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The Making of an Indian Metropolis
Colonial Governance and Public Culture in Bombay, 1890–1920

PRASHANT KIDAMBI

ASHGATE
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Density and proximity are two of the defining characteristics of the urban dimension. It is these that identify a place as uniquely urban, though the threshold for such pressure points varies from place to place. What is considered an important cluster in one context—may not be considered as urban elsewhere. A third defining characteristic is functionality—the commercial or strategic position of a town or city which conveys an advantage over other places. Over time, these functional advantages may diminish, or the balance of advantage may change within a hierarchy of towns. To understand how the relative importance of towns shifts over time and space is to grasp a set of relationships which is fundamental to the study of urban history.

Towns and cities are products of history, yet have themselves helped to shape history. As the proportion of urban dwellers has increased, so the urban dimension has proved a legitimate unit of analysis through which to understand the spectrum of human experience and to explore the cumulative memory of past generations. Though obscured by layers of economic, social and political change, the study of the urban milieu provides insights into the functioning of human relationships and, if urban historians themselves are not directly concerned with current policy studies, few contemporary concerns can be understood without reference to the historical development of towns and cities.

This longer historical perspective is essential to an understanding of social processes. Crime, housing conditions and property values, health and education, discrimination and deviance, and the formulation of regulations and social policies to deal with them were, and remain, amongst the perennial preoccupations of towns and cities—no historical period has a monopoly of these concerns. They recur in successive generations, albeit in varying mixtures and strengths; the details may differ.

The central forces of class, power and authority in the city remain. If this was the case for different periods, so it was for different geographical entities and cultures. Both scientific knowledge and technical information were available across Europe and showed little respect for frontiers. Yet despite common concerns and access to broadly similar knowledge, different solutions to urban problems were proposed and adopted by towns and cities in different parts of Europe. This comparative dimension informs urban historians as to which were systematic factors and which were of a purely local nature: general and particular forces can be distinguished.

These analytical and comparative frameworks inform this book. Indeed, thematic, comparative and analytical approaches to the historical study
of towns and cities is the hallmark of the Historical Urban Studies series which now extends to over 30 titles, either already published or currently in production. European urban historiography has been extended and enriched as a result and this book makes another important addition to an intellectual mission to which we, as General Editors, remain firmly committed.

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My greatest debt is to my family, who have watched the progress of this book with bemused forbearance; and to Rochana, without whose perspicacity none of this would have been possible.

List of Abbreviations

AARBIT Annual Administration Report of the Bombay Improvement Trust
AFRB Annual Factory Report for the Bombay Presidency
ARMCC Administration Report of the Municipal Commissioner of Bombay
ARPB Annual Report on the Police in the Town and Island of Bombay
B.B. & C.I. Bombay, Baroda and Central Indian Railway
BG Bombay Gazette
BGOS Bombay Gazette and Overland Summary
BIT City of Bombay Improvement Trust
BMOA Bombay Mill Owners' Association
BPPSAI Bombay Presidency Police Secret Abstracts of Intelligence
CEHI Cambridge Economic History of India
EPW Economic and Political Weekly
GD General Department
GOB Government of Bombay
GOI Government of India
HMSO His Majesty's Stationery Office
IESHR Indian Economic and Social History Review
IPC Indian Plague Commission
ITJ Indian Textile Journal
JAS Journal of Asian Studies
JD Judicial Department
MAS Modern Asian Studies
MCRP Report of the Municipal Commissioner on the Plague in Bombay
MSA Maharashtra State Archives (Bombay)
NAI National Archives of India (New Delhi)
NS New Series
OIOC Oriental and India Office Collections (British Library, London)
PP Parliamentary Papers
RBDC Report of the Bombay Development Committee
RDPI Report of the Department of Public Instruction
RIFLC Report of the Indian Factory Labour Commission
RNNBP Report on Native Newspapers in the Bombay Presidency
SSQ Social Service Quarterly
TOI Times of India
Glossary

Akbara  gymnasium; meeting place; residence of religious mendicants

Alim  spear-headed black banner of Imam Hussein and Imam Hasan carried in procession during Muharram

Anjuman  an assembly; a Muslim association

Arnya Samaj  Hindu revivalist organization founded in 1875

Arjan  racial category used to distinguish speakers of Indo-European languages from so-called Dravidians

Ashrf  respectable Muslim

Badmash  hooligan

Bania  trader, moneylender, grain dealer; also a caste name

Bazaar  market

Bhaiyya  literally, brother; colloquial term for migrants from North India

Bhajan  Hindu devotional song

Bhangi  caste title of 'untouchable' waste-removers

Bigarri  sweeper

Brahman  member of Hindu priestly caste; highest and purest order in the traditional fourfold varna system

Budmash  criminal

Chamar  caste title of 'untouchable' leather workers in North India

Charpae  cot or bedstead

Chaul  tenement

Chitpavan  sub-caste of Brahmans settled in the Konkan region of Maharashtra

Crore  ten million

Dada  literally, 'elder brother'; colloquial term for neighbourhood tough

Dana  charity

Dharma  literally, duty; code of morality and righteous conduct

Dhed  caste title of 'untouchable' scavengers in Gujarat

Galli  alley; lane

Gampa  elephant-headed Hindu god

Goonda  ruffian, thug

Halalkhor  sweeper who removed refuse and excreta from houses and streets

Havaldar  constable

Holi  Hindu festival of colours that heralds the onset of spring

Imambana  a religious enclosure or building maintained by Shia communities in India
Jama
community gatherings of Muslims
Jati
endogamous sub-caste; a specific named 'birth-group'
Jethwala
storer of a commodity
Kamgar
worker
Kali-kr-ram
final night of the Muharram festival
Kayastha
title of caste with tradition of scribal livelihoods
Kirtan
Hindu devotional song
Koli
title of western Indian pastoralist and fishing community; regarded as the oldest indigenous inhabitants of Bombay.
Kshatriya
member of Hindu warrior caste; second highest order in the traditional fourfold varna system
Lakh
one hundred thousand
Lathi
a long and stout stick
Mahajan
merchants' guild, assembly, association
Mahar
title of a large labouring caste in Maharashtra; regarded as 'unclean' by upper-caste Hindus
Majalis
a collective gathering; here, a mourning assembly during Muharram
Mandal
association, committee, society
Mandir
Hindu temple
Mantra
pavilion or place with canopy above
Maratha
caste title of dominant 'warrior-peasants' in Maharashtra
Marwari
native of Marwar in Rajasthan, a community well-known throughout India for its moneylending and mercantile activities
Matam
collective outpouring of grief; public rituals of collective chest beating or self-flagellation during Muharram, in remembrance of the martyrdom of Imam Hussein at Kerbala
Maulvi
Muslim priest or learned man
Mela
fair, festival; company of dancers taking part in a festival
Mistry/maistry
foreman, master-workman, artisan
Mofussil
province or hinterland
Moholla
neighbourhood, quarter of a town
Muzaddad
foreman or supervisor, labour contractor
Ota
verandah or porch
Panchayat
council or tribunal, typically consisting of five persons
Panna
literally an aggregate of five; here, it refers to a model of a hand with five fingers extended, each representing a member of Prophet Muhammad's family, which was paraded during Muharram
Pethi
here, a model coffin paraded during Muharram
Samaj
society
Samiti
society or association; a committee
Sangh
association, organization
Sandal
foreman, labour contractor, jobber, community leader

Glossary

Sarkar
government
Serang
foreman who recruited and supervised labour among stevedores and ships' workers
Seva
service
Shair
bard; poet
Sheth/shethia
wealthy financier, merchant; head of trade guild
Shimla
another name for the Holi festival
Shimp
the caste of tailors
Shivaji
eighteenth-century Maratha warrior king
Shiv Sena
literally, army of Shivaji; militant Hindu nationalist organization in Bombay
Shroff
banker, money-changer
Shudra
the lowest of the orders in the fourfold traditional Hindu varna system
Sonar
the caste of goldsmiths
Swadeshi
literally 'of one's own country'; home industry; specific political campaign launched in early twentieth century by Indian nationalists to boycott British-made goods
Swaraj
collective action
Tabut
model of the tomb of Hussain at Kerbala carried in procession during the Muharram festival (also known as tazia)
Talim
literally, education; gymnasium
Tamasha
folk theatre
Tendal
leader of a gang of labourers among stevedores and ships' workers
Toli
gang of men; colloquial term for the wandering gangs during public festivals
Ugarani
Vaishya
the collection of money which is considered to be due to the caste; third in the ranked order of the traditional fourfold varna system
Vaishya
the traditional Vedic fourfold hierarchical scheme of ranked orders
Waaz
Islamic sermon; delivered usually in mosques
Wali
compact residential precinct within a town
Fig 1  Map of Bombay Island, 1909

Fig 2  Map of Bombay City, c. 1919: Municipal Wards and Sections
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

You can only express things properly by details ... Yet a detail ceases to mean anything when it becomes nothing but a colour and a shape, when we feel it's a detail and nothing more.

In recent years, scholarly accounts of urban modernity in Europe have focused increasingly on historical processes that transcended the boundaries of the local. The emergence of modern forms of state power and urban governance, the growth of civil society and the rise of the public sphere have emerged as key themes in the historiography. In turn, this has led to a growing recognition of the comparative possibilities afforded by the analytical study of these transnational developments. Historians have been especially keen to explore the similarities and differences that characterized the modernization of urban society in diverse European contexts.

Curiously, however, there has been relatively muted recognition of the extent to which imperial expansion and overseas colonization lent a global dimension to many of these historical processes. Yet even a cursory survey would show that many of the contemporary megacities in the former colonial societies of Asia and Africa acquired their recognizably modern characteristics during the ‘imperial globalization’ of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fabric of urban life in many colonial cities was transformed by the rise of a global economic system based on industrial capitalism and its attendant technologies of power. At the same time, the dense concentration of modern factories, commercial firms, western-educated local intelligentsias and culturally diverse migrant communities rendered colonial cities decisive sites of the encounter between European and non-European societies. A vigorous public culture emerged in these cities, buoyed by a thriving print industry and a variety of associational activities. The experience of urban modernity in the colonial context thus offers fertile terrain for the comparative analysis of processes and ideas that may have originated in Europe but became truly global in reach and scope during the age of empire.

These themes and their scholarly appraisal constitute the point of departure for this book, which explores the dynamics of urban change in a premier colonial city at a pivotal juncture in its emergence as a modern metropolis. Drawing together strands that have hitherto been treated in an isolated and

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piecemeal manner, this micro-study investigates the social history of Bombay in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. In examining the colonial experience of historical processes that have attracted considerable attention in recent European scholarship, the inquiry seeks to highlight the global dimension to a comparative discussion of these themes. At the same time, the book does not construe modernization in the colonial context as the inexorable unfolding of industrial capitalism, 'westernization' or 'governmentality'. Rather, it is interpreted here as a contested and contingent set of outcomes that flowed from the contradictory currents generated by the market, state and politics against a background of rapid technological change, demographic growth, urbanization and mass migration.  

In particular, the book highlights the manner in which the turbulent changes unleashed by European modernity were negotiated, appropriated or resisted by the colonized.

This book also seeks to contribute to the current revitalization of urban studies in India. For long, as scholars have noted, the perception that the defining feature of Indian society was its predominantly agrarian character had tended to obscure the significance of its cities. It was the village rather than the modern city that dominated the Indian intellectual landscape. As with many other representations of the subcontinent, the notion that India had been since time immemorial a land of self-contained village communities was a construct of nineteenth-century colonial discourse.  

Nonetheless, it was embraced by educated Indians of differing ideological persuasions and exerted a profound influence on their cultural and political imagination in the twentieth century. The village was regarded as the authentic repository of the timeless values and virtues of Indian civilization, whereas the modern city was viewed with profound ambivalence as a spurious Western implant. These attitudes also suffused the scholarship within the social sciences: anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists largely focused on the countryside since the 'real' India was believed to reside, literally as well as figuratively, in her villages.

There were, of course, intermittent flashes of interest in the modern Indian city. One of the earliest attempts at studying processes of contemporary urbanism in the subcontinent was undertaken not long after the


4 Gyan Prakash, 'The Urban Turn', in Ravi Vatsalvarsk et al. (eds), Sita Reader 02: Cities of Everyday Life (Delhi, 2002), p. 3.


6 Jasuki Nair, The Promise of the Metropolis: Bangalore's Twentieth Century (Delhi, 2005), pp. 1-10.

embryonic field of 'urban planning' had begun to crystallize in Britain at the dawn of the twentieth century. This was initiated by Patrick Geddes (1854-1932), the renowned Scottish polymath, 'social evolutionist' and civic visionary who spent prolonged periods of time in India between 1914 and 1924. Having initially arrived in the country on the eve of the First World War with his peripatetic City and Town Planning Exhibition, Geddes stayed on to investigate the effects of economic and social change on its cities. In the years that followed, he prepared over fifty 'town-planning' reports on Indian urban centres. In 1919, Geddes also took up a professorship in the newly-created department of Sociology and Civics at the University of Bombay. In his writings and lectures, Geddes questioned many of the prevailing shibboleths of urban 'improvement' that he encountered in colonial India, regarding them as historically ill-informed and destructive. Instead, he advocated ecologically sensitive forms of town planning that were attuned to the rich architectural, civic and cultural traditions of the Indian urban environment. Geddes's work triggered a short-lived burst of enthusiasm for studying Indian urbanism. In particular, it produced an interest in indigenous traditions of urbanism and spawned attempts to search for solutions to contemporary civic problems in the prescriptive past. But on the whole, his influence was restricted to a few individuals and did not have a lasting impact. Indeed, one of the intriguing features of the late colonial period is that even though the leading lights of the Indian intelligentsia were products of the city, they devoted most of their energies to the task of producing an idea not of the future Indian city but of a rural India fit for the modern age. This seeming paradox has yet to be satisfactorily accounted for, but any plausible explanation would surely have to consider the impact of Gandhi on Indian intellectual life in those years.

The contemporary Indian city resurrected as an object of intellectual scrutiny in the 1950s. The nationalist endeavour to construct 'modern cities' for newly-created regional states, the need to accommodate within towns and cities the massive influx of Partition-affected refugees and the burgeoning international interest in processes of 'modernisation' in postcolonial societies, all combined to create new political situations in which urban problems attracted scholarly attention. Several developments attest to this newfound interest in the city. A number of theoretically-driven anthropological and sociological accounts

8 Helen Meier, Patrick Geddes: Social Evolutionist and City Planner (London, 1990); see also Jacqueline Trudhill (ed.), Patrick Geddes in India (London, 1974).

9 Narayan Gupta, 'British Town Planners and India', in Narayan Gupta and Mohan Patel (eds), India's Colonial Encounters: Essays in Honour of Eric Stokes (Delhi, 1993), pp. 234-261. The most prominent Indian followers of Geddes in the inter-war years were S. A. Tendulkar, his student at Bombay whom he sent to England for further training, and Radhakamal Mukerji, who was based in the Department of Sociology at Lucknow. However, another student, G.S. Ghurye, became 'viscerally disaffected by the 'indominion in civic reconstruction' that he received from Geddes. Meier, Patrick Geddes, pp. 225-7.

10 Chatterjee, Politics of the Governed, p. 140.

11 For an overview, see Sunil Khilnani, The Idea of India (Delhi, 1989), pp. 107-149.
of Indian cities were published in this decade. The topic of "urbanization" also came to form a separate segment within the Indian Sociological Association and the Indian Economic Association, while "Town-Planning" became a recognized subject in the undergraduate curriculum. Equally significant was the decision of the Indian Planning Commission's Research Programmes Committee to initiate and sponsor socio-economic surveys of a number of major cities.

The urban surveys of the 1950s inaugurated an enduring tradition of descriptive studies detailing the economic, demographic and morphological features of contemporary Indian cities. But their wealth of detail was rarely matched by a depth of historical perspective. Historians, for their part, did not begin to engage with the modern Indian city until the 1960s. Two developments in that decade served to awaken their interest. First, scholars embarking on the serious study of the Indian nationalist movement were drawn to the urban centres in which "modern" politics emerged. Thus, a number of studies sought to locate the rise of Indian nationalism within specific urban contexts. Second, a growing interest in the "industrialization" of developing societies led some scholars to undertake the historical investigation of these themes in relation to particular cities. Common to all these works was a tendency to view the city merely as the backdrop for the larger economic and political processes that were the principal focus of analysis.

In the following two decades, however, scholars began to pursue fresh lines of enquiry that construed the social history of the modern Indian city as an important object of study in its own right. Three noteworthy strands can be discerned within this historiography. First, historians began to explore the ways in which the built environment and public architecture of Indian cities under

...
INTRODUCTION

Cities with a population in excess of a million. Indeed, as one writer recently remarked, "There will be more people living in the city of Bombay than on the continent of Australia." Second, the far-reaching changes brought by economic liberalization and globalization since the early 1990s have profoundly altered the face of Indian cities. At one level, these processes have hastened the demise of many of the traditional manufacturing industries that dominated the urban landscape. Cities like Ahmedabad, Bombay and Kanpur have seen their core industries dwindle, leading to the retrenchment of millions of workers. Industrial restructuring has led to the contraction of production in the so-called 'formal sector', even as the 'informal economy' has continued steadily to expand in size. Indian towns and cities today are thus teeming with millions of casually employed, low-paid workers who toil in small-scale manufacturing enterprises and seasonal industries that lie outside the purview of any protective labour legislation. These developments have triggered scholarly interest in the workings of India's burgeoning urban 'informal economy'. It has also prompted them to query the classic narratives of industrialization, which saw the process as inevitably culminating in the modern, large-scale factory system, based on capital-intensive technologies and a commitment to steady levels of production and labour deployment. At another level, the withering away of many of the staple industries that lay at the heart of India's urban modernity in the twentieth century has been offset by the rise of economically dynamic service-sector activities that have thrived on the revolution in information technology. Indian cities have become part of a new 'inter-metropolitan and global network carrying out information processing and control functions'. They have also emerged as key sites in the refashioning of middle-class

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2 See, for instance, Darryl O'Meara, Ripping the Fabrics: The Decline of Aum and its Mills (Delhi, 2002); Chitra Jothi, Lost Worlds: Indian Labour and its Forgotten Histories (Delhi, 2000). Of course, the signs of impending crisis were evident even before the era of economic liberalization commenced. Through the 1970s and 1980s there were attempts, both in the private and public sectors, to 'downsize' firms and rationalize production strategies. Employers increasingly took recourse to casual labour, which could be hired and fired in keeping with their requirements. The new era of privatization that was inaugurated by economic liberalization in the early 1990s only served further to accentuate these trends. See Jan Brennan, The Study of Industrial Labour in Post-colonial India - the Informal Sector: A Concluding Review', in Parry et al. (eds), Worlds of Indian Industrial Labour, pp. 407-429.
5 Chatterjee, Politics of the Governed, pp. 142-5.
identities. Equipped with technical, professional or processing skills, middle-
class men and women are the principal beneficiaries of the surge in demand 
for Indian services in the new global economy. Their visibility and volubility 
have been enhanced even further by the arrival in India over the past decade 
of multi-national corporations willing to offer unheard of salaries to their 
white-collar employees. In turn, the increased spending power of the middle 
classes has spawned a new urban consumer culture, amply reflected in the 
ever-proliferating malls and multiplexes appearing in Indian cities.

Finally, the so-called ‘urban turn’ has also been impelled by the recognition 
that the Indian city is now in a ‘new, post-nationalist stage’ marked by the 
deepening contradiction between ‘economic inequalities’ and ‘political 
opportunities’, giving rise to new claims and conflicts over its identity. On 
the one hand, as Chatterjee has suggested, there has been an ‘apparent shift in 
the ruling attitudes towards the big city in India’. A new vision of a global, 
post-industrial city has come to dominate the fantasies of India’s rapidly expanding 
urban middle classes. The combined effects of the ‘intensified circulation of 
images of global cities through cinema, television, and the internet’ and the 
‘urgent pressure to connect with the global economy and attract foreign 
investment’; Chatterjee argues, has had important consequences for the ways 
in which the urban poor are now perceived by social elites and the state. 
Thus, recent years have witnessed a ‘growing assertion by organizations of 
middle-class citizens of their right to unhindered access to public spaces and 
thoroughfares and to a clean and healthy urban environment’. Simultaneously, 
‘manufacturing industries are being moved out of city limits; squatters and 
encroachers are being evicted; property and tenancy laws are being rewritten to 
enable market forces to rapidly convert the congested and dilapidated sections 
of the old city into high-value commercial and residential districts’. On 
the other hand, Chatterjee contends, the poor ‘have sought to advance their own 
claims on the city by forging a new domain of ‘political society’ whose values are 
anachronistic to the norms of middle-class ‘civil society’. Many of their ‘political’ 
practices are ‘found on violations of the law’ and hence very different from 
the constitutionally sanctioned relations between the state and citizens within 
civil society. Equally, it has been argued, collective rituals of ‘public protest, 
violence, and local mobilizations’ have been integral to their sense of politics. 
Such ‘political spectacles’ in public arenas are thus regarded as having played 
a key role in fashioning new forms of chauvinistic and particularistic identities 
among the plebeian classes in contemporary Indian cities.

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12 Nair, Promise of the Metropolis, pp. 21-28.
13 Khilnani, Idea of India, p. 144.
15 Partha Chatterjee, ‘On Civil and Political Society in Post-Colonial Democracies’, in 
Sudipta Kaviraj and Sunil Khilnani (eds), Civil Society: History and Possibilities (Cambridge, 
2001).
16 Thomas Azim Hansen, Violence in Urban India: Identity Politics, ‘Mumbai’ and the 
Post-colonial City (Delhi, 2001); Nair, Promise of the Metropolis, pp. 271-88.

The urgency of the ‘urban question’ has thus reigned interest in the 
modern Indian city. Recent perspectives on the postcolonial city have opened 
up fresh lines of enquiry and brought novel theoretical concerns to bear on 
the study of contemporary urban trends. At the same time, there has been a 
tendency in these accounts to posit a rather stark contrast between the 
turbulent postcolonial city and its seemingly staid colonial predecessor. Yet 
there has never been a ‘golden age’ in the career of the modern city, when it 
was free of the conflicts generated by the deepening hold of market relations, 
state power and politics.

