *Punjabi Century 1857-1947* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