This book explores a watershed era in Bombay’s evolution as a modern 
metropolis. Like many other urban centres in the sprawling Indian Ocean 
region, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a tumultuous 
and fractious period in the city’s history. Bombay was transformed from a 
prosperous port city into a major industrial metropolis. At the heart of this 
process lay the rapid expansion of the cotton-textile industry, whose profound 
influence on the city’s economy, social structure and political culture has 
been extensively documented by scholars over the past four decades. But, 
as this book seeks to demonstrate, there were other ways in which the late 
Victorian and Edwardian eras were decisive in shaping Bombay’s identity 
as a modern city. Most notably, it was in these decades that the city was 
restructured in accordance with the dictates of modern urban planning and 
intrusive modes of governance deployed in response to the challenges posed 
by rapid industrialization and massive labour migration. Equally, the city 
became the site of a vigorous associational culture and ‘modernizing’ social 
activism that infused its civil society with a new dynamism. The legacy of these 
developments continues to endure in the built environment and public culture of 
postcolonial Bombay.

From San Francisco to Singapore, urban modernity in the nineteenth century 
invented a profound transformation in the techniques of rule. The city 
was rendered into an object of knowledge in the form of maps, surveys and 
censuses. New imperatives of rationality, legibility and visibility underpinned 
the conceptualization and governance of urban space. The city also came to 
embody new ideals of order that valorized ‘public health’ and the unimpeded 
flow of commodities and people. At the same time, governments and urban 
elites viewed with anxiety the massed ranks of the poor or racially defined 
‘others’, whose norms and practices were regarded as impediments to the

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45 Most notably, Morss, Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force; and Chaudhary, 
Origins of Industrial Capitalism in India.
46 Patrick Joyce, Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City (London and New York, 
2003); Mary Poovey, Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864 (Baltimore, 
1996); Paul Raboteau, French Modern Norms and Forms of the Social Environment (Cambridge, 
Massachusetts, 1983); Brenda S.A. Yeoh, Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore: Power Relations 
and the Urban Built Environment (Singapore, 2003); Joseph W. Bahrke (ed.), Remaking the 
Chinese City: Modernity and National Identity, 1900-1940 (Honolulu, 1999).
This intervention of the state in the sphere of urban development, through the creation of a special agency devoted solely to the purpose of civic restructuring, was the first attempt of its kind in colonial India. Chapter 4 investigates the functioning of the Bombay Improvement Trust, assesses its impact on the city’s built environment and underscores the diverse ways in which the city’s residents sought to contest, subvert or deflect its operations.

If colonial civic renewal sought to reorder urban space, colonial policing focused on its regulation. Chapter 5 argues that the outbreak of major episodes of collective violence in the 1890s, as well as the simultaneous emergence of a plebeian casual economy and public culture centered on the street, produced a significant shift in the strategies of urban policing. Attempts were initiated to modernize the police in line with metropolitan models and practices. Furthermore, the traditional colonial mode of exercising ‘indirect’ influence yielded to more authoritarian methods of ‘top-down’ control. The shift in emphasis was facilitated by a new City Police Act that was introduced in 1901. This piece of legislation vastly enhanced the powers of the police by bringing a range of activities in public spaces under their surveillance. In particular, the Act vested the police with an exhaustive array of ‘special powers’ for regulating and controlling collective activities in public spaces. It also consolidated and extended the formal powers of regulation vested in the police by criminalizing a range of activities in ‘public’ sites. In turn, their newly consolidated powers emboldened the police more directly than before in the conflicts of the street and the neighbourhood and amplified the repercussions of such intervention.

Cumulatively, the three chapters that comprise this part of the book suggest that the early twentieth century witnessed a major realignment in the relationship between the state and local society in Bombay. The city’s rulers adopted a more interventionist approach to urban governance. Integral to this shift were the crises of the 1890s, which prompted colonial authorities to set about reordering and regulating urban space. In highlighting the connection between these two developments, the book proposes an analytical framework within which the disparate events of these years, hitherto studied in an episodic fashion, can be located.

As in the metropolitan context, centralizing governmental agencies intervened in unprecedented ways. However, while this book focuses on the augmentation and application of colonial power, it queries the view that the state was a monolithic and omnipotent entity with an unlimited and unchallenged capacity to mould the spaces of the city to its will. 35 It suggests that far from constructing a unitary institution, the state was the dispersed locus of contending logics and internal contradictions. The chapters that follow also demonstrate how their strategies and mechanisms of governance ensured colonial authorities in conflicts that they were unable easily to resolve. Furthermore, by documenting the numerous ways in which indigenous agents countered the policies and actions of their rulers — ranging from outright defiance to the subtlest forms of...

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35 The civic projects that were undertaken prior to the 1890s, as far as they were implemented, were either designed to bolster the city’s commercial infrastructure or provide modern sanitary amenities to the city’s elites. For an account of mid-Victorian colonial civic initiatives, see Drawel, Imperial Designs and Indigenous Realities.

36 The idea of the ‘unplanned city’ was first elaborated in an influential essay by the architect and urban activist J.J. Maheswari. Originally published in April 1975, the essay was subsequently reproduced in a special issue of the Indian journal Seminar. See J.J. Maheswari, Seminar, 50€ (April 2001): 38–47. More recently, Ashok Sanyal has deployed the phrase to signify the city that was never part of the formal ‘master plan’ but always implicit in it, Quoted in Prakash, ‘Urban Turn’, p. 5; J.C. Scott, Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed (New Haven, 1998).
subversion— one may highlight how the city was a ‘contested terrain’, shaped as much by acts of resistance as by the operations of power.51

At the same time, the book seeks to qualify recent accounts which have suggested that the boundaries between state and society were contingent, fuzzy and porous.52 While the state cannot be regarded as a discrete organization that was external to society, the practices of its various agencies nonetheless produced a ‘structural effect’, simultaneously material and ideological, that set it apart as a transcendental entity.53 In other words, the ‘idea’ of the state became more firmly entrenched within local society. And no matter how indistinct the dividing lines between state and society might have been, they were nonetheless regarded as boundaries.54

Another key feature of global modernity in the ‘long’ nineteenth century was the rise and consolidation of new forms of urban public culture. This was symbolized by the proliferation of clubs, societies and other kinds of voluntary associations, which became a characteristic feature of towns and cities across the globe. It was through such associational activities, central to ‘civil society’, that men and women from diverse social backgrounds negotiated the pressures and possibilities of modern life. At the same time, urban associational culture transformed cities into veritable theatres of popular politics.55 The emergent public sphere of civil society enabled the liberal critique of modern state power as well as the articulation of collective identities.

The period from the 1890s to the end of the First World War, it is now widely accepted, marked an important watershed in the public culture of the Indian subcontinent. These years witnessed a spectacular surge in associational activities ranging from caste societies to nationalist organizations, as well as the rise of a dynamic print industry that churned out books, newspapers, journals, tracts, pamphlets and posters. There also arose new forms of collective action in public arenas: reasoned debates in the press, as well as meetings, meetings and public demonstrations.56 Importantly, these developments were a product of the urban context. It was in the city that Indians encountered and came to terms with new definitions of the ‘public’ and the ‘private’ and it was here too that they began to recognize the potential of novel modes of association and sociability.57

51 Yes, Contesting Space in Colonial Singapore, pp. 9-10.
52 See, for instance, Chaudhurkar, Imperial Power and Popular Politics, pp. 180-213.
54 For an elaboration of this point in the context of contemporary India, see C. J. Fuller and John Harris, 'For an Anthropology of the Modern Indian State', in C. J. Fuller and Veronique Bencie (eds.), The Everyday State and Society in Modern India (London, 2003), p. 24.

INTRODUCTION

Chapters 6 and 7 trace the crystallization of ‘civil society’ in colonial Bombay during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras. Chapter 6 charts the growing density and diversity of the modern associational culture that was fostered in the city. In particular, it highlights the countervailing trends that were a distinctive feature of Indian civil society. On the one hand, a vast proportion of the clubs, societies and trusts established in these years were organizational ‘hybrids’ that combined voluntary and ascritive criteria of membership. On the other hand, there also developed paradigmatic forms of voluntary association that adhered to the principle of open access based on secular criteria of membership. In focusing on the simultaneous rise and coexistence of different kinds of associations, this chapter treats within the same analytical framework forms of collective sociability that hitherto have been considered discretely. It also demonstrates how the city’s varied associational life helped to create a richly textured public culture marked by multiplicity and multivalence.

At the same time, the chapter seeks to highlight the ambiguous and contradictory effects of this associational culture. The clubs and societies that proliferated in this period served to promote in their members feelings of mutual fellowship and goodwill as well as a concern for the ‘common good’. They also helped to entrench within Indian public life a remarkably enduring commitment to debate and discussion. Yet the voluntary associations did not always adhere to the values of autonomy, equality and deliberative decision-making. Nor were they free of tensions and conflicts.58 At times, internal rivalries ripped apart associations as their members competed against each other for power and prestige. In other instances, associational activity produced deep fissures within urban society that even resulted in riots. Furthermore, ‘modern’ forms of collective sociability served to refresh a variety of putatively primordial attachments and ‘traditional’ identities.

This chapter also draws attention to two features of associational life in Bombay that were central to contemporary Indian civil society. First, it focuses not only on the associations founded by the liberal-nationalist elite, but also those formed to espouse communities defined by caste or religion. It thus questions the view that the term civil society is ‘best used to describe those institutions of modern associational life set up by nationalist elites in the era of colonial modernity’. This restrictive understanding of the concept is premised on a ‘normative model presented by Western modernity’. The defining features of associational culture in this ideal-typical version of civil society are ‘equality, autonomy, freedom of entry and exit, contract, deliberative procedures of decision-making, recognized rights and duties of members, and other such principles’.59 However, many of these characteristics can also be discerned in associations that were based on putatively ascribed identities of caste

58 As one scholar has noted, 'The discourse of social capital, with its emphasis on cooperation and collaboration, is not sensitive to negative effects in situations of social conflict'. Susanne Hoebel Rudolph, 'Civil Society and the Realm of Freedom', Economic and Political Weekly (thereafter EPW), 35/20 (2000), p. 1764.
or religion, but which nevertheless adopted the same forms, principles and practices as the ideal-typical voluntary organization. Indeed, such ‘hybrid’ societies were as much a product of colonial modernity as the purely voluntary associations that are the sine qua non of liberal models of civil society.

Second, the study also challenges the widely entrenched perception that the norms and practices of civil society were solely internalized by the Anglophone intelligentsia and were more or less alien to the cultural worldview and dispositions of the lower orders. It shows how the associational ventures in colonial Bombay were borne aloft by the initiatives of individuals and groups drawn from diverse social strata. In particular, it suggests that in spite of their lack of basic entitlements and the severe political constraints that they faced, the city’s working classes displayed a willingness to commit themselves ‘partially and transiently to others with the same sectional interests’ and were not unaware of the niceties of ‘associational civility’. Conversely, their awareness of the ‘advantages of social individuation’ notwithstanding, English-educated Indians were not always able to transcend their attachment to ‘a world of more complete commitments’.

The final chapter considers a novel departure in the history of Bombay’s nascent civil society. Conscious of their self-proclaimed status as the new leaders of Indian society and the arbiters of new norms of ‘respectable’ public conduct, the city’s educated elites initiated and participated in forms of social activism that sought to ‘uplift’ and ‘improve’ the masses. In particular, there developed among sections of the Indian intelligentsia a newfound enthusiasm for ‘social service’. For long, it was assumed that this concern for the poor first emerged in the Gandhian era of Indian nationalism. In recent years, however, the importance of pre-Gandhian ‘constructive nationalism’ has attracted scholarly attention. In particular, historians have begun to examine the voluntary organizations animated by the ideals of ‘active citizenship’ and ‘selfless service’ that emerged prior to the Great War. While sharing their interest in the specific local and global conjunctures within which these developments occurred, the analytical perspective adopted in this chapter is distinctive in at least two ways. First, it locates the new concern about the poor within broader processes of urban middle-class formation in colonial India. Second, the study seeks to disentangle the specific connotations of ‘social service’ from the generic category of ‘social reform’ to which it has usually been consigned. In particular, it argues that while ‘social reform’ during the late nineteenth century had largely denoted the internal attempts at ‘self-improvement’ within particular castes and communities, the emergent discourse and practice of ‘social service’ articulated by members of the high-status Anglophone intelligentsia was directed at the destitute, the downtrodden and the disadvantaged.

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40 In this context, see Sandia Breiting, ‘Contesting in Public: Colonial Legacies and Contemporary Communalism’, in David Ludden (ed.), Making India Hindu: Community Conflict and the Politics of Democracy (Delhi, 1996); Aditya Negam, ‘Civil Society and its “Underground” Explorations in the Notion of Political Society’, in Rajeev Bhargava and Helen Reiff (eds), Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship: Dialogues and Perceptions (Delhi, 2003), pp. 236–59.


43 C.A. Bayly, Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India (Delhi, 1998); Carey Anthony Watts, Serving the Nation: Cultures of Service, Association and Citizenship in Colonial India (Delhi, 2003).
CHAPTER TWO

The Rise of Bombay

Introduction

This chapter provides a broad historical overview of Bombay's rise to prominence during the course of the nineteenth century and highlights some of the salient features of the city's growth. The first section identifies the key turning points in Bombay's development as a commercial, financial, and industrial centre. The second section delineates the social profile of the city in this period, paying particular attention to the interplay of caste, community and class. The following section focuses on the spatial ramifications of Bombay's rapid development, and underscores patterns of continuity and change in the city's social geography. The penultimate section draws attention to Bombay's deepening civic crisis in the wake of rapid industrial urbanization from the 1870s. It shows how even as the city was transformed by industrialization, its civic infrastructure retained its pre-industrial character. The consequences of the city's worsening civic problems were largely borne by its working classes who experienced high rates of disease and mortality. The final section charts the institutional history of municipal governance to explain why Bombay's local authorities failed to deal adequately with its mounting civic woes in the late nineteenth century.

Urbs Prima in Indis

By the early 1890s, a century of sustained growth had transformed Bombay from a swamp-ridden cluster of seven islands into a prosperous city whose elites confidently trumpeted its claims to the status of Urbs Prima in Indis. Acquired from the Portuguese by the British Crown in 1661 as part of the dowry presented to Charles II at the time of his marriage to Catherine of Braganza and transferred to the English East India Company eight years later, Bombay's subsequent development was not preordained. Historical contingencies had a decisive role to play in its dramatic transformation from a sparsely populated settlement into a thriving centre of imperial commercial and political power.

Bombay's future was far from assured during the first century of its existence as a Company possession. The settlement was more noted at this time for the heavy toll that it was said to take of European lives1 than for its

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1 According to an English proverb popular in Bombay during the late seventeenth century, "two monsoons were the age of a man". Quoted in Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island, compiled by S.M. Edwardes (hereafter Gazetteer), (3 vols. Bombay, 1909), vol. 1, p. 163.
commercial allure. Its ascent to prominence only commenced towards the end of the eighteenth century, following the growth of an export trade in raw cotton to China. During the first quarter of the following century, Bombay's position as the premier commercial centre on the west coast was further consolidated by two developments. First, the collapse of Mughal power and the assumption of formal British authority in the region led to an expansion in Bombay's commerce. In particular, the East India Company's new territorial acquisitions in western India provided the city with a vast hinterland. Second, and possibly even more crucial in shaping the island's fortunes, was the growth of the opium trade within the triangular commercial relationship involving India, Britain and China.

From the 1840s onwards there was a further diversification in Bombay's export trade with an increase in shipments of raw cotton to the European market. By 1860 the town had become, after New York and Liverpool, the largest cotton market in the world. At the same time, Bombay was also the primary centre in Western India for the import and distribution of British-manufactured cotton piece-goods. Spurred on by these developments, a range of commercial services sprung up to meet the requirements of the town's merchants, European and Indian alike. The old system of agency houses gave way to new joint-stock banks and insurance companies.

Bombay's growing commercial significance was underpinned by the rapid improvement in internal and international communications networks in the three decades between 1830 and 1860. In 1830, the island was connected directly to the Deccan by a road that was cut through the Bor Ghat. The first railway line connecting Bombay to Thana was built in 1853 and in the following decade the island was linked to the Deccan. In 1860, the establishment of the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway secured a connection with

Gujarat. New docks were constructed for the major steam shipping companies that served Bombay. Substantial growth in coastal trade also occurred, and by 1847 there were nine steamers operating out of Bombay, of which the Bombay Steam Navigation Company owned five plying between Colombo, Surat and Karachi. Telegraph connections began to be laid from the mid-1850s and five main lines operated from the town by 1860.

Bombay's commercial fortunes experienced an even sharper upswing during the early 1860s. In 1861, following the outbreak of the American Civil War, supply of cotton from the Americas dried up and Lancashire was forced to turn to the Indian market. Consequently, there was an exponential increase in Bombay's exports of raw cotton to Great Britain. The resulting inflow of bullion led to a frenzied extension of credit into all kinds of speculative ventures and an unprecedented rise in share prices. Inevitably, however, the end of the Civil War in 1865 triggered a financial crash that ruined some of the biggest names in Bombay's commercial world, besides abruptly halting the various construction projects and other speculative ventures into which money had been so recklessly poured.

Yet the town recovered fairly rapidly from this setback. Historians have identified several factors that underpinned the city's continued commercial dynamism. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 reduced the distance to London and made it more viable for exporters to use Bombay's port facilities. The city's cotton exporters had also gained a foothold in continental markets, while the depreciation of silver after the 1870s and improvement in communications helped to boost Indian exports of primary products. The continued improvements in internal communications, especially the rapid expansion of the rail network, served to widen the island's access to an ever-widening regional hinterland.

The rapid development of the cotton-textile industry in the last quarter of the nineteenth century further bolstered the dynamism of the urban economy. A Parsi entrepreneur named Cowasji Dastur founded the first cotton-textile mill in 1854 and thereby inaugurated the age of industrial capitalism in the city. A noteworthy feature of the emergence of modern industry in Bombay, as scholars have long noted, was that it was essentially Indian in origin,

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5 Farrow, Urban Development, pp. 748-9. As a result of the China trade and the revival in the trade with the Persian Gulf, between 1830 and 1860, the value of the goods traded increased considerably, and the value of cotton goods increased more than tenfold. Added to these factors was the stimulus provided by the abolition of the Company's monopoly of the China trade in 1833 and the opening up of the huge Chinese market by force of British arms in 1842. Claude Markoff, 'Bombay as a Business Centre in the Colonial Period: A Comparison with Calcutta', in Saints Patel and Michel Thurner (eds.), Bombay: Metropolis for Modern India (Bombay, 1989), pp. 28-9. See also Gazetteer, 1st, pp. 514-21.

6 Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, p. 23.

7 Gazetteer, 1st, p. 422.

8 Morris, Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force, p. 15; Gazetteer, 1st, p. 311.

9 Kosambi, Commerce', p. 37.
largely controlled by Indian investors, and increasingly administered by native managers and technicians.\(^\text{17}\)

Owing to the diversion of capital into trade and other speculative schemes during the boom unleashed by the American Civil War, no more than ten mills were floated during the 1830s and none at all in the following decade. But the period between 1870 and 1890 saw the addition of sixty mills. Historians have attributed the timing and pace of this expansion to the structural pressures that bore down upon Indian merchants involved in the export trade in raw cotton to Europe.\(^\text{18}\) This trade had attracted indigenous capital from the 1850s and resulted in rich profits for Indian businessmen. During the 1860s, however, indigenous mercantile firms found themselves being squeezed out of the trade in raw cotton to Europe by the combined improvements in transportation, communication and market networks that gave a decisive advantage to the large European purchasing and shipping agencies with access to wider international credit networks.\(^\text{19}\) The growing subordination of indigenous mercantile capital by foreign capital, allied with the search for stability in an uncertain market, it has been argued, accounted for the rapid diversification of Indian merchants into the building of cotton-textile mills in the 1870s and 1880s.\(^\text{20}\) By investing in cotton mills, the large traders gained greater economies of scale whilst at the same time spreading their risks over a wider terrain of activities.\(^\text{21}\) It was, therefore, cotton brokers and piece-goods dealers who largely provided the impetus for the expansion of the industry.

As in the case of the export trade in raw cotton earlier in the century, the growth of the city’s textile industry was driven by the demand for its products in Far Eastern markets. Though the low count yarn produced by the Bombay mills had initially been supplied to the domestic market,\(^\text{22}\) the industry increasingly began to export large quantities of its yarn to China in the 1870s. Indeed, the industry’s exports to that country were by no less than 529 per cent, without any interruption, in the decade ending in 1890–91.\(^\text{23}\) During these years, Bombay dominated the overall development of the Indian cotton-textile industry and more than half the total number of spindles and looms in the country came to be located in the city.

The demand in the Chinese market for Bombay yarn had a major impact on entrepreneurial strategies in the industry. The first Bombay mills, unlike their English counterparts, had been composite units designed for both spinning and weaving.\(^\text{24}\) However, as Chinese demand for Bombay coarse yarn grew, millowners began to concentrate on developing their spinning capacities at the expense of weaving.\(^\text{25}\) In 1879–80, nine out of sixteen mills which had been established in the wake of the spurt in Chinese demand in the 1870s ‘did not install looms’, while by 1894, forty out of the sixty-nine mills in the city ‘had no looms at all’.\(^\text{26}\)

The extension of the cotton mills affected a wide range of trades and occupations within the city. Thus, the state of the cotton trade ‘determined levels of employment in the docks and on the railways’, while the cotton and cloth markets ‘were intimately connected with the industry’. Alongside the factories sprang up a range of ancillary small industries and workshops that sought to cater to its needs. For instance, while the leather industry supplied the cotton mills with bands and belts for pulleys and machines, sawmills and woodworking factories manufactured spindles and bobbins. Small workshops serviced the textile mills by undertaking maintenance work and repair of machinery. When the mills began to diversify from spinning to weaving, dyeing and printing cloth from the 1890s, chemical works began to proliferate to meet the demand for sizing powder and heavy chemicals. The mills also employed skilled artisans such as carpenters, electricians, mechanics, blacksmiths and cobblers. Finally, there were several economic activities, such as the retail sector of the cloth marker including tailoring and dressmaking, whose fortunes were crucially affected by the textile industry.\(^\text{27}\)

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of other kinds of industrial activity in the city. The workshops of the Bombay Baroda and Central Indian (B.B. & C.I.) Railway and Great Indian Peninsula (G.I.P.) Railway companies, which provided employment to a large number of workers, were principally concerned with ‘fitting up locomotives, building carriages and wagons and carrying out general repairs’.\(^\text{28}\) Civic agencies such as the Bombay Municipal Corporation and the Port Trust, and private agencies such as the Bombay Electric Supply and Tramways Company and the Bombay Gas Works all had their own workshops. And there were also other engineering workshops that produced industrial machinery such as boilers and cranes.

Numerous small-scale manufacturing enterprises catered to the demand for consumer goods in a large city.\(^\text{29}\) As one observer wrote in the Indian Textile Journal:

\begin{quote}
We have, in addition to cotton factories, engineering workshops, belonging to the Government, to steamship and railway companies, and to private firms; flour mills, ice works, bone mills, silk and woollen mills, oil mills, rope works, and tanneries. We make paper, soap, hosiery, sewing thread,
\end{quote}

\(^\text{18}\) Chandravarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, pp. 64–7.
\(^\text{20}\) Chandravarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, pp. 64–7.
\(^\text{22}\) Morss, 'Growth of Large-Scale Industry', p. 575.
\(^\text{24}\) Chandravarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, pp. 246-7.
\(^\text{26}\) Chandravarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, p. 247.
\(^\text{27}\) Ibid., pp. 76–7.
\(^\text{28}\) Gauthier, L. p. 356.
\(^\text{29}\) For a description of these manufacturing units see ibid., pp. 461-503.
sulphuric acid, drugs, furniture, vehicles, soda water, electrical apparatus, locks, conmopogies, brass furniture, safes, bricks, tiles, and pottery; a goodly show on paper.\(^9\)

By the end of the nineteenth century Bombay had also become a major financial centre. It possessed more international banks than any other city in India, while the combined activity of its two Presidency Banks was said to have created 'a broad and alert discount market'. Moreover, the city also had 'more Indian merchant bankers, financiers and accepting houses than ... any other city of India' and bills were said to 'come here from every bazaar of India for discount'.\(^31\) This financial clout was also underpinned by the fact that Bombay possessed both the largest gold market in Asia as well as the biggest silver market in India.

The trends in population growth reflected Bombay's status as the premier city in western India.\(^1\) Census figures for the first half of the nineteenth century are not reliable but nevertheless provide a rough benchmark against which to measure later increases. In 1833 the city's population was estimated at 234,032, a figure that had more than doubled by 1849 when a census put the population at more than half a million. When the first formal census was held in 1864, the city's population had soared to 816,562, a reflection of the impact of the boom of the early 1860s. By the time the next census was taken in 1872, Bombay's population had fallen to 44,405, largely due to the collapse that followed the end of the American Civil War. Thereafter, however, the population continued to increase at a steady rate and the census of 1891 put the figure at little over 800,000, a testimony to the city's growing industrial and commercial prosperity.\(^32\) Significantly, migrants comprised a very large proportion of Bombay's population; indeed, according to the census figures for 1891, just about a quarter of the total population was born within the city's limits.\(^33\)

Migrants to the city came from all over the subcontinent and the wider Indian Ocean region.\(^34\) The city's multi-ethnic character was frequently noted by wonder-struck visitors and proud local inhabitants. After a foray into the Indian town, one visitor wrote that he had encountered 'white men, brown men, yellow men, chocolate men, and very nearly black men' and declared that 'nowhere in London or in any other European city that I know, except possibly Naples, have I ever seen anything like this swarming, vivid, various humanity'.\(^35\)

This was also a multi-lingual city of unparalleled diversity. 'In Bombay', wrote the city's official historian, 'a greater variety of languages is to be found

\(^{30}\) The Indian Textile Journal [hereafter IT], VIII/90 (1898): 147.
\(^{31}\) ITJ, XXVI/310 (1916): 368.
\(^{32}\) This paragraph is based on the information provided in Gazetteer, I, pp. 155-66.
\(^{33}\) Ibid., pp. 163-5.
\(^{34}\) Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, pp. 30-35.

\(^{31}\) Gazetteer, I, p. 203.
\(^{32}\) Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, p. 33.
Rajendralal Mitra was expressing here a perception about Bombay that has since acquired the status of a truism. His words capture with great acuity the essence of life in this great city. They also highlight the fact that Bombay's buoyancy during the second half of the nineteenth century owed much to the enterprise and labour of the city's Indian inhabitants.

Imperial rule paved the way for Bombay's ascent but the city's commercial dynamism during the nineteenth century was fuelled by the sophistication of indigenous mercantile capitalism. Unlike Calcutta, where Europeans dominated the city's economy and commerce, Bombay's success owed a great deal to the vigour of its Indian businessmen. There are two noteworthy features about the Indian merchants and traders who participated in the city's commercial expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century. First, they were able to build on their close links with the Company as well as European private traders in establishing themselves in the export trade in raw cotton and opium to China and the re-export trade of British products throughout western India. Second, these businessmen displayed great flexibility in their commercial practices. While capital was generally mobilized through caste and community networks, this did not preclude the emergence of a highly sophisticated system of cross-communal business arrangements. Indeed, there developed a highly cosmopolitan culture amongst the business elites of Bombay.

The growth of modern factory industry in the second half of the nineteenth century was based on, and perpetuated, many of the characteristic features of Bombay's pre-industrial commercial world. Factory-based industrialization relied upon pre-existing networks of community and kinship. Given the paucity of sources of credit, the early cotton-mill promoters 'relieved heavily upon caste-fellows, friends and relatives to mobilize capital.' Many of the city's millowners retained strong connections with the world of the bazaar. Within the market for raw cotton, for instance, there was a close relationship between the Indian mills and the importers, brokers and jethawalas, for whom the latter acted as agents. There were similar ties between the mills and the money market and the millowners turned to the city's shroffs from time to time for their capital requirements. The management of the cotton mills reflected and fostered the cosmopolitanism of Bombay's commercial culture.

The business world of nineteenth-century Bombay was notable for its ethnic diversity. Parsi merchants, mostly migrants from Gujarat, headed some of the most powerful business houses in nineteenth-century Bombay. Starting as brokers and guarantors for the English East India Company in the late eighteenth century, the Parsi businessmen built on their connections with the Company to gain a foothold in the China trade. By the 1840s, they owned the largest block of shipping tonnage in India after the English East India Company. When control of the China trade passed into the hands of the wider international credit and trading networks of metropolitan capital, the Parsi merchants showed great flexibility in diversifying into other areas of commerce and were the pioneers of the cotton mill industry. Gujarati Banias, like their Parsi counterparts, had also been involved in the commercial world of Bombay from the very beginning, providing European private traders with credit and participating in the coastal trade between Bombay and parts of Kathiawar and the Konkan. Equally prominent were Gujarati Bohra traders of the Ismaili community, whose members were descendants of Hindu converts to Islam. They had been based in Bombay since the eighteenth century and were mainly involved in trade with western and northern India.

After the mid-nineteenth century, Khoja, Memon and Bhatia businessmen, new migrants from Gujarat, challenged the commercial dominance of the established Parsi, Bania and Bohra merchant aristocracy and bid for a larger stake in Bombay's expanding foreign trade. From fairly humble beginnings as small merchants, shop-keepers and moneylenders, these parvenus became important players in the China trade. Many of them subsequently went on to invest in the rapidly developing cotton industry. Of course, not all Bombay
businessmen belonged to Gujarati mercantile communities. There were, for instance, Konkani Muslim like the Roghays and the Ghattars who were the first to profit from the China trade in the nineteenth century. Similarly, there were Maharashtrians like Dhakkee Dadaji, a Prabhoo millionaire who acted as a broker to English commercial firms in the 1840s. Another prominent Maharashtrian businessman, Jagannath Shankarsett, combined land ownership with moneylending and banking.

By the turn of the century, the Indian mercantile community in Bombay counted amongst its ranks some of the richest families in the city, with a diverse portfolio of interests in both commerce and industry. Their wealth and social status also made the city’s merchant princes a force to reckon with in local politics. Regarding by colonial authorities as the ‘natural leaders’ of their respective communities, many Bombay shetias were closely associated with the administration of the city in the nineteenth century. From 1834, Indian merchants began to be nominated as Justices of the Peace by the local government, in which capacity ‘they became directly involved in the municipal administration of the city’. Indeed, by the 1850s, ‘most of the leading shetias had become Justices’. And when Indians were nominated to the representative Councils of the provincial Governments, a number of leading shetias entered a new sphere of public importance.31

Moreover, like the ‘notables’ of Surat described in Douglas Haynes’s seminal monograph, Bombay’s business magnates played a key role in the emergence of a nascent urban public sphere in this period. As intermediaries between the city’s ruling authorities and the rest of Indian society, Bombay’s shetias were the first to adopt the new political vocabulary introduced by British rule. Accepting the ‘imperial ethic of improvement’ and ardently invoking the ‘concepts of the public and the public good’, the merchant princes participated in municipal affairs and undertook lavish acts of public philanthropy.51 But, as in the case of Surat’s notables, the public culture fashioned by Bombay’s merchant princes was essentially dictated by ‘conservative impulses’. The Victorian idioms and practices of colonial civic culture embraced by the shetias served primarily as means of ‘cultivating deferential ties with the ruling group’.52

Bombay was also home to a nascent, but dynamic, English-educated Indian middle class comprising lawyers, doctors, engineers, businessmen, journalists, teachers and clerks employed in mercantile and government offices. This middle class was a product of colonial policies that dated back to the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The process had commenced in 1822

when the Native School Book and School Society appointed by the Bombay Education Society began to provide education in the vernacular languages to Indian students. After this institution collapsed, its place was taken by the Bombay Native Education Society in 1827, which sought to improve upon the existing educational infrastructure. College education was organized from 1834 at the newly-founded Elphinstone College, which had emerged out of the Elphinstone Institution. In 1840, the activities of the existing school and college institutions were amalgamated and renamed the Elphinstone Native Education Institution. The new institution was placed under a Board of Education that took up the responsibility of educational administration for the whole of the Bombay Presidency.

The expansion of the educational system under the aegis of the Board of Education paved the way for the establishment of the University of Bombay in 1857.53 This led to a further formalization of the educational network, with the university standing at the apex of a tier of colleges and secondary schools throughout the Presidency, the whole system being supervised by the Department of Public Instruction that had replaced the Board of Education in 1855. By 1900, Bombay Presidency possessed thirteen institutions of higher learning (inclusive of both arts and professional colleges) with 2,662 students on the rolls, and 481 secondary schools (inclusive of both high and middle schools where English was the medium of instruction), with a total of 47,223 students.54 Bombay City was the principal node in this educational network and the premier centre of higher learning in Western India. Not only was Bombay’s Elphinstone High School the leading school in the Presidency, both in numbers and in examination results, the city had also benefited from the growth of private high schools ... encouraged by the operation of the Government’s grant-in-aid scheme from 1866–67.55 Moreover, three of the most prestigious arts colleges in the Presidency were located in the city, as were the Grant Medical College and the Bombay Law School.

While the English-educated middle class that emerged out of these institutions was relatively small in size, it was by no means a homogeneous group. In terms of social origins, for instance, the educated middle class in Bombay, unlike in Calcutta, was not drawn principally from the petty landed gentry.56 Rather, those who took to higher learning in the Bombay Presidency belonged both to scribal castes such as the Brahmins and Pathure Prabhus, with

51 Haynes, Rhetoric and Ritual, pp. 108–114. Many of Bombay’s merchant princes acquired a reputation for their philanthropic endeavours. For instance, D.M. Petri, the Parsi millionaire, patronized a number of charities relating to ‘hospitals, libraries, schools, and education’. Similarly, Brahmo Jhikish was renowned for his support of medical education. While Damodar Thackersey Mulji ‘gave the better part of 4 lakhs for educational purposes’, Debbar, Urban Leadership, p. 159.
54 Report of the Department of Public Instruction (thereafter RDP) in the Bombay Presidency for the year, 1899–1900 (Bombay, 1900), p. 1. The numbers of those appearing for university examinations rose fairly rapidly during the late nineteenth century. Whereas in 1865 there had only been 166 candidates for the various degrees, by 1900 the number had risen to 4178. A. Ticehurst, The Cloistered Pale: A Biography of the University of Bombay (Bombay, 1984), p. 47.
56 In 1900, there were a total of 1556 students on the rolls in these five institutions of higher learning taken together. RDP, 1899–1900, Appendix, p. xiv.
57 Sumit Sarkar, Writing Social History (Delhi, 1997), p. 169.
long traditions of employment in the administration of pre-colonial regimes, as well as communities such as the Parsis and (admittedly to a much lesser degree) Khojas and Bohras, whose roots lay in the world of commerce.59

Nor were those who emerged from English schools and colleges an undifferentiated stratum with regard to their socio-economic status within urban society. In Bombay, it has been noted, by the 1880s 'successful lawyers, doctors and educated businessmen' had begun to be 'widely separated in fame and fortune from government clerks and assistant masters in high schools'. Those who carved out a successful professional career for themselves could 'make an extremely comfortable livelihood, either independently or in association with a shehit who needed his skills'.60 Some members of the new English-educated professional middle class had also acquired wealth and property on account of their social moorings in the world of trade and industry. Thus, D.E. Wacha joined his father's mercantile firm after graduating from Elphinstone College. He then moved to a firm of accountants before becoming J.N. Tata's partner in the agency of the Swadeshi Mills. After relinquishing this in 1890, he was associated with the firm of Moreaji Gokhale, the Bhatia merchant.61 Similarly, some members of the Tyabji clan pursued professional careers but also had close links with the world of trade and industry. Badruddin Tyabji's elder brother Kamruddin, for instance, was a solicitor who also held directorships in several cotton mills.62

By the end of the century, the more successful members of this educated middle class, mostly drawn from traditional high-status castes and communities, had begun to match the city's established business elite in terms of their social status and prestige.63 Public occasions such as the visits of imperial dignitaries, important events associated with the British sovereign and the royal family, the celebration of victories connected with the Empire and other civic gatherings were now as likely as not to find members of the city's professional elite rubbing shoulders with the shehitas. Socially too, the more successful of the Anglophone intelligentsia forged connections with the commercial and industrial elite and some pursued lifestyles that were not very different from the wealthy magnates. Phiroze Sahib Mehra, for instance, reaped handsome rewards from his legal career that enabled him to buy a 'fine country house in Matheran' and in time become a close confidant of J.N. Tata.64 Badruddin Tyabji's biographer notes that his professional success prompted him to move from his relatively modest home in Kherwadi to the more elite Cumballa Hill and that this mode of life also underwent certain changes, with the change of his house, locality, and social environments'.65 Similarly, V.N. Mandlik's law practice enabled him to acquire 'a sumptuous residence' and 'one of the largest private libraries in Bombay'.66 This trend was accentuated over time, and by the turn of the century the upper crust of the professional intelligentsia was counted as part of the city's propertied elite.

At the other end of the spectrum, the world of the educated middle class also encompassed those who occupied a more humble niche in urban society. This stratum included those who had relatively modest educational attainments and staffed the lower levels of the government and private mercantile offices. Schoolteachers, clerks, petrol station attendants, and the like constituted an urban petit-bourgeoisie whose economic resources and lifestyles were far removed from those of the professional elites and educated businessmen. But, as in Calcutta, the dividing lines within the world of the Bombay middle classes were 'permeable'.67 Indeed, there were some well-known examples in Bombay of men who had risen from humble clerical ranks to positions of eminence in later life. For instance, Javerial Umashankar, a Nagas Brahmin, 'began as a clerk in a spinning and weaving company and afterwards became a merchant'. Another Brahmin, Raghunath Narayan Khot, a Saraswat who had graduated from Elphinstone College in 1840, 'rose from a clerkship in a merchant's office to make a fortune in commerce'.68

Notwithstanding the internal differentiation in the material conditions of their existence, two processes within the urban context were vital in shaping the distinctive collective identity of the new social class that they represented. First, their exposure to colonial educational institutions and the new forms of knowledge imparted in these pedagogical sites fashioned the social identity of educated Indians in ways that clearly set them apart from the world of the unlettered, both rich and poor.69 Second, the emergence during the late nineteenth century of a flourishing print culture, of which the educated middle class was the principal producer and consumer, helped forge a 'public' defined by its access to, and command over, the tools of literacy. Their ability to access and interpret the printed word forged 'new forms of sociability' that bound together members of this class.70

Bombay's economic growth also attracted a large, predominantly male, proletarian population to the city during the course of the late nineteenth century. A sizeable segment of the city's labouring classes found employment in the cotton textile industry. A less significant number found work in the

60 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, pp. 61-62.
61 N. Ram, Bombay Industries, p. 372.
64 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, p. 172.
66 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, p. 172.
67 Sarkar, Writing Social History, p. 228.
68 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, p. 31.
69 Vishwa Kumar, Political Agenda of Education: A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas (Delhi, 1991). For an account that highlights the contested character of educational socialization in the colonial context, see Nia Kumar, Lessons From Schools: The History of Education in Bengal (Delhi, 2000).
70 Sarkar, Writing Social History, pp. 171-174.
small industrial units and workshops that began to proliferate in the city. There were also general labouring jobs to be found in the docks, the building trade, the cotton markets and warehouses, the various retail trades as well as the various public agencies such as the railways, the municipality and the Port Trust. Those who were unable to cling on to secure work took recourse to self-employment by investing their meagre resources in petty trading, hawking and peddling, and if all else failed, turned to begging. 71

A significant proportion of the migrants who streamed into the city in search of employment were drawn from its immediate hinterland comprising the Deccan and the Konkan, especially Ratnagiri District, a hundred miles to its south. 72 However, other parts of the Bombay Presidency like Sind, Gujarat and Goa also sent migrants to the city. Their ranks were reinforced by streams of migration from the eastern districts of the United Provinces, which commenced in the 1880s and then accelerated in the early twentieth century. 73

Many rural migrants travelled to the city in a seasonal pattern, arriving in October–December and returning to their districts in April–May, prior to the onset of the monsoon and the commencement of the agricultural season. 74 Increasingly during the late nineteenth century, however, the pattern of seasonal migration also appears to have been accompanied by a trend towards increasing urbanization among rural migrants. 75

For most workers, life in the city was built on rather precarious foundations. In recent years, historians have shown how the fluctuating demand for labour within the various urban trades and industries rendered the experience of casual employment a common one for the vast majority of Bombay’s working classes. 76 For example, the flexible production strategies adopted by Bombay’s cotton-textile owners in response to short-term fluctuations of demand resulted in a significant proportion of mill workers being hired on a casual basis. Workers employed in other manufacturing industries and workshops also faced similar uncertainty on account of the variable demand for their labour.

Employers devised methods of labour recruitment that would enable them to deploy or lay off additional workers at short notice. In particular, they delegated responsibility for recruiting and dispensing with workers to intermediaries known as jobbers, muccadams, mistries, tindals and strange. 77 Jobbers came to perform a crucial role by ensuring a steady supply of labour in the context of flexible production strategies, as well as neutralizing the threat of combinations against employers through the skillful deployment and manipulation of casual labour. However, the operations of the jobber system served to deepen the insecurity of employment for the city’s workers. In order to maintain a steady and continuous supply of labour, jobbers tended to employ ‘a proportion of new men’ and refused to hire those who did not offer themselves for work with sufficient regularity. This led to the creation of a ‘surplus pool of labour’ around each trade and heightened the dependence of a large number of workers, especially those who were casually employed, upon particular jobbers who could ensure them work in a market characterized by the impermanence of employment. 78

74 Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, pp. 152–5.
75 The testimony of mill workers to the Indian FactoryLabour Commission of 1890 suggests that many workers did not go back to their villages every year, while a 1913 survey of one hundred mill hands from the Konkan and the Deccan showed that only 33 per cent returned to their villages on an annual basis. Morris, Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force, p. 98.
76 Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, pp. 72–123.
78 Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, p. 108. However, recent research has highlighted the limits to the jobber’s influence. In particular, it has been argued that not only was power within the workplace diffuse, but that many of the functions attributed to the jobber were also performed by other agencies which served to limit his authority. For a recent account of the jobber and his role in Bombay see. ibid., pp. 99–110, 295–307.
79 For a delineation of these relationships see Chandavarkar, Workers’ Politics and the Mill Districts.
80 Research over the last two decades has undermined the assumption that the process of industrialization necessarily resulted in the dissolution of ‘traditional’ social relationships and institutions. Historians have emphasized the manner in which industrial capital could reproduce itself by subordinating and restructuring supposedly ‘traditional’ social institutions and integrating them within its structure. See Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, pp. 143–67.
to leave their families behind in the village. The very conditions which caused them to migrate also entailed a division of familial responsibilities with the men going to work in the city while the women stayed back to cultivate the land. Once in the city, however, workers found it imperative to rely on their rural base in order to cope with the instability of the labour market. Thus, it was the village resources of workers that enabled them to deal with periods of unemployment or severe economic distress. Moreover, workers also retired to their village during times of illness since they could not afford the medical care facilities in Bombay. Female workers, likewise, retired to their villages to bear children since they were more likely to find a supportive environment in the village than in the city. Of course, the significance of the rural link in workers' lives cannot be impeded to material needs. Memories of the village were often a source of solace to rural migrants confronted with the drudgery of urban life and labour.

'Modern Town' and 'Native Town'

Bombay's emergence as a burgeoning industrial metropolis during the second half of the nineteenth century was most visibly inscribed in urban space. From the start, large-scale industrial development in the island was oriented northwards. This was in keeping with the logic of colonization that had characterized Bombay's development from the very outset. During the eighteenth century, the town's spatial organization had been largely defined by its role as a port. The nucleus of the settlement was the area known as the Fort, situated on the southeastern tip of the island and facing the harbour. Here, circumscribed within a walled area, were the European and Indian quarters of the town, which were used both for commercial as well as residential purposes. Given the security it provided and the close proximity to the docks, land in the Fort area was much sought after. As the Fort grew overcrowded during the late eighteenth century, new settlements began to mushroom outside its walls. The growth of these settlements slowly rendered superfluous the definition of Bombay as a fortified port town.

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1) The first cotton mills were clustered at Tardeo on the northern outskirts of the densely populated Indian town. By the 1870s, the emergence of the cotton mills, the setting up of the B.B. & C.F. railway workshops at Pars into as well as the building of railway lines and new roads through the marshy land known as the Flats stimulated frantic building activity in the eight northern sections which came to constitute the 'mill districts' namely, Byculla, Tardeo, Mazagon, Parsi, Sewri, Sion, Mahim and Worli.

2) The Fort itself was marked by an informal residential segregation with the Indian population, comprising mostly merchants, traders and artisans clustered in the northern part, while the southern section was largely European-dominated. However, in Bombay the segregation of the colonial and indigenous population was never rigid. Since the East India Company was in close economic and administrative contact with various indigenous groups, it was not feasible for the European-dominated parts of the town to be completely detached from the Indian section. See Farquhar, 'Urban Development', p. 2732.

3) It was in belated recognition of this fact in 1794 the Governor in Council extended the boundaries of Bombay to two miles beyond the walled Fort. An Act of Parliament in the same year authorized an assessment on all the houses and land within the area included in the new definition of the town, thereby securing legal recognition upon it. J.C. Maselkov, 'Changing Definitions of Bombay', in Indo-Banga (ed.), Port and their hinterlands (Delhi, 1992), p. 292.


6) ITJ, XXIII (1912): 7.
century saw the beginning of a series of reclamation on the eastern foreshore of Bombay Island that transformed it into one continuous block comprising docks, basins and other facilities.\(^9\)

Given the paucity of space in the Fort and the Indian town, it was not surprising that the first cotton mills were clustered at Tardeo on the northern outskirts of the existing settlements. By the beginning of the 1860s, the marshy land in the north of the island, known as the Flats, began to be utilized for mill construction. These developments accelerated from the 1870s as the textile industry expanded rapidly, and led to a diminution in the influence exerted by the port on the city's morphology. The emergence of the mills and the building of railway lines and new roads through the Flats as well as the setting up of the B.B. & C.I. railway workshops at Parel stimulated frenetic building activity which led to the colonization of new lands to the north of the island. From the 1880s, the largest increase in the sectional population density occurred in the north of the island where the cotton mills were concentrated.\(^9\) By the close of the decade, noted an official history in 1901, 'the Tardeo, Parel, Byrulla, Tarwadi, Nagpada, and Chinchpoochdy quarters had expanded through the forward march of industrial enterprise into the populous dwelling place of an immigrant labour-population - a character which they possess at the opening of this twentieth century.\(^9\)

While urban industrialization in its spatial dimension followed an older pattern of northward colonization, its impact on the city's social geography marked a break from earlier developments. Industrialization accentuated social differentiation in the city's residential patterns. By the end of the nineteenth century, in particular, there was a noticeable difference in the appearance of the city's elite residential areas and its poorer quarters. Even as the city began to expand northwards with the creation of the mill districts, European and indigenous propertied elites began to move to the more secluded areas in the western part of the island, extending from Malabar Hill to Breach Candy at the northern extremity of Cumballa Hill. Here, European civil servants and businessmen as well as Indian millowners and the more affluent members of the emerging professional classes lived in opulent splendour.

The Fort began to evolve into the city's central business district after its ramparts were levelled during Sir Bartle Frere's frenetic gubernatorial tenure in the 1860s.\(^9\) The 1870s and 1880s witnessed the construction of an array of buildings in this area that were designed to underscore the imperial character of the city. These included the Telegraph Office, the adjoining General Post Office, the Secretariat, the High Court and the University Library and Convocation Hall. The grandest of these colonial buildings were Frederick William Stevens' twin creations, the Victoria Terminus and the Bombay Municipal Corporation building; the former, headquarters of the G.I.P. railway, was commenced in 1878 and completed ten years later, while the latter was commenced in 1884 and completed by 1893.\(^9\)

In terms of spatial layout, there was relatively little contact between the European sectors of the city and the Indian town. While the Fort was separated from the Indian town by the vast open space provided by the Esplanade, points of interface were limited on the west to the intersection between Girgaum and Chaupati at the northern edge of the Back Bay and on the east at the intersection of Crawford Market and the Victoria Terminus. The contrast between the Raj-dominated sections and the Indian town impressed itself on European writers and travellers out to sample the exotic Orient. 'When we reached the native town how changed was the scene,' exclaimed one visitor to the city in 1876, 'Europe was left behind and the East was realized - the narrow, winding streets, the open shops, small but highly characteristic, where the owner, Hindoo, Mahomedan, or Jew squatted among his wares.\(^9\)

Within the Indian town, the period after the mid-nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of socially differentiated patterns of residential clustering that reflected the overlap of both class and community. Areas such as Girgaum, Khetwadi and Fanatwadi came to be the domain of the literate Maharashtrian middle classes, many of whom manned clerical posts in the government and private commercial firms. In these sections, the rising value of land was reflected in the growing ubiquity of tenements in place of the old single-storey houses.\(^9\) More wealthy, but less literate, mercantile classes - Gujarati shroffs, Bhatia piece-goods dealers, Cutchi Jain grain-dealers, Marwari cotton-brokers and money-lenders - all inhabited the bazaars in the south-western sections of the town, which also doubled as residential areas with the floors above the shops being used as living quarters by the merchants and their dependents.\(^9\) On the other hand, the labouring poor who worked in the bazaars and docks predominantly inhabited areas like Kamathipura, Nagpada, Chakia, Mandvi, Dongri, Kumbharwada and Khara Talao.\(^9\) In Khara Talao, for instance, there were many weavers, shoemakers and casual labourers, a majority of whom worked 'all day in the unwholesome rooms and

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\(^9\) Indigenous elites also contributed to these imperial projects. Thus, the Bombay financier Premchand Roychand funded the University Library and the 250-seat high Rajabai Clock Tower; the Parsi merchant prince Sir Cowasjiji Jehangir provided the money for the university's Convocation Hall.


\(^9\) 'Hindu clerks on moderate salaries affect tenements of two rooms in chawls,' observed the Gazetteer and added that there was 'a tendency for the older style of Hindu house with its cela and mezzanine (middle hall) to disappear under the pressure of space and higher rents.' Gazetteer, 1, p. 192.


surroundings in which they lodge all night'." Most of the people in this section were said to be 'poverty-stricken to the bone, and as a matter of course they are glad to take any shelter or to get anywhere to lay their heads'.

The 'unintended city'

'It is truly said that one end of Bombay does not know how the other lives', wrote a contemporary observer in the early twentieth century. And indeed, notwithstanding the nuances of its social geography, fin-de-siècle Bombay was a city of startling contrasts. As Klein has pointed out, the city's modernization had resulted in 'two Bombays': the one inhabited by a cosmopolitan elite that nested in the fashionable western enclaves of the city, the other 'full of chaulis, crowded, insanitary, ill-ventilated slums, and filthy lanes, stable and godowns, a city in which a vast proletariat was penned together and savaged together by disease'.

During the late nineteenth century, the Bombay inhabited by the poor 'experienced significant declines in living standards, worsening environmental conditions and escalating death-rates'. A hint of things to come had already appeared in the 1860s when the city witnessed a large influx of migrants in the wake of the speculative boom triggered by the American Civil War. In 1864, at the height of the boom, the city's Health Officer came across one instance of overcrowding wherein in a lane nine feet wide,


the houses on each side were of two or three floors, and the various rooms were densely peopled, and the floors of the verandahs were fully occupied, while to eke out the accommodation in some of the verandahs there were charpoys or cots lying up and screened with old matting to form a second tier of sleeping places for labourers that were employed in the railway terminus or elsewhere.

Cholera and fevers became common in this part of the town and mortality figures soared to unprecedented levels. The contemporary Bombay Builder blamed 'the wretched rows of cadjan huts' inhabited by the poor for the fact that 'two out of every three coolies that come to Bombay for employment do not return to their homes, but are carried off by fever or other diseases'.

The end of the American Civil War led to a collapse of the share market and put an end to many of the misplaced schemes floated at the height of the frenzy. When the crash came, 'company after company collapsed, the labourers that had been engaged in reclamation and other works were discharged, and finding no further employment in Bombay, returned to their villages in the interior'. Yet, even as the population was reduced, the rapid expansion of the textile mills and other allied small-scale industries ensured that the pressure on the civic infrastructure continued to mount inexorably.

In the Indian town, for instance, the proliferation of a variety of small-scale economic activities and the availability of numerous employment opportunities in the bazaars, docks and warehouses led to increasing pressure on housing. The resultant overcrowding in this part of the city became a persistent theme in the writings of colonial officials. However, as Yeoh has noted in the context of colonial Singapore, overcrowding 'did not simply describe a state of affairs, but became the mechanism by which the urban economy sustained a market for menial and more or less casual labour'. In the absence of public housing, the 'sweating' of building sites and the subdivision of tenements to accommodate the maximum possible number of tenants were the means by which the city's ever increasing working-class population was 'physically absorbed'.

To an extent, the emergence and rapid expansion of the cotton industry during the late nineteenth century alleviated the pressure of population in the central parts of the city. The prospect of living close to their workplace as well as the cheaper land values in the emergent northern districts prompted some sections of the working classes to move out of the congested Indian town. But the rapid growth of a large working-class population in the newly emerging mill districts soon led to conditions of overcrowding similar to those in the Indian town. While population density per acre in the mill districts remained low because cotton mills and workshops as well as maidens and open spaces occupied a considerable portion of the ground area, residential buildings concentrated on small plots of land were nevertheless densely built over, with several multi-storied chaulis minutely divided into single-room tenements. It was pointed out, for instance, that 'in some sections... the mean area to each person is large, there are in some of these localities communities as overcrowded as the most overcrowded in the heart of the city'. As a consequence, 'in rural districts you have large tracts of land scarcely dotted with a habitation, and in other portions villages in which the people are languishing for want of air'.

The dwellings available for the housing needs of the labouring poor in the city varied in character from the single-room tenements known as chaulis to the 'zail' sheds constructed of dry leaves from date or coconut palms. Chaulis or tenements consisting usually of single rooms were the predominant form of

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81 Report of the Health Officer, ARMCB, 1877, p. 76.
82 Ibid., p. 179.
85 Ibid., p. 726.
86 Report of the Health Officer, ARMCB, 1877, p. 76.
87 Ibid., p. 293.
working-class dwelling and were to be found in Biculla, Khetwadi, Girgaum, Mahalakshmi, Tarwadi, Patel and Worli. These differed in appearance, construction and size. In the Indian town there were many chawls that had originally housed one or two families but which gradually had been turned into tenement blocks sub-divided to accommodate a large number of households. The owners of such properties capitalized on the high demand for housing by utilizing all the available space on their sites.

High rents, the shortage of housing at affordable rates and the exigencies of room-sharing arrangements ensured that a large section of the labouring poor were forced to appropriate the street for their needs. It was estimated in the 1890s that around 100,000 labourers usually slept on roads or footpaths. Moreover, many beggars and vagrants who ‘wander about the town begging from street to street during the day’ were said to ‘sleep at night in open places on footpaths or on verandahs of houses, in temple compounds and in Masjids, Dharamshalas, etc.’

The poor quality of housing for the working classes in Bombay was an outcome of several factors. The perennial scarcity of land on the island was compounded by the nature of the tenurial conditions. Builders who leased land from owners on a reversionary basis had little incentive to invest more than the bare minimum in the structures that they erected. In many instances, the leaseholder erected the buildings and rented them out to rent contractors who undertook to pay them high rents. Equally significant were the limitations on the demand side that constrained investors who catered to the lower end of the housing market. The workers who flooded the city were rarely able to pay more than a minimal part of their wages in rent, since most of them aimed at remitting as much money as possible to their village homes.

But the abysmal housing of the city’s working classes was only one of many problems that dogged Bombay’s civic infrastructure in the late nineteenth century. As industrialization gathered pace, the requirements of the various factories that sprang up in the city placed an enormous burden on the water supply and ‘caused a scarcity of drinking water to be felt’. Bombay’s water supply, dependent as it was on the annual monsoon, had been notoriously inadequate during the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, the failure of the monsoons often triggered a drought and caused ‘great distress’ to the town’s residents. The need to ensure a more secure and long-term source of water supply that would meet the needs of the growing town had prompted colonial authorities to undertake the Vihar waterworks in the 1850s. First developed as a proposal by two military engineers and subsequently refined into a concrete scheme by Henry Conybeare, Superintendent of Repairs working under the town’s Board of Conservancy, the Vihar water scheme was ‘the first municipal project in British India’. Essentially, it involved the construction of a system of pipes that would bring water to Bombay from an artificial lake created in the Vihar valley in Saket, which lay to the north of the island. The city thereby gained a daily water supply of close to nine and a half million gallons. However, while the Vihar scheme alleviated Bombay’s pressing water problem in the short run, by the mid-1860s the supply was ‘wholly insufficient for the needs of a population, which from the commencement of the cotton-boom and share-mania was annually increasing by abnormal strides’.

The enormous increase in Bombay’s population in this period led to renewed attempts to augment the city’s scarce water resources. A new project, the Tansa scheme, was undertaken in 1872 and completed at a cost of 40 lakhs in 1879. This scheme provided an additional four and a half million gallons of water a day. But, one contemporary observer pointed out, even this additional source of supply represented only ‘a mere temporary slaking of the ever growing thirst of the city’. Further schemes to augment the water supply were undertaken, therefore, to satisfy the growing demand. Thus, the Tansa water works, hailed by many contemporary colonial officials as a ‘magnificent project’, was launched in 1885 and completed in 1892. An imminent water crisis in 1889 also prompted the commencement of the Powai valley scheme, but the resultant emergency reservoir was deemed to be ‘too shallow to admit of good water for domestic purposes’ and was ‘abandoned’ after 1892. In spite of these initiatives, however, complaints about water shortages, especially during the summer, did not cease. Indeed, even during the early twentieth century contemporary observers continued to draw attention to the inadequacy and irregularity of the water supply.

The quality of the water supply was also a source of grave concern. A vast proportion of the city’s population could not afford private water connections and drew their supply from dipping wells although their water was said to be
'so impure as to be not only unfit for drinking, but absolutely poisonous'. An even more potent source of danger was the sewage from drains, sewers and sullage outlets into water pipes on account of their close proximity. 'The laying of water-pipes in drains, sewers, or passages for house sewage and sullage, was a sanitary crime and is inexcusable, and those who are responsible for it would have much to answer for', thundered the city's Health Officer.\(^{16}\)

These sanitary drawbacks were compounded by other glaring defects in the city's drainage system. 'No problem in the municipal administration of the island has presented greater difficulties or been more fully discussed from time to time than that of drainage', wrote the city's official historian in the early twentieth century.\(^{17}\) As one historian has noted, 'The monsoonal rainfall, the absence of house drainage, extensive low-lying areas, sewers which were close to the surface and were not watertight, made the drainage of the island a difficult engineering proposition'.\(^{18}\) Moreover, a proper drainage system in the town required that the labyrinth of crooked narrow alleys in the town be cleared and straight streets run through it, in order to facilitate the laying of drains and the proper flow of sewage. During the mid-nineteenth century, however, the Indian town was polluted by gutters or 'open drains' that were to be found running 'along (on both sides) the whole length of every street', seeping 'into the foundations of the whole street-frontage of each house'.\(^{19}\)

Health officials continued persistently to allude to the precarious state of the city's drainage system throughout the late nineteenth century. Side drains were said to be 'badly designed, and not in the best repair'; cesspools were 'an intolerable nuisance'; sewers 'for the most part constructed on the most faulty and antiquated principles' and drains 'badly constructed, with rough uneven sides, offer great opposition to the flow of sewage'.\(^{20}\) The expansion of the city consequent upon industrial development imposed further strains on the drainage system in the northern part of the island. During the late 1880s and early 1890s, the Health Officer repeatedly complained about the inadequacy of the drainage system in the rapidly growing northern suburbs such as Parel and Byculla, where there were said to be 'serious nuisances' caused by 'sewage pollution, amidst dwellings and round dwellings, soaking into the ground, polluting ground and buildings and oozing from increasing loudness to the ditches by the railway lines'.\(^{21}\)

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\(^{16}\) Report of the Health Officer, ARMCRB, 1875, p. 145.

\(^{17}\) Report of the Health Officer, ARMCRB, 1876, p. 64.

\(^{18}\) Gazetteer, III, p. 42.

\(^{19}\) Dossai, Imperial Designs and Indian Realities, pp. 129-30.


\(^{24}\) Hayes, Rhetoric and Ritual, pp. 111-12.
dwellers, who tended generally to regard the activities of the municipality with a mixture of incomprehension and suspicion.

Municipal organization in nineteenth-century Bombay was marked by chronic instability on account of an enduring tension between its government-appointed executive and local property elites, both European and Indian, who stoutly opposed any attempt to increase their tax burden even as they demanded a greater say in civic affairs. A number of distinct phases can be identified in the institutional history of the city's municipal administration. To begin with, a Court of Petty Sessions was set up in 1792 and European Justices of the Peace appointed whose duty it was to ensure the regular cleaning and repair of streets. In 1808, a twelve-member Bench of Justices was created; a series of regulations in the following two decades vested it with powers to assess and collect local taxes, look after the maintenance and repairs of streets and supervise conservancy arrangements in the town. Propertied Indian merchants, as noted earlier, had been admitted to the ranks of the JPs from the 1830s, and by the 1850s 'most of the leading shettas had become Justices'. In this capacity, they were also able to participate in the affairs of the Court of Petty Sessions.

The friction that developed between the Bench of Justices and other local civic authorities paved the way for the next phase in the evolution of Bombay's municipal administration. In 1845, a Board of Conservancy was established and began to function alongside the Court of Petty Sessions. Consisting of seven members, five of whom were Justices of the Peace (two European and three Indian, each to be re-elected every three years), the Board dealt with important municipal tasks including drainage, the cleaning and water supply of streets, the removal of refuse and night soil and the maintenance of law and order. Act XI of 1845 also created for the very first time a new municipal fund into which were paid all the tax receipts of the town; these were largely derived from five principal sources: land revenue, the house tax, a shop and stall tax, a tax on carriages and liquor license fees. Under the terms of the 1845 regulations, the Justices of the Peace 'were vested with the supervision and control of the fund, while in practice the Board of Conservancy administered it as they pleased'. In practice, the Board 'had entire control over the fund, and were empowered to make such improvements and carry out such public works, as in their discretion they deemed necessary'. A major proportion of the Board's expenditure was on the construction of new public works and the repair of roads.

The potential for conflict inherent in the division of powers between the Board of Conservancy and the Court of Petty Sessions was borne out in practice. The Board's expenditure was not matched by the revenues that it had at its disposal; tensions also developed between its officials and the Justices of the Peace, especially over the issue of municipal taxes. Sustained complaints about the 'inefficiency of the Board' resulted in its disbandment in 1858. In its place, a three-member Board of Municipal Commissioners was established in order to carry out the task of conservancy and civic improvement. The Board took control of the municipal fund, whose existing sources of revenue were augmented by the levying of town duties on 'certain animals, foodstuffs and materials'. Given that the legislation of 1858 freed the triumvirate of commissioners from the controls and checks exercised by the Justices of the Peace, and given too that the latter had vociferously protested against this, it is perhaps not surprising that the new system 'never worked successfully'. Many of the problems that dogged the Conservancy Board, it was said, 'were prolonged, and in some degrees intensified by the division of power, the absence of individual responsibility, the tedious routine and the absence of power of enforcing obedience to the law'. Consequently, the experiment with the triumvirate of commissioners was even shorter than the preceding one with the Conservancy Board.

A new, and qualitatively different, phase in municipal governance commenced in July 1865, with the passing of an act whereby the Justices of the Peace were created a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal and with the power to hold lands, impose taxes and rates, and borrow money on the security of the same. The Act of 1865 also created a unitary executive, with power being concentrated in a Commissioner who was to be appointed by the government 'for a term of three years'. It was the Commissioner's responsibility to prepare the municipal budget and to direct the operations of the corporation. In addition, a new set of executive officials were appointed to assist the Municipal Commissioner; this included a health officer, an engineer and a controller of accounts. The other noteworthy institutional change introduced by the Act was that for the very first time the Justices of the Peace were given substantive control over the municipal fund. The Act also introduced some important financial innovations. Indirect taxation in the form of town duties was abolished; and the corporation was given 'the power to borrow on mortgage of the rates and taxes with the sanction of the Governor-in-Council such sums as might be required to carry out any permanent work for the city'.

Introduced at a time when the city's economy had been dealt a body blow by the ending of the American Civil War, the legislative creation of 1865 met the same inglorious fate as the preceding experiments in municipal governance. Most fatally, even though the Municipal Corporation ostensibly controlled the purse strings and could vote on the commissioner's budget, it exercised

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133 Gaster, III, pp. 1-2.
136 Dossal, Imperial Designs and Indian Realities, p. 20.
179 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, pp. 24-5.
138 Gaster, III, pp. 2-3.
139 Ibid., pp. 3-4.
140 Ibid., p. 17.
141 Ibid., p. 4.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid., p. 19.
'practically no control' over his spending powers. The first Municipal Commissioner to take office was Arthur Crawford, an ICS officer who was appointed for a three-year term. It was a fateful choice. At a time when the city was reeling under the double catastrophe of a disastrous financial crisis and trade depression, the Bombay municipality had at its helm 'a lavish spender who accepted huge contracts for repairing the roads, lighting the city, providing extensive drainage, and building the costly Arthur Crawford market'.

At first, the Justices of the Peace, Indian and European alike, who 'were actively engaged in business, and had not the time to devote to municipal affairs', did little to check the Commissioner's profligacy. By July 1867, however, the JPs began to express their concern at the mounting municipal expenditure. A committee constituted by the Bench of Justices to examine the corporation's financial position forecast a total deficit of nearly twenty lakh rupees, five times the figure for the preceding year. Moreover, since no provision had been made to write off debts of almost fifteen lakh rupees incurred on account of drainage schemes alone, 'the municipal exchequer was close to insolvency'.

The panic created by these disclosures, in conjunction with the increasing number of distress warrants issued to tax defaulters, rendered the municipal finances a subject of feverish debate in the emerging press. The nascent Indian intelligentsia began to grow increasingly critical both of the Municipal Commissioner and the Bench of Justices and demanded that the corporation be made more representative.

The crisis in the municipality deepened towards the end of the 1860s. In 1869 the Government of Bombay agreed to bail out the Corporation with a loan of fifteen lakh rupees, provided it curtailed its expenditure and checked the functioning of the Municipal Commissioner. Town duties were also re-imposed in March 1869 in order to improve the state of the municipal exchequer. Once again, this was a demonstration of the power wielded by the property elites in the corporation who were able to shift the burden of increased taxation on to the wider population. At the same time, the Bench of Justices also appointed four committees to investigate the problems that had arisen; however, of these 'only one actually submitted a report'. The Indians on this committee, which took two years to frame its report, called for the replacement of the Bench of Justices with 'an essentially popular form of municipal government'. They advocated the creation of a municipal council, 'partially nominated by Government, partially elected by the Justices from their own body and partially elected by the ratepayers with certain qualifications'.

However, even as the committee went about its deliberations, there arose towards the end of 1870 a new ratepayers' movement dominated largely by what one contemporary observer described as 'the lower strata of the middle classes'. Comprising mainly of small merchants and shop-keepers, 'men who paid rates for their cramped shop premises or godowns, or who hired out carriages in a small way and therefore paid the wheel tax', this movement was a protest against the perceived iniquities of the municipal taxation system. The leaders of the ratepayers' movement addressed two petitions to the Bench of Justices in November 1870 in which they denounced the policies of the Municipal Commissioner, whose profligacy they held responsible for their hardship, and called for relief from the high tax burden. When these entreaties were met with resounding silence from the Corporation, the ratepayers' sent a petition to Sir Seymour Fitzgerald, the Governor of Bombay. Signed by five thousand ratepayers, the petition declared that the 1865 Act was a failure since it had given rise to wasteful expenditure and high levels of taxation. Furthermore, the petitioners argued that 'there was no adequate return for ratepayers' money, as improvements were confined to a few select localities, and not shared by the greater portion of the town occupied by the ratepayers'.

They therefore demanded a thoroughgoing investigation and overhaul of the entire system of municipal administration.

The movement for municipal 'reform' reached a crescendo in 1871. In May that year the Bench refused to pass the Commissioner's budget estimates. The following month it passed a motion convening a special meeting to discuss fresh proposals for the reform of the Corporation that were drawn up by J.A. Forbes, the head of the prominent European commercial firm that bore his name. Between 30 June and 7 July 1871, a series of debates took place in the Corporation at the end of which a resolution was passed requesting the Government to transfer the financial powers of the Bench and the Municipal Commissioner to a new sixteen-member Town Council comprising partly of members elected by the ratepayers and partly nominated by the Justices and the Government. Outside the Corporation too, there was great interest in the reform question amongst the city's ratepayers as well as newspapers. The former sent a second petition to the Governor of Bombay in which they argued in favour of 'popular' representation. The growing clamour for municipal reform also registered an impact on the Government of Bombay. Arthur Crawford was forced to resign in October 1871 and a government resolution castigated his actions as Commissioner. More importantly, the government acknowledged the need for fresh legislation in order to change the municipal constitution.

The Government of Bombay's decision to draw up a new municipal constitution raised high hopes amongst the city's ratepayers. A public meeting was held at the Town Hall on 7 November 1871 which culminated in a large and raucous procession being taken out through the surrounding streets. A committee, consisting of members of the Indian intelligentsia as well as local businessmen, was established to organize the movement for reform.

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144 Ibid., p. 5.
145 Doss, Urban Leadership, p. 132.
146 Doss, Imperial Dreams and Indian Realities, p. 86.
147 Doss, Urban Leadership, p. 135.
148 Ibid., p. 136.
150 Ibid., pp. 137-8.
Increasingly, the emphasis of the movement shifted from 'fiscal reform' to the 'management and control of municipal affairs by the ratepayers through their elected representatives'.

However, the aspirations of the reformers were scarcely satisfied by the legislation that was finally passed in August 1872. This act created a Municipal Corporation consisting of 64 members, half of whom were to be elected by ratepayers. Of the other half, the Bench of Justices were given the right to elect eight members, while the Government of Bombay was to nominate the rest. The Corporation was to set rates of taxation, vote on the municipal budget estimates and appoint all municipal officers except the Commissioner. In addition to this, the act provided for a twelve-member Town Council, eight of whom were to be elected by the Corporation, while the remainder were to be appointed by the government. The Town Council had to scrutinize the weekly municipal receipts and payments; along with the Commissioner, it also had to prepare the annual budget estimates.

Significantly, however, in order to qualify for membership of the Municipal Corporation, a person had to pay an annual minimum of fifty rupees in municipal rates. Moreover, in order to be eligible to vote in municipal elections, ratepayers had to pay an annual sum of at least fifty rupees in house, lighting and police rates. Since property taxes were paid by house owners rather than occupiers, this meant that a mere 0.6 per cent of the city's total population was deemed eligible to vote in the first municipal elections held under the new Act.

Not surprisingly, many Indian newspapers were scathing about the limitations of the new legislation, arguing that it still vested enormous control in the hands of the government and its nominees. The restrictions on the franchise were equally galling to the Indian intelligentsia who protested that the new electors would consist chiefly of the house- and land-owning class, to the exclusion of the large body of professional people, who fell into the category of occupiers. A meeting was also held at the Framji Kavasji Hall on 5 November 1872 to protest against the Municipal Corporation and turned out to be a tumultuous affair, with three thousand participants, brass bands, banners, flags and impassioned speeches in favour of 'popular' representation. It was all to no avail.

The triennial elections to the Municipal Corporation that were held from 1873 rapidly justified the complaints of the Indian intelligentsia that the 1872 Act had been 'a mere sham'. Each successive election confirmed that English-educated Indians had feared from the outset: the overwhelming majority of those elected to the corporation were rich property-owners. It was therefore with increasing frustration that the rising professional classes of Bombay saw themselves robbed of the fruits of their reform agitation.

The intelligentsia hit back in the way that it knew best: the shettas who were elected to the Corporation were savaged in the Indian press. Local newspapers excoriated the merchant princes for: their lackadaisical attitude towards civic affairs, their poor attendance at Corporation meetings, their inadequate grasp of legal intricacies, the largely unquestioning support that they extended to the colonial ruling elite and their inability to communicate in English. Members of the intelligentsia also constantly contended that propertied Indians in the corporation were incapable of representing adequately the genuine interests of the wider 'public'. In particular, they alleged that the increase in municipal expenditure was at the expense of the ordinary taxpayer who had to bear the brunt of the town duties; moreover, it was argued, the benefits of such expenditure were enjoyed by the wealthier areas of the city. Indian opinion in the press also frequently bemoaned the fact that well-qualified and educated men were excluded from taking part in the affairs of the Corporation on account of the restricted franchise.

By the early 1880s, moves for further reform of the Municipal Corporation were once again set afoot. Some of these emanated from within the Corporation itself. Thus in January 1883, it passed a motion calling for the government's power of nominating members to the Corporation to be transferred to graduates of the University of Bombay. Later that year, a Corporation committee that deliberated on the issue of municipal reform recommended that the 1872 Act be amended in order to extend the franchise. Calls for reform were also voiced outside the corporation. A number of schemes for municipal reform were floated by members of the Indian intelligentsia, all of which sought the lowering of the franchise restriction in order to ensure, in the words of one newspaper, 'a sufficient counter-balance to the errors of the ratepayers'. The Ratepayers' Association, which had been moribund since the passing of the Municipal Act of 1872, was reconvened in March 1886. Equally significantly, Lord Ripon's tenure as Viceroy saw the introduction of new initiatives that sought to give Indians a bigger stake in the structures of municipal governance. These developments hastened the passing of a new bill in 1888 that restructured the constitution and functioning of the Municipal Corporation.

The new Municipal Act of 1888 created a tripartite institutional structure. First, it provided for a Municipal Corporation of 72 members, vested with 'the power of the purse' in relation to all items of expenditure. The ratepayers were to elect half the total membership of the Corporation; the other half comprised sixteen members to be elected by the Justices, two each elected by the University Fellows and the Chamber of Commerce, with the government nominating the rest. The franchise qualification was lowered to include all house-owners who paid an annual minimum tax of thirty rupees. At the same time, university graduates were granted the right to vote in the municipal

113 Gatreto, III, pp. 5-6.
116 Ibid., p. 179.
elections. Second, the Act introduced a Standing Committee to replace the old Town Council. This committee was to act as a financial advisory body in facilitating the preparation of the municipal budget; it also had to audit the accounts of the Corporation. Finally, the Municipal Commissioner was to be the chief executive officer, responsible for carrying out the provisions of the law governing the entire municipal administration of the city.\(^{117}\)

In many respects, then, the Act of 1888 perpetuated the fundamental features of the municipal constitution as it had evolved since 1865. As before, the government-appointed Municipal Commissioner continued to be the sole executive authority. Norwithstanding the concessions that had been made to the English-educated intelligentsia, the restricted franchise also ensured that the corporation remained 'a close borough of landlords and capitalists'.\(^{118}\) In turn, the political constitution of the Corporation had important consequences for the manner in which it dealt with the social and civic problems generated by industrial urbanization. Most notably, property owners who participated in municipal affairs were not inclined to provide civic amenities to the poor if this was to be achieved at the cost of increased taxation. Thus, the political order fashioned by colonial rule in late nineteenth-century Bombay was one in which 'the restricted class location of political citizenship went hand-in-hand with municipal neglect of collective urban amenities'.\(^{119}\) As the century drew to a close, that negligence would cost the city dear.

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**CHAPTER THREE**

*A Disease of Locality*: Plague and the Crisis of ‘Sanitary Order’

**Introduction**

On 14 April 1896, Lieutenant-Colonel George Waters, a British surgeon, delivered a lecture at the Sassoon Mechanics’ Institute in Bombay. During the course of his address, entitled ‘Bombay the Beautiful’, the medical man assured his audience that they had ‘every right to rejoice that our lives have fallen in a place so pleasant – that we live in Bombay the beautiful, bonnie Bombay’.\(^{1}\) Nine months later, Waters returned to the same venue to deliver yet another lecture to ‘a large representative audience’. But on this occasion he was rather less sanguine about the city’s prospects; his theme was ‘The Plague in Bombay’.

‘The disease with which we are called on to fight in Bombay’, Waters declared, ‘is a scourge of the first magnitude, and eminently deserving of the name of plague. It has already done incalculable damage to Bombay for the blow which this fell disease has done to the great and progressive trade of this port, will, I fear, be felt long after it has disappeared.’

The discovery of the dreaded bubonic plague in Bombay City in September 1896 precipitated a political and social crisis unknown in colonial India since the summer of 1857.\(^{2}\) The frenzy with which the colonial state responded to the plague epidemic has been well documented by historians.\(^{3}\) Now, a pervasive assumption in the scholarly literature is that colonial plague

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\(^{1}\) George Waters, *Bombay the Beautiful*: A lecture delivered at the Sassoon Mechanics’ Institute, Bombay (Bombay, 1896), p. 18.

\(^{2}\) George Waters, *Plague in Bombay*: A lecture delivered at the Sassoon Mechanics’ Institute, Bombay (Bombay, 1897), p. 3.


policies were predicated on the belief that the disease was contagious, in other words, transmitted either directly or indirectly through human agency. Since 'contagionist' etiology (the theoretical exposition of the origins and causes of diseases) entailed breaking the 'chains of transmission' and 'interrupting the circulation of carriers by means of cordon, quarantine, and sequesters', the recent historiography on the Indian epidemic has largely focused on what Arnold has termed the colonial state's 'unprecedented assault upon the body of the colonized'. Historians have predominantly examined the impact of policies such as the compulsory hospitalization of suspected victims, the intrusive house-to-house visitations in the search of cases, the segregation of those who came into contact with the afflicted and the enforcement of elaborate quarantine regulations. However, the widely entrenched assumption that colonial plague policies were based on unambiguously contagionist principles has hindered a proper appreciation of the nature of the state's response to the epidemic and its impact on local society. Most notably, it has impelled scholars to focus on the colonial state's assault on the bodies of its subjects while downplaying the equally severe offensive against the urban built environment.

This chapter argues that for nearly a decade after the initial outbreak in the city, long-standing assumptions that viewed epidemic diseases as a product of locality-specific conditions of filth and squalor exercised a significant influence over the colonial state's war against plague. In contrast to contagionist etiology, which focused on the human body as the 'carrier' of disease, the 'localist' framework emphasized the role of environmental factors as a predisposing cause of the plague. With regard to preventive action, whereas contagionist theory entailed a confinement of the human body in combating disease, the localist perspective emphasized the need to ameliorate its underlying 'environmental causes'.

Localist assumptions informed colonial plague policies in Bombay in two crucial ways. First, many contemporary observers were inclined to ascribe the microbial origins of the disease to localized conditions of filth, lack of ventilation and general 'sanitary disorder'. Indeed, the new microbial theories were frequently apprehended through the prism of long-standing localist, 'phygocratic' theories that saw the plague germ as being produced by, and proliferating in, filth. Consequently, from the beginning, the colonial anti-plague campaign in the city rested on the belief that the disease had an identifiable focus in the city's festering 'slums'. Second, localist ideas combined with orthodox contagionist doctrine to produce a variant of what might be termed 'contingent contagionism', in that plague by virtue of being a 'filth' disease was seen primarily to affect those residing in poor sanitary conditions. Hence, the frenzied 'quarantinist' policies in the initial phase of the anti-plague offensive did not target the city's Indian population in a socially indiscriminate fashion; on the contrary, they were driven by an anxiety that Bombay's poor, by virtue of being innately susceptible to the plague contagion nurtured in their insanitary 'slums', would infect the city's elites.

The impact of the plague epidemic, and the responses of colonial authorities to it, had major long-term consequences for urban development in Bombay. In particular, there were significant links between the prosecution of plague policies in the late 1890s and the discourse and practice of sanitary regeneration in the city during the first decade of the twentieth century. The basis for this continuity was the enduring appeal of the localist perspective, which viewed

Of course, it would be a gross oversimplification to posit a 'mainstream' division between etiological theories based on localist and contagionist doctrines, or the mode of preventive treatment conventionally associated with each: namely, 'sanitarism' and 'quarantinism'. Nevertheless, as Peter Baldwin has recently observed, 'it remains the case that a crucial distinction persists over the longue durée of western thinking about diseases and their causes that should not be effaced by attempts to render nuanced and more subtle otherwise overly stark dichotomies'. In other words, 'a closely related distinction has been drawn etiologically speaking, between a focus on the environmental background of epidemic disease and its transmissibility among humans; prophyllactically, between attempts to ameliorate toxic surroundings and limiting contagious spread'. Baldwin, Contagion and the State, pp. 7-10.


1 Peter Baldwin, Contagion and the State in Europe, 1830-1930 (Cambridge, 1999), p. 4.

2 Arnold, Colonizing the Body, p. 203.

The precise role of localist perceptions of plague as an environmental-specific, phygocratic (generated by, or from, filth) disease in informing colonial plague policy has either been downplayed or misconstrued in the existing historiography. On the one hand, while Arnold acknowledges that both the human body and the local conditions of human habitation and sanitation were thought in the 1890s to be the primary factors in the spread of the disease, his own focus is resolutely to the policies that flowed from the perceived centrality of the human body as plague's source and vehicle. Arnold, Colonizing the Body, pp. 202-203. On the other hand, Chandrasen has suggested that as the disease gradually engulfed the Indian subcontinent, colonial officials came to associate it with poverty and filth. The complacency engendered by this realization is said to have accounted for the change in the nature of colonial plague policy from one of forceful intrusion to benign indifference. Chandrasen, Plague Panic, p. 209. This line of reasoning is problematic. The association of the disease with the consequences of poverty did not dawn slowly on colonial officials: rather, it had co-existed alongside 'contagions' explanations from the outset. Moreover, if the identification of the disease with filth and poverty was present from the very beginning and did not preclude the notion with which plague measures were enforced in the early years of the epidemic, it could scarcely be adduced as the principal reason for the later relaxation in policies. In this context, for an important intervention that highlights the influence of localist ideas during the early years of the plague epidemic, see M.P. Sutphen, 'Not what, but where: bubonic plague and the reception of germ theories in Hong Kong and Calcutta, 1894-1897', Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences, 52/1 (1997): 81-113. In this context, see also L. Fabian Hirst, The Conquest of Plague: A Study of the Evolution of Epidemiology (Oxford, 1933), pp. 115-20, 292-6.
environmental pollution as the principal predisposing factor in the production and proliferation of epidemic diseases.

Filth, poverty and the plague epidemic

As we have noted, Bombay's rapid rise as a major manufacturing city from the 1870s produced consequences similar to those experienced elsewhere in the modern industrial world during the nineteenth century. The proliferation of large textile factories and small-scale industrial units, rapid demographic growth and urban expansion was accompanied by the widespread prevalence of a variety of diseases that ravaged the city's poor. While some epidemic diseases like cholera, measles, small-pox and tuberculosis had become more or less endemic in the city during the latter half of the nineteenth century, malaria and a host of unspecified 'fevers' also claimed a large number of victims each year.13

During the late nineteenth century, many colonial medical and sanitary officials interpreted the causes of the principal epidemic diseases primarily in terms of a localist framework that accorded causal primacy to polluted urban spaces and filth.14 In the annual reports of Bombay's Health Officer during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the diseases that occurred in the city were consistently attributed to the effects of a localized miasma produced by contaminated air, water or soil. This environmental pollution, which was linked to poor sanitary conditions both within dwellings and in entire neighbourhoods, was held to be the principal 'predisposing' cause of disease.

Within dwellings, the presence of a localized miasma was principally attributed to defective ventilation and overcrowding. Defective ventilation was seen to prevent the circulation of fresh air, leading thereby to the inhalation of putrid air by those who resided within. Consequently, it was believed, 'in the absence of light and air in the buildings, the dissipation of the effete products of life is slow and incomplete...and they accumulate as poisons to destroy or blight the vitality of the human beings who live amidst them'.15 The effects of poor ventilation in nurturing disease were perceived to be intensified by the insanitary conditions created by overcrowding within dwellings, both in individual rooms as well as in houses. The 'featural' compression within tenements was seen to result in the inhalation of stale and poisonous air, thereby lowering the vitality of the individuals who dwell therein.16

Outside dwellings, the localist perspective associated disease with the environmental pollution caused by poor drainage, the dampness produced by high levels of sub-soil water and a general accumulation of filth in urban

14 In this context, see also Ramanna, Western Medicine and Public Health, pp. 128-37, 143-7.
17 Report of the Health Officer, ARMCB, 1877, p. 72.
20 As Roy Porter has observed, 'Miasmatism seemed to explain why it was slum districts and the poor who were most severely struck in times of epidemic.' Roy Porter (ed.), Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine (Cambridge, 1996), p. 103.
22 Thus, the Health Officer made it a point to emphasize in his annual reports that sections inhabited predominantly by the city's labouring classes, such as Kamathipura, Khara Talao, Kumharwada, Mandvi, Nagpada and Umawadi, which regularly posted the highest mortality rates for the city, were also 'districts of ill-ventilation, of density and crowding, and of imperfect and faulty drainage'. Report of the Health Officer, ARMCB, 1883-86, pp. 234.
poor for the high mortality rates in the city's poorer quarters. In particular, their ignorance of the elementary principles of hygiene was seen to foster an environment that was conducive to disease. The Health Officer was wont to remark, 'are naturally the filthiest in their habits and customs, and are the great filth-producers in this city.' It was often noted that, given their weakly constitution, there was every likelihood that once in a while 'some disease will arise and sweep off the most effete of the population.'

The plague outbreak in Bombay thus confronted colonial authorities with their worst nightmare and crystallized latent anxieties about their hold on empire. As studies of the Indian plague epidemic have shown, even as they began to combat the disease, colonial officials knew relatively little about its etiology. Indeed, despite the knowledge that a microbe had been identified in conjunction with the disease, medical authorities remained unsure whether the bacterium was a sole causal agent or just one of the consequences of the disease. Nor indeed, was the specific mode of transmission of the microbe clearly understood. Consequently, the old controversy over whether plague was a contagion or the product of a localized miasma continued to persist in spite of the medical discovery of the pathogenic agent: at work.

Even though they accepted the new germ theory in some measure, many colonial medical and sanitary officials in Bombay found it hard to discard well-entrenched localist ideas in making sense of the plague. Thus, a memorandum presented to the Government of Bombay by local medical practitioners in January 1897 claimed that the bubonic plague now prevailing in the city is under certain conditions only slightly contagious or infectious, and that the facts observed in connection with individual cases and those associated with the general progress of the disease, warrant us in concluding that its incidence is greatly due to local conditions.

There were many reasons for the persistence of localist ideas in contemporary official accounts of the plague in Bombay. First, the suspicion with which many medical and sanitary officials viewed the new bacteriological theories led them to rely on long-standing localist explanations in making sense of the epidemic. Indeed, some medical observers even criticized the predominant focus on the plague bacillus at the expense of the supposedly more crucial sanitary factors that enabled it to thrive.

Second, localist theories continued to remain pervasive because they were able to supply a plausible account of the etiology of the plague in a context of considerable uncertainty. In this context, it made sense for some observers to filter the new theory of microbial agency through the long-standing localist etiological framework that viewed epidemic diseases as a product of filth and environmental pollution. Localist ideas appeared to supply the missing link in the etiology of the plague by suggesting that the germs that caused the disease were either a product or a constituent element of localized sanitary disorder. Thus, a number of contemporary observers simply reconciled the idea of microbial agency with the notion of predisposing causes that were the outcome of a generalized sanitary disorder. As one official history of the plague epidemic declared, 'Filth, overcrowding, bad ventilation, and bad drainage are the fostering causes of plague.'

Furthermore, the localist perspective gained credence because it appeared to explain certain clearly observable features of the plague epidemic in Bombay. For instance, the epidemic was first discovered in Mandvi, a district that had been consistently identified in previous years as being amongst the city's more insanitary areas. Some officials were quick to point out that in this 'densely populated quarter of the city conditions were very favourable for its development.' Localist theories also helped to make sense of the distinctive social geography of the epidemic in the early years. As the disease spread out from Mandvi towards the end of 1896, it quickly became apparent that the incidence of mortality was more severe in the poorer quarters of the city. Naturally, localist theories, which highlighted the determining role of environmental pollution and sanitary conditions, offered a ready-made and commonsensical explanation for why the poorer quarters of the city suffered more on account of the caves of plague.

Localist theories continued to influence the thinking of many colonial medical and sanitary officials even at the turn of the twentieth century.

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14 See, for instance, Report of the Health Officer, ARMCH, 1897, p. 61.
15 Report of the Health Officer, ARMCH, 1875, p. 149.
17 Hurst, Conquest, pp. 107-120.
21 Hurst, Conquest, pp. 119-20.
number of colonial sanitary officials as well as medical practitioners who tendered evidence to the Indian Plague Commission of 1898–99 adhered to localist explanations even though they acknowledged the role of a microbe in the causation of plague.\(^{42}\) Indeed, by 1902 Bombay's Health Officer was convinced that plague had become 'endemic' in the city in that, 'it has become 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 infected material into uninfected localities.'\(^{42}\)

So influential was this view that when the Plague Research Commission came to Bombay in 1905, one of their first tasks was to inquire closely into the sanitary circumstances of Bombay and their relation to the incidence of that disease in order to resolve the 'division of medical opinion on the subject'.\(^{44}\) Following a sanitary survey of the tenements in Bombay, however, the commission could neither observe any relation 'between the incidence of plague in these houses and their ventilation', nor a connection between poorly lit dwellings and the incidence of plague. Moreover, it noted, 'although the incidence of plague was highest in the most crowded tenements, it was apparently unaffected, so far as the City of Bombay is concerned, by the density of population in the different sections of the City'. \(^{46}\) In short, the commission concluded, the insanitary conditions which exist in Bombay have no influence which acts directly on the spread of epidemic plague.\(^{41}\)

**Localist doctrine and colonial plague policies**

Localist theories had a crucial bearing on colonial plague policies in Bombay from the very outset of the epidemic. Since every source of filth was seen to be a potential breeding ground of the invisible plague microbe, a whole range of sanitary measures were undertaken in order to eradicate it. In his exhaustive account of the first year of the epidemic, the Health Officer wrote, 'We created

\(^{42}\) See, for instance, *Indian Plague Commission, 1898-99, Further Evidence with Appendices* (hereafter IPC, *Further Evidence*), III, pp. 17, 20, 44, 53, 63, 62, 220, 291, PP, 1900, XXXIII. The Commission, for its part, was rather more ambivalent. A majority of the commissioners declared that they had been 'unable to find anything in the nature of statistical evidence or in the nature of inference from scientific observations to establish the proposition that any of the sanitary defects referred to, or any combination of them, exercise any marked favouring influence on the spread of plague'. *Report of the Indian Plague Commission, 1898-99, with Appendices and Summary* (hereafter IPC, *Report*), V, p. 169, PP, 1902, LXXII. At the same time, they were unwilling to go so far as to suggest that 'there may not be some insanitary conditions which may be contributory to the spread or persistence of plague'. Ibid., p. 171. However, in a long dissenting note, T.E. Fraser, the president, argued that while plague was no doubt an infectious disease 'produced by a specific micro-organism', its incidence was greatly influenced by 'the polluted atmosphere and other conditions extant in the interior of inadequately ventilated and lighted dwellings'. Ibid., Appendix III.

\(^{44}\) *Report of the Health Officer, ARMCB, 1901-1902*, p. 176.

\(^{45}\) Hirst, *Conquest of Plague*, p. 293.

\(^{46}\) *The Etiology and Epidemiology of Plague: A Summary Of The Work Of The Plague Commission (Créances, 1908)*, pp. 70-71.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., pp. 86-91. The authorities proceeded on the assumption that no stone ought to be left unturned in fighting the disease. Thus, when it came to digging up earthen floors, one method was 'to spread over them a thin layer of gunpowder and explode it, another was to pour over the floor kerosene oil and set it on fire, and another was to spread straw over the ground and set it on fire'. Not surprisingly, in many cases these methods 'were rarely found to be very effective'.

\(^{46}\) Local authorities in Bombay were not sure whether this technique really worked and acknowledged that 'it had no direct influence in preventing the spread of plague. However, they persisted with it in the hope that any measure which has a favourable influence on the health of individuals or on the conditions under which they live must increase their chances of life and powers of resistance to disease'. Ibid., p. 85.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 173.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., p. 171.

\(^{45}\) *Ibid., pp. 190-102.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 15.

Fig 3  Flushing engine cleansing infected houses, Bombay, c. 1896–97

Fig 4  Lime washers at work on a badly infected house, Bombay, c. 1896–97
scarcely practicable to effect much improvement in many of the darkest and dampest buildings without demolishing portions of them.\textsuperscript{12}

Until February 1897 the demolition of buildings was carried out by the Health Department, after which the task was entrusted to a specially appointed official. New regulations were also introduced in order to carry out the various sanitary measures necessary to tackle the epidemic. Thus, on 10 February 1897, the Municipal Commissioner used the powers conferred by the Epidemic Diseases Act to issue a notification that gave local authorities increased powers and greater control over buildings than they had hitherto enjoyed under the ordinary law.\textsuperscript{13} These regulations legalized not only the entry and disinfection of buildings and the prevention of overcrowding, but also empowered municipal authorities to declare as ‘unfit for human habitation’ any building that they deemed insanitary, to compel landlords to reduce overcrowding in their tenements by turning out lodgers and tenants, to peremptorily evict the residents from any buildings that were to be disinfected, to cut-off water connections inside buildings and to demolish any tenements that were perceived to be beyond sanitary redemption.\textsuperscript{14}

The regulations sanctioned the use of force in the event of non-compliance. Thus, if the tenants of a building whose landlord had been asked to reduce the number of residents failed to vacate the premises, ‘the Commissioner or any Police or other officer as aforesaid may forcibly remove them and prevent their re-occupation of such building’. Equally, compensation, if to be paid at all, was a matter that was left to the discretion of the officials on the spot. ‘The valuation of such building by such officer shall be final and conclusive’, the notification declared, ‘and the owner shall be entitled to receive the amount thereof which shall be provided out of the Municipal Fund, but he shall not be entitled to receive any other sum by way of compensation.’ Nor was any person ‘entitled to recover any compensation by way of damages or otherwise for the destruction or disinfection of any article’. On the other hand, the Municipal Commissioner was authorized to recover the costs of cleansing and disinfection from the owners of the buildings concerned.\textsuperscript{15} It is not surprising, therefore, that these measures aroused enormous resentment amongst landlords whose properties were targeted by the municipal squads.\textsuperscript{16}

The direct causal connection established between sanitary conditions and the prevalence of plague sustained the conviction amongst many colonial medical officials that it was ‘a disease of locality’. Since there was as yet little recognition that it was the presence of rat fleas that determined the incidence of plague in a given locality, it was the sanitary conditions therein that were seen to either generate or nurture the disease. In turn, this suggested that the only way to combat the high mortality rate and eventually suppress the disease was to conduct wholesale evacuations of the healthy from localities in which plague cases had occurred in order to subject these areas to thorough cleansing and disinfecting operations. ‘Where the conditions are not hopelessly insanitary, the vigorous prosecution of sanitary improvement combined with the segregation of the sick may check or stop the course of the disease’, one official summary of plague operations declared, ‘but in the worst class of cases nothing but the evacuation of the polluted locality and its destruction or a revolution in its sanitary conditions, will stay the epidemic.’\textsuperscript{17}

From the outset, however, the issue of evacuation provoked strong differences of opinion between the Government of Bombay and the Government of India. Towards the end of December 1896, as the death rate continued to rise dramatically, the Government of India directed the head of the medical service, Surgeon-Major-General James Cleghorn, to visit Bombay in order to assess the situation. On completing his investigation, Cleghorn presented the Government of India with a note and a memorandum signed by a number of local medical practitioners. The memorandum noted that the systematic cleansing and disinfecting of the affected parts of the city had failed to arrest the progress of the disease and emphasized that the only practical method of dealing with the outbreak and of arresting the progress of the disease was the removal of the inmates from houses in which cases of plague occurred, and the subsequent complete cleansing, disinfecting and sanitary overhauling of the premises.\textsuperscript{18} It also suggested that ‘suitable huts should be provided, free of rent, for the accommodation of different classes’.\textsuperscript{19}

The sanitary commissioner backed the proposals in the memorandum. The medical practitioners' suggestions had merit, Cleghorn believed, since the local health department was 'frustrated by the difficulty they found in carrying out their operations in inhabited houses'. Wholesale evacuation of plague-affected localities, it was argued, would get around this problem. Cleghorn provided vivid descriptions of living conditions in the Bombay chawls to buttress his case that an unhindered attack on insanitary localities was the only effective way of suppressing the plague.

Convinced by these suggestions, the Government of India repeatedly pressed the Government of Bombay to put them into practice. Since the 'vigorous' action taken by local authorities to clean and disinfect the infected parts of the city had failed to arrest the progress of the epidemic, the Government of India considered it necessary that the measures advocated in the memorandum

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 186–7.
\textsuperscript{13} Snow, Report on the Outbreak of bubonic Plague, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{14} M.E. Couchman, Account of Plague Administration in the Bombay Presidency, From September 1896 till May 1897 (Bombay, 1897), pp. 68–70.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid. It was reported in 1914 that under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 'over 14,000 houses were inspected, over 9,000 improvement notices were issued, and over 4,000 certificate were granted after completion of the improvement demanded'. Report of the Bombay Development Committee (hereafter BDCO) (Bombay, 1914), para. 20.
\textsuperscript{16} A majority of the complaints recorded by the committee that was established in March 1898 to redress popular grievances against plague regulations, were expressed by local landlords protesting against the assault on their properties. Government of Bombay (hereafter GOB), General (Plague), 1898, vol. 407, Compilation no. 367, NSA.
\textsuperscript{17} Nathan, Plague, I, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., pp. 138–9.
should be adopted, and that temporary accommodation suitable to the families to be removed should be at once prepared.\textsuperscript{53}

Local authorities in Bombay agreed in principle with the basic premises on which the sanitary commissioner's recommendations were based.\textsuperscript{49} The evacuation of infected houses and localities had even been carried out in Bombay on a limited scale.\textsuperscript{41} The problem of wholesale evacuation of infected localities on the large scale proposed by the Government of India, as far as the provincial government was concerned, was essentially a practical one. To give full effect to the sanitary commissioner's recommendations, they noted, 'at the lowest computation 30,000 persons belonging to different races, castes and creeds would need to be provided with temporary dwellings'. There was no site within the limits of Bombay municipality,' they pointed out, 'which would accommodate a tenth of this number.' Moreover, the people were averse to being moved out and 'their dread of the disease itself appears to be hardly so powerful as their horror of being removed from their houses'.\textsuperscript{42}

While the practical difficulties involved prevented the policy of wholesale evacuation of localities from being pursued energetically in Bombay, a new organization was nonetheless established in January 1898 to deal 'solely with the removal of tenants from ... infected houses under the orders of the Plague Committee'.\textsuperscript{46} Camps were prepared at Elphinstone Bridge, Byculla, Connaught Road, Foras Road, the Kennedy Sea Face, and to the south of the Goculdas Tiplal Hospital. Those who were evicted and removed to these camps were detained there for two weeks, 'after which they were permitted to return to their old houses, if fit for habitation, or to proceed elsewhere'.\textsuperscript{44} The aim, it was stated, 'was to pass through the camps the greatest possible number of the poorer classes who live in insanitary houses'.\textsuperscript{45} As soon as a tenement was vacated, 'it was at once surveyed with the object of improving its sanitary condition, so that when the poor inhabitants had finished their time in the Health Camp, they might return to a thoroughly disinfected, cleansed, well-ventilated and healthy dwelling.'\textsuperscript{46}

The Municipal Commissioner reported subsequently that, 'The evacuation of thoroughly infected houses was carried on systematically throughout the city'.\textsuperscript{47} Describing the evacuation measures, he noted how it was 'common in the city during an epidemic to see a street almost blocked up with carts, hurriedly collected from all directions, loaded up with furniture and kit of every description; the men busily carrying boxes and bundles out of the chawl to the carts, the women and children sitting on the top of everything, the District Officer standing by listening to and smoothing away difficulties, with the relief fund in his pocket, and directing and arranging the whole operation'.\textsuperscript{48}

However, the policy of evacuation encountered local resistance. Those sections of the casual poor who were predominantly employed in the shops, markets, warehouses and docks in the heart of the Indian town, resisted the attempts by officials to evacuate them. The Municipal Commissioner later noted that his personal experience of plague work had demonstrated quite clearly how 'reluctant the working classes are to go to any distance from their work, even for a short time to camps'.\textsuperscript{49} The policy of evacuation was also resisted strenuously by many local landlords and the contractors to whom they had leased out their rent-collecting rights. This was not a particularly startling revelation to the Municipal Commissioner, who noted:

\begin{quote}
There is no doubt that the landlord class has been very severely hit by the visitation of the plague. The resumption from Bombay expires their chawls of tenants; when plague occurs, the inevitable plague mark goes up to frighten away future tenants; when plague occurs their tenants are turned out en masse for a brief space, and often take the opportunity which evacuation gives them of removing all their goods and chattels from the reach of the landlord's custodian or bhaya, to find accommodation elsewhere, and leave behind them an unpaid bill for arrears of rent. On the top of this, repeated cases of plague in a house brings down upon them other calamities. The building is inspected and surveyed for sanitary defects, and sometimes it is condemned to be demolished altogether for a compensation that ignores the blasted rents secured through overcrowding, and sometimes the landlord is called upon to carry out improvements without any compensation at all.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Nonetheless, partial evacuation continued to remain an integral part of colonial plague policy even after other aspects had been jettisoned. Speaking generally, the Municipal Commissioner observed, 'experience indicates that the danger is greater from being in an infected spot than from contact with an infected person.'\textsuperscript{51} The policy of evacuating infected localities and houses

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\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 140.
\textsuperscript{54} See, for instance, Report of the Executive Health Officer, Bombay, in Snow, Report on the Outbreak of Bubonic Plague, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{55} 'The importance of evacuating infected houses and localities was realized at an early date', the Municipal Commissioner P.C.H. Snow noted, 'and, when the disease appeared with concentrated virulence in a particular house, the whole of the residents were removed.' In December 1896, the Municipal Commissioner had also agreed to a proposal from a local citizens' committee to establish camps for evacuees. Accordingly, camps capable of accommodating fifteen hundred inmates were opened for the healthy at Connaught Road and Northbrook Gardens. But 'the camps were hardly used.' Queued in Nathan, Plague, I, p. 142.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Further Papers relating to the Outbreak of Plague in India, with statement showing the quarantine and other restrictions recently placed upon Indian Trade} to May 1897, PP. 1897, LXIII. C. 8511 (HMSO, 1897).
\textsuperscript{57} Report of the Bombay Plague Committee for the period extending from the 1st July 1897 to the 30th April 1898, under the chairmanship of Sir James MacNab Campbell, K.C.I.E. (Bombay, 1898), p. 58.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 69.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 85.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p. 70.
\textsuperscript{61} MCRP, 1899, I, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., p. 40.
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{Annual Administration Report of the City of Bombay Improvement Trust (hereafter AABIT), for the year 1912-13} (Bombay, 1913), p. 134.
\textsuperscript{64} MCRP, 1899, I, p. 333.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., p. 141.
\end{flushright}
was thus 'based on the almost universal experience that the principal danger in a plague epidemic is to be found in the infected locality – that the greatest safety lies in flight'. Indeed, the seeming effectiveness of partial evacuation measures spawned a yearning for a more comprehensive wholesale evacuation scheme of the kind favoured earlier by Cleghorn. Thus, the Health Officer remarked wistfully, 'If we could remove 300,000 people from infected houses in Bombay for six months, isolate cases as they occur, keep the vacated houses empty, thoroughly disinfect them, demolish the insanitary quarters, prevent immigration from infected areas, Plague would be under control and soon disappear'.

A 'contingent contagionism'

Localist assumptions also blended with contagionist doctrine to produce a variant of what might be termed 'contingent contagionism', in that it was believed that the plague germ primarily infected those residing in poor sanitary conditions. If plague was a disease either generated by, or nurtured in, filth and squalor, many officials argued, it followed that Bombay's poor who resided in ill-ventilated, overcrowded tenements would be more susceptible to its ravages. This, in turn, buttressed the belief that it was the poor, rather than the 'respectable' classes, who were the 'natural' carriers of contagion. As T.S. Weir told the Indian Plague Commission, 'Before an epidemic comes, you can map out its course if you have two factors, the buildings and the classes of the population.' A view supported by Dr Thomas Blaney who asserted that in districts 'which contain the poorest population and the worst houses there we see the plague has the greatest intensity'.

Such assertions gained increasing credence not only because of the long-standing association of poverty and disease, but also because it became increasingly evident that the plague epidemic had barely touched the city's elites. As early as January 1897, some observers were quick to note that 'Europeans themselves have so far escaped with an exemption which at first sight seems marvellous'. This knowledge had become commonplace by the time the Indian Plague Commission began collecting its evidence. As one observer told the Commission, 'the incidence of the plague in Bombay has been almost entirely among the lower classes, who are entirely crowded up together a good deal'. On the other hand, although cases had occurred among the well to do, 'there has been no epidemic among the Europeans or among the higher classes of natives'.

Yet during the first phase of the epidemic colonial officials proceeded on the assumption that unless something drastic was done, the disease would not be restricted to the poorer quarters of the city for long. Indeed, many lived in dread at the prospect of the epidemic spreading out from the insanitary eastern part of the city and affecting the European enclaves of the city. Since the poor who lived in insanitary conditions were seen as natural repositories of the plague microbe, it became imperative to adopt every measure possible to minimize the threat they posed to the health of the city's ruling elites. Of all the classes within the city, Bombay's poor bore the brunt of the colonial state's anti-plague offensive. As the city's Health Officer acknowledged, 'From the beginning the greatest attention was paid to the disinfection of houses and to the segregation of the poor'.

The emphasis placed on targeting the bodies of the poor thus suggests that, from the very outset, an explicit 'class' bias underpinned the colonial state's seemingly arbitrary 'assault on the body' of the colonized population. Indeed, the belief that plague was a disease that primarily affected those who lived in insanitary dwellings led to a markedly less stringent attitude on the part of plague officials towards Indian elites. The Municipal Commissioner's original proclamation on 6 October 1896 announcing compulsory segregation in hospital of all plague cases had been 'received with loud denunciations' by the respectable classes. A petition signed by some of the city's influential Indian residents noted that hospital life was 'unknown amongst the people', and that it was perceived by both the patients and their families as 'certain death'. The respectable classes also expressed resentment that 'the authorities should make no distinction in this respect between the well-to-do classes who can afford

37 Ibid., p. 142.
38 ARMC, 1901-1902, p. 177.
39 The essence of the 'contingent contagionist' perspective is perhaps best encapsulated in the directives issued in January 1898 by the Government of Bombay to all officials connected with the plague administration in the presidency. The memorandum of instructions declared that, 'Plague is a disease which is essentially associated with insanitary conditions in human habitations, the chief of which are accumulation of filth, overcrowding and the absence of light and ventilation, 'It is', the memorandum added, 'in the first instance at least, a disease of locality, and is mainly conveyed from place to place by individuals in their person, clothing and personal effects, who have resided in the infected locality.' Further Papers Relating To The Outbreak of Plague in India, PP, 1898 (HMSO, 1898), LXIII, C. 8800.
40 Indian Plague Commission, 1892-99, Evidence with Appendices [hereafter IPC, Evidence], I, p. 40, PP, 1900, XXX.
41 IPC, Evidence, I, p. 60.
42 Thus, at the height of the first epidemic in February 1897, James Lawson (a member of the Hong Kong Medical Service who had been despatched to assist in the plague operations in Bombay) and W.L. Reade advised the Government of Bombay that prompt measures to suppress the epidemic were in order, since there were growing indications that 'the almost complete immunity enjoyed by Europeans is decidedly less than formerly, and cases are now occurring in full-blooded Europeans of a rapidly fatal nature'. GOB, General (Plague), 1897, vol. 52, Compilation no. 102, MSA.
44 Ibid., p. 74.
to effect the necessary isolation in their own house and the low unprotected
members of society to whom this is not possible. 41

Consequently, the Municipal Commissioner issued a second proclamation
that stated that 'no cases where proper segregation and treatment can be
carried out on the premises' would be moved to hospital. 42 From this point on,
the Municipal Commissioner noted, segregation of the sick in hospitals was
largely resorted to in cases 'where circumstances made it absolutely impossible
to make any suitable arrangement, or where the patients were paupers or
friendless'. 43 This was a policy that was supported by contemporary observers
like George Waters who declared, 'By all means ... let the sick be isolated,
for the great majority of the sufferers from plague are poor persons who cannot
have the requisite provision for their recovery in their own squalid homes.
For those, however, whose surroundings and means enable them with all
that the situation indicates, there seems to me no paramount obligation to be
isolated. 44

Even the initiation in 1897 of a military-style operation directed by a newly
established Bombay Plague Committee did not lead to a change in the basic
tenor of the campaign to eradicate the epidemic. The Plague Committee led
by General Gatacre treated the local elites with a great deal of tact over the
issue of hospitalization and hence elicited a great deal of praise in the Indian
press. 45 And after the committee was disbanded in 1898, plague officers were
permitted to exercise a discretion in the matters of removing patients to
hospital, and to allow a patient living in a house, not overcrowded, and with
fairly good sanitary conditions, to be treated in his own home. 46

Impressionistic evidence supports the view that it was mainly the poor who
were carted off to hospital. 47 For instance, according to Captain Thomson,
a surgeon in the Parel Government Hospital, most of the hospital patients
were 'very poor labouring-class people' whose 'horribly filthy condition of the
person and clothing of most patients was undesirable'. 48 Similarly, a majority
of the 'Hindus' admitted to the Arthur Road Hospital, it was noted, 'consisted of
Deccani and Konkan Maharrats', followed by migrants from north India
who were 'mostly employed as sweepers, dhobes, goweles or milkmen, coachmen,
in the mill industry, and in miscellaneous employments, such as hawkers and
sweetmeat sellers'. 49 In the Grant Road Hospital too, a 'major portion' of the
patients were said to be 'labourers'. 50 And it was probably the sharp awareness
that they were more likely targets than those above in the social hierarchy,
rather than an irrational susceptibility to rumours, which perhaps explains
why it was the urban poor who mainly took to the streets in protest against
colonial plague policies. 51

Sanitarianism and urban renewal

'As a consequence of the resistance encountered and the resulting reappraisal
of its political priorities and administrative limitations', Arnold has noted,
'the Government of India made a series of compromises and concessions in its
plague policy in 1898-99. The more coercive and unpopular aspects of
plague administration, house and body searches, compulsory segregation and
hospitalization, corpse inspection, and the use of troops, were accordingly
abandoned or greatly modified.' 52 The report of the Indian Plague Commission,
published in 1900, generally accepted that plague measures based on coercion
such as compulsory segregation of the sick in hospitals, house-to-house searches
for plague cases and corpse inspection were counter-productive. Responding
favourably to the report, the Government of India issued a decree on 16 July
1900 announcing the discontinuance of such methods. 53

However, the emphasis on the contagionist underpinnings of plague
policies has led some scholars to over-estimate the disjunction created by the
changes initiated after 1898-99. Arguably, there were significant continuities in
plague policies well into the first decade of the new century. The basis for
this continuity was the enduring hold of localist beliefs that regarded plague
as a disease that primarily took root in insanitary neighbourhoods. While the
political costs of continuing with compulsory measures based on contagionist
documentary was considered to be unacceptable, many colonial officials argued
that a focus on the locales in which plague was bred would constitute a more
effective long-term response to the disease. In a letter to the Bombay Gazette
in 1902, the Health Officer wrote, 'The condition of climate, the habits of the

41 Gujarat, 11 October 1896., in Report on Native Newspapers in the Bombay Presidency
these years, RNNBP, p 42, 1896. See also Arnold, 'Touching the Body'.
42 The Gatacre noted that the notification had 'spread such consternation among Native circles
that it is hard for the European officers of Government, with their own ideas about hygiene
and the sanitary effects of forcible segregation, to adequately realise'. Gujarat, 11 October 1896,
in RNNBP, p 42, 1896.
43 Waters, Plague in Bombay, p 9-10
44 Gatacre, 'Who Are Your Leaders? Plague, the Raj and the "Communities" in Bombay,
1896-1901', in Peter Roff (ed.), Society and Ideology: Essays in South Asian History Presented to
K A Ballhatchet (London, 1992). It was when the British deviated from this policy, as
happened when Sir James Campbell presided over the Bombay Plague Committee, that Indian
elites vehemently protested.
45 IPC, Report, para. 600.
46 However, some sections of the labouring poor, such as the scavengers and halwais,
were specifically exempted from segregation measures since their services were deemed
indispensable by colonial authorities who feared alienating them. Report of the Executive Health
47 Gatacre, Report, p 50.
49 Gatacre, Report, 92. The statistics of admissions in the government hospitals appear to
confirm such testimonies. See, for instance, ibid., pp 105, 110; Captain J K Conlon, The Bombay
Plague: Being a History of the Progress of Plague in the Bombay Presidency from September
1896 to June 1899 (Bombay, 1900), p 84.
50 On the popular resistance to colonial plague policies see Keman, 'Plague, Policy and Popular
usuness in British India'; Arnold, 'Touching the Body'; and Chantavarkar, 'Plague Panic'.
51 Arnold, Colonizing the Body, pp 234-5.
52 Government of India, Home (Sanitary), no 230, 16 July 1900, National Archives of India
(hereafter NAI).
people, the condition of the soil and surroundings, poverty and filth all tended to foster the disease. Some of these conditions are ameliorable, and others can be ameliorated by constant and determined efforts on the part of authorities to improve the sanitary surroundings of the people.

Even as the Health Officer wrote this, a special agency vested with the ambitious task of urban reconstruction had begun to set about reordering the city’s poorer districts on ‘sanitary’ principles. 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. In other ways too, the localist perspective entailed continuities in plague policies. Thus, disinfection, demolition of insanitary dwellings and temporary evacuation of plague-affected dwellings under the provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act continued to be the mainstay of the colonial state’s anti-plague campaign in Bombay well into the first decade of the twentieth century.

However, it is in the discourse and practices of sanitary reconstruction espoused by urban authorities that the most significant continuities can be discerned. As we have already seen, some contemporaries like T.R. Fraser believed that ‘darkness and, to a less degree, deficiency of light are conducive to the prolonged existence of the plague bacillus’. To suppress plague, Fraser argued in his note of dissent to the report of the Indian Plague Commission, what was needed was ‘pure air’. This could be achieved by ensuring first, that each room in a dwelling was ‘provided with windows for the admission of air and day-light’, and second, by keeping each house and its surroundings ‘reasonably free from all causes of air-pollution’. To do this would be relatively simple, and definitely cheaper than what it cost to combat cholera, since ‘pure air, the chief requirement for the extinction and prevention of plague is everywhere obtainable, and may everywhere be introduced into dwellings by relatively simple and inexpensive means’.

During the early years of the new century, such views appeared to have exerted a great deal of influence over local authorities in Bombay. Thus, the Health Officer wrote in 1903, ‘The poor of Bombay now live an artificial life in houses and under conditions to which they are unaccustomed and unsuited, and which render any attempt at sanitation most difficult.’ As a solution, he proposed the evacuation of plague-affected localities in order to enable a wholesale programme of slum destruction in the city’s overcrowded central districts. His proposal was a more ambitious version of the plan outlined by James Cleghorn in 1897, and involved constructing semi-permanent accommodation for a hundred thousand people while the work of sanitary reconstruction was carried on in the insanitary areas. ‘What I advise’, he wrote, ‘is that all the insanitary areas be demobilised and acquired by the Municipalities or Government or Improvement Trust.’ However, the Trust, while ‘willing to undertake a few small Improvement Schemes providing for the people displaced’, argued that its ‘financial obligations’ precluded it from undertaking the ambitious programme sketched out by the Health Officer. The Trust’s lack of enthusiasm effectively scuppered the Health Officer’s grand design for sanitary reconstruction.

The perception that poor ventilation and overcrowding were the root cause of the plague epidemic also turned the attention of urban local authorities to the question of overhauling the municipal building bye-laws. During the late nineteenth century the city’s Health Officer had frequently complained about the ineffectiveness of the bye-laws. Now, tightening these regulations was seen as a panacea for all the sanitary evils that had dogged the city. A first step towards reforming the building bye-laws had already been taken in April 1901 when W.L. Harvey, the Municipal Commissioner, set out before the Corporation the loopholes in the municipal regulations and proposed amendments to the Bombay Municipal Act of 1888 with regard to the provision of air-spaces for better ventilation as well as height restrictions on buildings, in order to remedy the existing defects and ‘bring all building operations under sanitary control’.

In his report the Municipal Commissioner also argued that the powers he derived under the Epidemic Diseases Act with regard to overcrowded dwellings (it will be recalled that under the regulations issued on 10 February 1897, he was permitted to use the police in evicting tenants from tenements that were deemed to be ‘overcrowded’ without reference to a magistrate) ought to be ‘permanently invested’ in him. ‘It is not necessary for me to make out a case for the amendment of building regulations which are so notoriously inadequate as those now in force in Bombay’, the Municipal Commissioner noted in his report, ‘a casual inspection of buildings erected under these regulations will be sufficient to convince anyone on this point.’ ‘It is essential’, he added, ‘that the radical alterations proposed should be effected as soon as possible and especially so in view of the fact that within the next few years the Improvement Trust may be expected to clear large areas of insanitary buildings now existing, which should be replaced by buildings conforming to a much stricter standard of sanitation.’

However, the amendments proposed by the Municipal Commissioner were not well received by a Corporation that was dominated by local landed interests. After a great deal of prevarication, some of Harvey’s proposals were adopted in the Bombay Municipal Act of 1905. However, one observer later recalled that ‘the legislator of 1905 ignored all Mr. Harvey’s recommendations.

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93 Bombay Gazetteer: Overland Summary (hereafter BGOS), 25 October 1902.
94 IPC, Report, p. 479.
95 Ibid., p. 487.
for the provisions of air spaces round houses'. It was left to the Municipal Corporation to deal with this question through the provision of bye-laws, 'but it was not until 1910 that the discussion on Mr. Harvey’s suggestions ended in the passing of revised bye-laws'. While the bye-laws that were finally adopted effected 'some improvement in the case of new buildings', it was at the same time feared that 'the insanitary condition of the older and more congested building areas must continue to go from bad to worse as long as the control of building operations on old buildings remains as ineffective as it now is under all the Municipal bye-laws'.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn attention to three crucial aspects of the state’s response to the plague epidemic in Bombay and highlighted their consequences for colonial attempts at civic renewal. First, the anti-plague campaign in the city was informed from the very outset by the belief that the disease had an identifiable locus in the ‘slums’ of the poor and thereby prompted an assault on their neighbourhoods. In part, this was an outcome of the long-standing reflexive association of the poorer quarters of the city with disease and high mortality over the quarter of a century preceding the outbreak. But localist ideas proved to be tenacious during the first decade of the twentieth century because they also provided colonial authorities with a plausible theory in a context of considerable uncertainty regarding the etiology of the plague. Second, far from constituting a random ‘assault upon the body’ of the colonized, official plague policies were influenced by a ‘contingent contagionism’ in that it was the poor who resided in ill-ventilated, overcrowded tenements in the city’s insanitary localities that were perceived as more likely bearers of the plague contagion than the so-called ‘respectable classes’. Consequently, the colonial state’s anti-plague offensive was in large measure directed at segregating the urban poor, who were perceived as posing a direct threat to the physical well-being of Bombay’s elites. Finally, there was a marked continuity between the sanitary measures devised to combat the plague in the late 1890s and the discourse and practice of urban planning during the early years of the twentieth century. This continuity stemmed in large measure from the enduring conviction that filth and poor sanitation were the primary causal factors in the outbreak and spread of epidemic diseases. It is to one concrete institutional outcome of this belief, and its attendant consequences, that we shall now turn.

Introduction

As the bubonic plague ravaged Bombay in the last years of the nineteenth century, the authorities became concerned about the threat to ‘public health’ posed by the squalid living conditions of the city’s working classes. ‘Sanitary disorder’ in the dwellings inhabited by the poor was perceived as the primary cause of the epidemic. Finding solutions to the problem of overcrowding and insanitary housing became of critical importance if Bombay was to continue functioning as a centre of imperial political and commercial power. One major consequence of this concern was the formation of the City of Bombay Improvement Trust in 1898 with the express aim of destroying ‘slums’, mitigating the abysmal living conditions of the urban poor, and restoring the ‘health’ of the city. Redressing the problem of ‘sanitary disorder’ posed by the ‘untended city’ was part of an ambitious initiative to transform Bombay’s built environment. The Improvement Trust was entrusted with the work of ‘making new streets’, ‘opening out crowded localities’, and carrying out land reclamation ‘to provide room for the expansion of the city’. Significantly, the Trust was expected not only to carry out urgent sanitary improvements, but also to enhance its image as a centre of imperial and commercial power.

In seeking to transform Bombay into an orderly city characterized by the free movement of people and commodities, colonial authorities were clearly influenced by ideas prevalent in the metropolitan context. As scholars have noted in recent years, visions of unimpeded circulation were integral to the spatial reconfiguration of the city in nineteenth-century Europe. In particular, drawing analogies with new medical doctrines that regarded the unrestricted passage of air and blood as the essential prerequisite of a healthy body, urban planners envisioned the sanitary city as ‘a place of flows, movements and circulation’.

The very idea of an ‘Improvement Trust’ as the solution to Bombay’s sanitary crisis was derived from town-planning experiments that had been carried out in England and Scotland in the nineteenth century. Such experiments, which went under the name of Improvement Schemes, had two salient features. First,
these were legal instruments that had been authorized by Parliament though private legislation, whose aim was 'to permit some publicly incorporated authority - such as a land development company or a municipal corporation or an improvement commission - to usurp private property rights in the name of some larger collective interest'. Second, such Improvement Schemes embodied a 'physical-planning concept' and their central powers were 'clearance powers'. The right to acquire property entailed 'a right of demolition and, along with that, a right of redevelopment'. Significantly, Improvement Schemes in the late nineteenth century had slum clearance as their primary objective. This, it was believed, would result in improved health and housing for the working classes and would also raise the moral and social character of slum-dwellers.

While these Improvement Schemes served as models for the formation of the City Improvement Trust, the constitution of the Trust and the specific form it assumed were determined by the prevailing political context of colonial Bombay. The idea of a separate agency to carry out the tasks of urban restructuring was the product of a growing belief amongst sections of colonial officialdom, in the aftermath of the plague epidemic, that strong executive action unencumbered by accountability to representatives of local self-governing institutions was the only way to achieve decisive results in civic affairs.

Colonial self-imagery of paternal governance and the supposed obligations of a civilized mission also suffused the rhetoric of its promoters. The squalor-ridden and overcrowded hovels of the poor were to be replaced by new sanitary housing, designed to 'improve' the working classes and display the benevolence of the city's rulers. According to Lord Sandhurst, the Governor of Bombay:

The rehousing of the poorer classes is one of the most important and attractive provisions of the Bill. These people deserve our sympathy and assistance. We desire to place them in better houses so that not only will it let the sun into their houses, but into their hearts and into their very existence and thus terminate the sad state of things amongst them which at present cannot but be one of unhappiness combined with toil.

The constitution of the Board of Trustees reflected the desire to retain tight official control over the operations of the Trust. Even though municipal revenues largely funded the Trust, the Bombay Municipal Corporation was allowed only four representatives on the Board of Trustees. The Trust was also vested with wide-ranging financial and statutory powers, apart from being endowed with the use of valuable Government and Municipal properties, only because it was viewed almost as a new department of government. Significantly, the date of the Trust's inauguration was a 'symbolic' representation of British dominance: it was consciously chosen to commemorate the birthday of the future sovereign and also the day when the Prince of Wales had landed in Bombay in 1875. As one of the Raj's senior civil servants in the city noted, 'it was one of the whitest days in the calendar of Bombay'.

Some contemporary urban activists have construed the activities of the Improvement Trust in the years that followed as evidence of the 'efficiency with which city improvement could be effected if there was political will and an efficient body'. This chapter will seek to argue, however, that colonial authorities failed to restructure and rationalize urban space in accordance with their visions of order. From the outset the Bombay Improvement Trust's schemes were bogged down by controversy and indecision, provoked sustained local opposition, and failed to achieve their principal objectives.

In highlighting the 'failure' of the Trust to achieve its stated aims, I do not intend to suggest that its actions produced no tangible effects. As Ferguson has argued, plans 'constructed within a conceptual apparatus do have effects but in the process of having these effects they generally fail to transform the world in their own image'. But 'failure' in this context 'does not mean doing nothing; it means doing something else, and that something else always has its own logic'. The following account seeks to uncover the logic underpinning the Bombay Improvement Trust's policies and shows how these exacerbated the problems that it had been set up to redress.

This chapter also shows how the Improvement Trust's attempts to reorder urban space became entangled in the very bureaucratic mechanisms and legal procedures that had been devised to facilitate its grand design of civic reconstruction. Indeed, as in the case of the urban planning initiatives in colonial Zanzibar examined by Bissell, the policies and practices of the Bombay Improvement Trust 'ensured the colonial regime within contradictions of its own creation, confronting bureaucratic power with insoluble dilemmas'.

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6 Gazetteer, III, p. 82. Of the remaining, the Bombay Millowners' Association, the Chamber of Commerce and the Port Trust had one representative each, while the others were either ex-officio members, such as the Collector of Land Revenue and the Municipal Commissioner, or were nominated by the Bombay Government. Ibid.

7 As Sir Stanley Edgerton of the Government of Bombay pointed out, 'the Government of India would never have entrusted either the wide borrowing powers in the market or property of the value which they did entrust to the Improvement Trust, nor would they have given from the wide statutory powers of interference with private property, except under the utmost Government control'. Council Proceedings, 1907, XLI (Bombay, 1908), p. 301.


10 Sharda DAvodi and Rahul Mehrotra (eds), Bombay: The City Within (Bombay, 1995), p. 139.


12 Quoted in W.C. Bissell, 'Conservation and the Colonial Past: Urban Planning, Space and Power in Zanzibar', in David Anderson and R. Rathbone (eds), Africa's Urban Past (Oxford, 2000), p. 251. Nonetheless, as Bissell suggests, intentionality should not be dismissed as 'inequivalently' because it 'lacks the capacity to impose its order upon the world'. Rather, the salient point here is that intentions 'are always contingent and partial, engage with other intentionalities in contradictory or complementary ways, and bound tenaciously to an entirely world of social practice that often eludes us or eludes them'. Ibid.
Furthermore, in colonial Bombay too, the ‘very irregularity, the gaps and incoherence that marked the unstable relation between the forms of the law and the unruly domain of social practice’, produced a form of state intervention in the domain of urban planning that was notable for its capriciousness and the ‘uneven rule of the arbitrary’.\[11\]

The Trust and its schemes

The Bombay Improvement Trust was formally established on 9 November 1898 – after the necessary legislation had been rushed through the provincial Legislative Council\[12\] – and commenced its operations from the following year. The financial resources of the Bombay Improvement Trust consisted of a one-time cash grant from the government as well as an assured annual contribution from the Bombay Municipality amounting to a maximum of two per cent on municipal assessments.\[13\] Furthermore, the Trust was also vested with vacant lands belonging both to the government and the Bombay Municipal Corporation.\[14\] The idea behind handing over these largely undeveloped sites was that the Trust would turn them into revenue-generating building estates and lease them out for a period of ninety-nine years, at the end of which they were to revert back to the government or the Municipal Corporation.\[15\] In addition, the government also temporarily transferred reclamation rights in certain areas along the western coast of Bombay. Here again, the rationale was

\[11\] Ibid., pp. 252–5.

\[12\] One Indian newspaper later complained: ‘The hurry with which the City Improvement Trust Bill was passed in the Legislative Council was justified by the plea of the overmastering necessity that was alleged to exist for improving the pestilential areas. All opposition was ridiculed, and those who prayed for more time and fuller discussion of a momentous legislative measure, which was the first of its kind in India, were held up to public scorn and derision.’ Gujrat, 26 January 1902, in RNNBP, 5, 1902.

\[13\] When the Improvement Trust Act was first passed, it was envisaged that from 1909 any sum left over from the Corporation’s contribution was to be refunded to it, and any profits on the Trust’s operations were ‘to be divided between the Municipality and Government’. AARBIT, 1907–1908, Appendix B. However, in 1913 an amendment to the original act ‘abolished the old provision for distribution of the Trust’s profits between Government and the Municipality every year’. From this point onwards, all profits in the revenue account were ‘transferred at the end of the year to the capital account and used in abatement of the amount of capital to be raised by debentures in the next year’. J.R. Ott, The Finances of the Bombay Improvement Trust (Bombay, 1919), p. 16.

\[14\] According to the provisions of the original act of 1898, the Trust was not required to pay anything in return for these lands either to the government or the municipal corporation for a period of ten years; thereafter, a charge of 3 per cent on ‘its original value’ was to accrue and become payable annually on 1st April of 1909 and subsequent years. AARBIT, 1907–1908, Appendix B. Once again, the 1913 amendment introduced a change that had a significant bearing on the Trust’s finances. Whereas under the original act, the Trust could not claim any compensation on vested lands that the government or municipality chose to take back into their possession, the amended version stipulated that the Trust should be paid its market value for the land that it was forced to relinquish. Ott, Finances, p. 16.

\[15\] Ibid., p. 3.

that the Trust would augment its revenues by letting out on long-term lease the land that was developed in this manner.\[16\]

The Trust’s loans were ‘raised on the security of the annual Municipal contribution and the rents of the Trust’s “scheduled lands” and acquired estates’. Simultaneously, a sinking fund was created ‘for repayment of each loan and for the investment in public securities of moneys annually paid to the fund or accumulated as interest thereon’. Significantly, the Government of India provided a ‘substantial guarantee’ to make good any failure in regular payment of interest and sinking fund charges on the Trust’s debentures.\[17\]

Prior to embarking on a scheme, the Bombay Improvement Trust was required to ‘notify’ the public as well as each individual owner whose property was likely to be affected by it. After the notification was issued, the government had to consider any representations that were put up against it, either by the Municipal Corporation or individual house-owners, before granting its approval.\[18\] All privately owned properties required for its schemes by the Trust, and publicly notified for the purpose, were acquired by a designated special officer acting under the provisions of the Land Acquisition Act of 1894. Furthermore, a three-member Tribunal of Appeal, comprising a president and two assessors, was also constituted in order to ‘ensure the correct apportionment of compensation among the various parties in intricate and contested cases’. Any property owners dissatisfied with the valuation of their property by the Special Officer were ‘entitled under certain limitations’ to take their case to the Tribunal of Appeal. In some instances, the Special Officer turned over to the Tribunal ‘questions of an intricate legal nature’ that could not be ‘satisfactorily settled in his courts’.\[19\]

In order to increase its revenues, the Trust sought to dispose of as quickly as possible the land that it acquired and developed. Acquired land was usually leased out, either by private negotiation or by public auction. Once a lease offer was accepted, the lessee was required to construct within two years a building that adhered to the Trust’s rules. He also had to furnish a security ‘for the fulfillment of his contract’, which in most instances consisted of a sum equivalent to one year’s or two years’ rent. In addition to this, the lessee had to pay five hundred rupees in order ‘to meet legal expenses in connection with the agreement and lease’. However, the lessee was allowed a rent-free period that varied ‘from six to eighteen months from the date of agreement according to the nature of the building to be erected on the plot’.\[20\]

Significantly, the lease agreements allowed the Trust to exercise a great deal of control over the buildings that were erected on them by lessees. Thus, the Trust had the right to stipulate ‘plans and specifications’ for the construction
of tenements. Indeed, the lease contract was not signed until the building was completed and approved by the Trust; nor could any 'subsequent alterations or additions' be made without its permission. Furthermore, Trust staff could inspect the buildings periodically to ensure compliance by the lessee with its rules and regulations regarding the maintenance of the property in 'sound and sanitary condition'.

The activities of the Bombay Improvement Trust during the first decade of its existence can be divided into six principal categories. The first type of scheme had as its primary objective 'slum clearance' and the 'improvement' of specific areas represented by the Municipal Commissioner as 'insanitary'. Thus the Trust launched its operations with a scheme at First Nagpada, which had 'the unenviable notoriety of being the unhealthiest area in Bombay'. Its first annual report noted that this was a district 'uninhabited chiefly by the labouring classes, which has suffered severely from plague and is in such a condition that no permanent improvement is possible without the re-arrangement and reconstruction of the whole quarter'. The Trust subsequently initiated similar slum clearances at Mandvi-Koliwada, Nowrojee Hill, Bhatwadi and East Agripada.

A second category of Trust schemes focused on the construction of new east-west thoroughfares, running from the densely congested inner districts of the Indian Town towards the seaboard, which were designed to facilitate the free circulation of people and commodities in a modern city. For instance, Scheme II (Princess Street Scheme) consisted of a 'new street running from Queen's Road to Carnac bridge, which opens up a wide passage through a thickly-crowded quarter, clears several very insanitary areas and provides a new thoroughfare for traffic'. Similarly, Scheme III (Sandhurst Road Scheme) involved the construction of 'a broad 80 feet road, running through the heart of the city from Back Bay to Elphinstone bridge near the harbour-properties of the Port Trust'. Here again, the purpose was 'to remedy the defective ventilation of the parts of the City traversed by it and to increase the existing means of communication and facilities for traffic'. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, however, the Trust began to shift its attention to the construction of thoroughfares that sought to facilitate swifter communication between the Indian Town and the expanding northern suburbs. The principal projects here were the Crawford Market-Sandhurst Road street scheme and the Pedal Road scheme.

Yet another set of Trust schemes was designed to expand the city's residential space by providing more building sites. The Trust set about achieving this objective by developing estates, both on land that was already available in areas such as Dadar, Matunga, and Sion, to the north of the Indian Town, and
on land reclaimed from the sea at Colaba, which lay at the southernmost tip of the island. The latter scheme was completed prior to the First World War and resulted in the erection of a much sought-after elite residential area.

The fourth type of schemes initiated by the Improvement Trust involved the provision of ‘sanitary’ housing, ‘for the poorer and working classes’. To this end, the Trust set about constructing tenements in Agripada, Nagpada, Chandanwadi, Princess Street, Inamwada and Mandvi-Kulivada. The first of these tenement blocks, at Agripada, sought to rehouse those who had been displaced by the demolitions at First Nagpada.

A fifth category of Trust schemes sought to develop the vacant lands that had been handed over to it by the Bombay Municipal Corporation and the provincial government. From the outset the Trust accorded the highest priority to enhancing the ‘revenue-producing powers’ of these lands in order to render them financially profitable.

Finally, the Trust was also vested with the task of providing new housing for the city’s police force. The Police Commissioner had frequently voiced the demand for police accommodation during the preceding decade and the Improvement Trust was seen as an appropriate body to carry out this increasingly pressing task. A total of nine police accommodation schemes, which were to provide housing for 26 European officers, 38 Indian officers and 538 men and their families, were notified and initiated during the first decade of the Trust’s operations.26

The Trust and its troubles

Confronted by what they regard as the pernicious influence of contemporary politics in frustrating technical solutions to the problems of Bombay’s urban development, some observers in recent times have adduced the Improvement Trust’s activities as proof that colonial policies of civic regeneration were informed by careful forethought.27 However, the available evidence suggests that no real consideration was devoted at the outset to working out the precise ways in which the Trust was to carry out its ambitious agenda. Indeed, recalling two decades later the events that led to the formation of the Trust, one official doubted ‘if any body had a very clear idea in those days what the Trust was going to do or how it was going to do it’.28

To begin with, the Trust initiated a number of major schemes all at once, even before the requisite bureaucratic and legal apparatus was in place to deal with the large volume of paperwork that their notification generated. This caused innumerable problems, both for the Trust and the property-owners who were affected by its schemes. Not surprisingly, the Trust’s administrative establishment soon found itself submerged under the avalanche of paperwork generated by the near-simultaneous notification of its early schemes.

At first the Collector of Bombay carried out the acquisition of properties.29 However, the Trust was unable to cope with the large volume of work that its schemes began to generate and was forced to request the provincial government to appoint a ‘special agency’ to carry out this task. But the heavy demands placed on the official machinery on account of the simultaneous outbreak of plague and famine meant that it was a while before their wish was granted.30 It was only in August 1900, almost two years after the Trust had first been established, that a ‘Special Collector’ was appointed to oversee the acquisition of properties. Two years later, a second Special Collector was appointed to expedite the process.

In spite of these appointments, the necessity of processing concurrently the ever-proliferating paperwork relating to so many large schemes severely tested the Special Collector’s office. ‘No part of the Board’s work has required and received so much attention as this’, the Chairman of the Trust commented in 1904 and added that it had ‘sorely taxed our establishment to keep pace with the mass of work which comes before these two officers’.31 Indeed, it was admitted that ‘the anticipation of the Trustees regarding the rate at which they might be able to carry through their schemes was too sanguine, and experience has shown that there is a long and unavoidable delay in the acquisition of properties’.32 On the other hand, as a result of the delays that ensued between the first notification of a property and its eventual acquisition, ‘grave complaints were made by owners whose properties had been notified’.33 A representation to the government from the Bombay Municipal Corporation pointed out that ‘the hardship on house-owners in consequence of such long delays has been grievous’ and argued that all transactions ‘in the properties concerned by way of mortgage or sale have become difficult and a stop is put to all additions and improvements to them’.34

From the very outset, the Trust’s notification of schemes triggered vocal opposition from owners whose properties were targeted for acquisition. ‘The notices which the Trust has lately scattered broadcast among the house-owners whose properties come within the limits of alignment have created quite a consternation amongst property-owners’, reported one Indian newspaper in January 1899. Another noted that ‘regular meetings of householders’ had been held and drew attention to the likelihood of a ‘general movement protesting

26 BIT Proceedings, 22 April 1904, ‘Note by the Chairman’, GOB, Judicial, vol. 37, Compilation no. 129, 1904, Appendix, para. 12, MSA.
27 Ibid., para. 21.
28 AARIT, 1902, p. 17.
29 Ibid., see also, GOB, 28 February 1903.
30 Quoted in Edition of the Bombay Ratepayers’ Association to His Excellency the Governor of Bombay in Council (hereafter Bombay Ratepayers’ Petition), Adopted at the Public Meeting of the Citizens of Bombay, held on the 5th of May 1903, in GOB, General, vol. 29, Compilation no. 522, 1903, MSA.
against the improvement operations'.

Property owners in the city's B and C municipal wards organized meetings in order to co-ordinate collective resistance. One such meeting was held at the house of Hasan Sharifuddin Khudd, a barrister, and was attended by a dozen Korki Muslin property-owners wherein it was resolved to petition the government against the acquisition of more property that was actually required. A similar resolution was passed at another meeting held at the house of Ibrahimbild Dossa, proprietor of the Kaisare-Hind Flour Mill.

Some of the neighbourhoods in the Indian town that the Trust sought to acquire for its schemes were inhabited predominantly by members of particular castes or communities. It is not surprising, therefore, that community ties were frequently activated in organizing resistance to the Trust. One prominent case involved the Koli fishermen, reputed to be the oldest inhabitants of the island whose neighbourhood the Trust sought to acquire as part of its Mandvi-Koliwada Scheme. As the news of the impending acquisition filtered through, members of the community organized a petition to the Chairman of the Improvement Trust in which they noted that their livelihood entailed living together in a compact colony and close to, and within easy reach of the sea as our people have for generations past lived and worked in Koliwada. They were, the petition noted, "poor in means" and bereft of the resources necessary to "re-acquire plots and build houses in Koliwada under the altered conditions' consequent upon the completion of the scheme. The result of their being dispossessed of their land, they argued, would be that "we must disperse, our industry already languishing, must collapse, and a population numbering over a thousand souls, go to ruin". 34

33 Nature Opinion, 2 February 1899, in RNNPB, 5, 1899. The lack of precise information about the Trust's intentions gave rise to wild speculation about its proposed activities. Thus, it was reported that 'Various rumours are abroad, one of which is that the Board are going to interfere with the famed Musjid and Hindu temples in order to carry out these schemes'. Another rumour was to the effect that the landlords are to be compensated in Trust Bonds and not in cash, and that Government have devised these schemes for business purposes and in order to make money'. Bombay Presidency Police: Secret Abstracts of Intelligence (hereafter BPFSAI), XII: 5, 1899, para. 169.

34 BPFSAI, XII: 6, 1899, para. 203. Their opposition to the Improvement Trust attracted official attention. A police report of the meetings noted that, 'These people are anxious that their fears should come to the notice of Government in some shape or form that will obtain early recognition, and therefore are trying to stir up mischief by disseminating reports in quarters where they think they will be taken seriously and so come to the ears of Government with the desired result that to avoid disturbances Government will make some concessions'. It was also reported that 'the noise has yet been made of resistance or of inclining to resist the measures of the Board ... the City Improvement Trust has given birth to a new Association called the 'Property-holders' Defence Association'. BPFSAI, XII: 8, 1899, para. 302.

However, the Koli were never entirely opposed to moving. Indeed, they argued that they were ready to vacate their homes if some means were devised by which they may be kept together in New Koliwada, after the improvements are completed and space allotted for building purposes or failing this if their houses be razed to the ground and the delinquents be exiled to some remote part of the island'. GOB, General, vol. 29, Compilation no. 184, Part I, 1903, MSA.

The Chairman of the Trust initially assured the Koli that they would not be provided with alternative sites close to their original neighbourhood and would receive adequate compensation for their property. A couple of years later, however, Trust officials claimed that the Koli 'appear to have no claim to any special consideration in the matter of the rates at which new building plots should be leased to them'. Indeed, it was argued that since Mandvi-Koliwada had been completely absorbed into the city and was no longer close to the sea, the 'Koli should move entirely away from this locality to one more suited to their calling'. Moreover, the trustees came to the conclusion that 'the picture of the city that would be a mistake for us to encourage them to remain where they are by giving them any peculiar facilities for building sites, and the most we need to do is to endeavour to provide temporary accommodation for them when they are displaced pending their establishing themselves somewhere else'.

Ties of community and neighbourhood were also invoked when the Trust attempted to acquire places of religious worship. In June 1905, the Bhandaris, Agnis and Koli residing in the neighbourhood of Lobar Chawl were said to be 'much exercised' by the Trust's decision to acquire land on which three of their religious shrines were located. They registered their protest against the Trust's proposal with the Government of Bombay in a petition in which they claimed that their shrines were over sixty years old and were part of their locality's history. They also argued that the Trust had avoided acquiring Muslim shrines in its other schemes and protested that the Trust was singling out their Hindu shrines for acquisition and demolition. Two years later the Trust's proposed decision to demolish the Mahadev Temple near Null Bazaar was said to have 'become a burning topic of discussion among the Hindu residents of the locality'. The Trust defused the situation by promising to provide an alternative site for the temple free of cost and to defray the expenses involved in building a new temple. However, even after these assurances were given to the neighbourhood residents by the Commissioner of Police (acting on the Trust's behalf), it was noted that 'excitement among the latter has not subsided'.


36 Bombay Samachar, 15 July 1905, in RNNPB, 28, 1905.

37 Kesaria, 19 June 1905, in RNNPB, 23, 1905. The Trust responded by agreeing to drop the proposal to acquire one of the temples, but refused to entertain the plea to leave the remaining two temples untouched. One of these temples was the private property of one Tubalda Ramdas with whom the Trust reached an agreement to pay a liberal compensation for the land. Despite the sale Ramdas prevailed over the transfer, perhaps due to pressures from the local community. Finally, the Trust deployed the services of some of its employees and the police and had the temple demolished. The demolition was carried out at night, 'to prevent possible disturbance'. Samachar, 8 August 1905, in RNNPB, 32, 1905. Local newspapers reported that the demolition had 'produced disturbances at which much time was spent in appeasing what steps should be taken in connection with the worship services'. Bombay Samachar, 8 August 1905, in RNNPB, 32, 1905. Fortunately for the Trust, the matter died a quiet death.

38 Akbar-Us-Soudagar, 8 February 1907, in RNNPB, 6, 1907.
Opposition to the Trust's acquisition of property also transcended the bounds of community. Indeed, the notification of the Trust's schemes triggered the formation of a number of ratepayers' associations whose leadership and composition cut across community lines. For instance, a public meeting of the Bombay Ratepayers' Association was held on 5 May 1903, which was chaired by Gokaldas Parekh (a Gujarati Hindu) and organized by Joseph Baptista (a Goan Christian), Ardesir Dadarshir Mody (a Parsi), and Jametram Nanabhai (a Gujarati Hindu).  

In the petitions and memorials submitted to the Government of Bombay, the ratepayers' associations opposed the Trust's schemes on a number of grounds. A recurrent complaint was that the Trust's acquisition of land contravened long-standing agreements that had guaranteed their property rights in perpetuity. The property-owners of Dadar, Matunga and Sion argued, for instance, that in sanctioning the Trust's schemes, the government was reneging on the promises given, and covenants entered into with them, by the British Rulers and their predecessors the Portuguese, Portuguese, Sutuds and other native Rulers of the Island when they were first invited to domicile themselves in this Island. They also argued that the government 'for centuries past' was only entitled to the rents of lands held under different tenures and ought not to acquire them for 'such speculative purposes as those of the Trust the lands now sought to be acquired wholesale by the Trust schemes'. Furthermore, the ratepayers pointed to the hardship that awaited them in the event of the loss of their lands. They noted that the Trust's schemes in Dadar, Matunga, and Sion would prove 'ruinous to the permanent residents, owners and ratepayers of those districts' and deprive property owners 'of their ancient possessions, houses and occupations, and send them into exile by thousands without any means of shelter or maintenance, and also without any prospect of obtaining other lands or occupations'.

In the C Ward, which lay in the heart of the Indian Town, property owners argued that they would be unable to find suitable alternative accommodation and would be forced to crowd into 'existing houses, or to seek new accommodation in places very distant from business centres, which will be a great hardship to them'. They also emphasized that land values in the areas where they had resided would 'rise considerably', and hence in the event of being deprived of their properties they would 'not be in a condition to build new houses for themselves elsewhere'.

Ratepayers also questioned the Trust's approach to urban development. For instance, the Bombay Ratepayers' Association noted in 1903 that the Trust had failed to tackle the sanitary problems highlighted by the outbreak of the plague epidemic. They also criticized its apathy in dealing with the problem of poor housing and overcrowding in the city's congested districts, and for not according the highest priority to the question of re-housing the working classes displaced by its schemes. Furthermore, the ratepayers contended that the Trust's propensity to undertake costly schemes, which called for large amounts of borrowed capital, was placing an unbearable burden on the city's finances. Thus, the ratepayers of the F and G wards noted in their memorial that the Trust's scheme 'as proposed, programmed and formulated' were 'based on wrong calculations and likely to result in failures that would leave the citizens of Bombay, as heretofore, the incalculable burdens of loans contracted with annually accruing amounts of interest'. In turn, it was argued, the consequent deterioration in the Corporation's financial condition would result in the ratepayers being 'crushed under the burden of taxes'.

The Bombay Ratepayers' Association also called for greater representation for the Bombay Municipal Corporation on the Trust Board. It pointed out that the Corporation was the biggest contributor to the Trust's coffers and that they were also responsible for its debts. Hence 'representation ought to be commensurate with the burden imposed' on the corporation. Moreover, the association argued, it was only through greater representation for the Municipal Corporation that the ratepayers could 'control the financial operations of the Board, reject extravagant and wild projects and secure the maximum benefit at the minimum cost'.

There are two further points of interest regarding the memorials and petitions submitted by the ratepayers' associations. First, they challenged the Trust's interpretation of the legal provisions of the 1898 Act that pertained to the acquisition of properties. For instance, the Trust was criticized for willfully misinterpreting provisions of the 1898 Act concerning the acquisition of lands that were 'necessary for or affected' by the execution of an improvement or street scheme. It was argued that, contrary to the Trust's practice, the 1898 Act clearly stipulated that 'only land required on sanitary grounds for improvement schemes or absolutely necessary for street schemes should be compulsorily acquired'.

Second, the ratepayers' associations complained about the lack of 'public accountability and transparency that characterized the Trust's functioning. In particular, they criticized the 'undue reticence of the Board' in parting with information pertaining to its acquisition procedures and argued that this made it difficult for the corporation to make an informed decision about its proposals. For instance, drawing attention to the Municipal Corporation's complaint that the information furnished by the Trust was not sufficient to arrive at a proper judgement about some of its schemes, the ratepayers argued that 'the fullest details of a complete scheme should be placed before the Corporation', including 'confidential data concerning the valuation of properties'.
Proprietary elites also deployed their clout within the chambers of the Municipal Corporation and were largely responsible for the consistently antagonistic stance that body took towards the Improvement Trust from the very outset. The Indian members of the Municipal Corporation relentlessly pilloried the Trust on grounds ranging from the neglect of the growing sanitary problems in the congested poorer sections of the city to the 'wasteful' expenditure entailed by its schemes. A representation from the corporation to the Bombay Government in 1901 also excoriated the Trust for neglecting to undertake a comprehensive sanitary survey prior to the commencement of its operations. As a consequence, it was argued, the Board's schemes left 'untouched large insanitary areas more or less contiguous to the proposed improvements'.

Moreover, on no less than three occasions (in 1906–1907, 1912 and 1916–17), motions were moved seeking the abolition of the Trust and the takeover of its powers by the corporation. In part, such animosity to the Trust was not entirely unrelated to the fact that 33 members of the Municipal Corporation were reputed 'to own chaws to the value of fifty-five lakhs of rupees', some of which were affected by the Trust's street schemes. Indeed, defenders of the Trust were quick to seize on this fact and frequently pointed to the complicity between 'the proprietors of slum property' and the ratepayers of the Municipal Corporation who were the 'most jealous guardians of their privileges'. Some, like J.P. Ori, chairman of the Bombay Improvement Trust, loftily remarked that it was precisely because it comprised 'a large leaven of Englishmen who have no vested interests in property in the City' that the Trust was better placed than the corporation in directing Bombay's civic reconstruction.

It should not be assumed that it was only the class interests of the proprietors that lay behind the corporation's vocal opposition to the Trust. Some of the most acrid criticism of the Trust's schemes emanated from the corporation's English-educated Indian elites, many of whom had opposed the creation of a separate agency to carry out civic reconstruction. Their antipathy to the Trust was a reflection of the growing tensions between the city's colonial rulers and educated Indians in the aftermath of the plague epidemic, as the former sought to assert their control over local self-government through recourse to executive fiat. Over time, the educated classes became increasingly querulous about the functioning of the Trust's bureaucracy. Had I the leisure, D.E. Wacha declared in 1915, 'I could write a thick volume on the scores of failures in the administration of the Improvement Trust, the autocracy of its successive Chairmen and notably that of its present incumbent.'

As it set out to reorder the city, the Bombay Improvement Trust found itself ensnared by the very bureaucratic mechanisms and legal instruments that it sought to deploy in mastering urban space. In particular, the actual process of acquiring properties for notified schemes was the source of considerable difficulties for the Trust. Indeed, in its early years the Trust largely confined itself to developing the government and municipal lands vested in it since its progress in 'acquiring other estates proved very slow' on account of 'legal difficulties'.

Under the City Improvement Trust Act of 1898, the Board had been empowered to take possession of land for the Trust's schemes either by agreement or by compulsory acquisition. However, it was noted from the very outset that 'in every detail connected with the acquisition of properties, wearisome, unavoidable and unexpected delay is caused'. One difficulty in the acquisition process in the early years was in procuring the establishment necessary for making reliable valuations and establishing their figures in the face of extravagant demands made by the owners with the assistance of experts. For instance, 'experience shows that in the initial stages of such work, nearly every case will be contested and the best available legal talent will be employed on behalf of the owners'.

The small size of many of the properties that needed to be acquired was another hindrance; thus, 'in a great majority of cases the properties stood on about 100 square yards of land and there was as much trouble and delay caused by taking up each such property as in the acquisition of very much larger and more valuable property'.

The Trust also faced insurmountable difficulties in property valuation given 'the lack of any reliable function of value, such as is ordinarily obtained from the Municipal Assessment'. Hence, in the absence of any established precedent for the valuation of property,

for precisely similar properties one owner claimed on his rental, another on the assessed value of the site and structure, another on what he had

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The intelligentsia was directed largely at Trust officials, who were perceived to be catering to the needs of the city's European commercial elite. At the same time, the educated classes repeatedly challenged the marginalization of the Municipal Corporation, both in terms of its limited representation on the board of trustees, and its lack of influence over the Trust's policies. It was for this reason that members of the Indian intelligentsia called for radical changes to the Trust's constitution.

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11 Ibid.
14 Proposed Transfer of Control of the City of Bombay Improvement Trust, p. 16.
15 Second Report of the Committee of the Corporation Regarding the Improvement Trust's Parcel Road Street Schemes, Bombay Corporation Debate of July 1915 on Improvement Trust's
paid for the property, and so on, namely, each on the basis thought likely to give the largest award.\textsuperscript{14}

The actual work of acquisition commenced with a notice being served to the owner of the property to appear at the Collector's Court with his or her title-deeds and other documents. Property owners showed a great deal of ingenuity in stalling the Trust's efforts, often using every available tactic to resist appearing before the court until they had surveyed all possible options. For instance:

On the expiry of the notice it was not unusual for a representative of the owner to appear and state that the owner had left for his up-country residence owing to the prevalence of plague and so as to avoid a postpone of several months until the owner could appear. When the owner did eventually appear it was often without documents to establish his claim to the property and further adjournments had to be granted, first for the production of title-deeds, then for the possibility of the establishment of shares' and mortgagees' claims, and lastly for time to allow his surveyor to prepare and submit a valuation of the property.

Once the case began, lawyers representing the property owners repeatedly challenged the Trust's decisions. Thus, 'every detail in the valuation prepared by the Trustee's Office was contested, and evidence was produced to show results favourable to the owners'. Inevitably, 'delay and constant postponements were the rule rather than the exception'.\textsuperscript{15}

The Trust's compensation policies also generated a great deal of friction in its dealings with local property owners whose lands it sought to acquire and thereby create new conundrums for its bureaucracy. Initially, the Trust sought to value acquired property on a 'net rental' basis. This consisted of ascertaining the net rental of the acquired land (and any building that stood on it), multiplying it by a certain number of years, and giving the owners the total sum thus derived. The number of years was dependent on the nature of the property and the rate of interest it was expected to yield.\textsuperscript{20} Many landlords staunchly opposed this method of valuation since they had under-assessed their rents in order to pay lower rates on their properties. As a consequence it was reported that 'these house-owners whose properties are included in the important schemes and are to be paid for their buildings on an estimate of the average of rentals for a certain number of years ... are having a desperate fight with the authorities'.\textsuperscript{21} The insistence of the Trust in pursuing the net rental

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 14-15.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Proceedings of the Board of Trustees for the Improvement of the City of Bombay (hereafter BIT Proceedings), 20 April 1909, GOB, General, vol. 25, Compilation no. 833, 1909, MSA.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Rast Gokar. 1 February 1899, 7, 1899. Instead, their surveyors favoured a method known as 'valuation on land and buildings' which involved ascertaining the cost price of the building, and after allowing for depreciation, adding it to the estimated value of the land. The combined sum so derived was claimed as the value of land and building. BIT Proceedings, 26 January 1899, GOB, General, vol. 25, Compilation no. 833, 1909, p. 114, MSA.
\end{itemize}

method of valuation also caused many landlords to raise rents arbitrarily in order to take advantage of the increase in valuation that would flow from such rent increases. As one witness later recalled, 'Owners of properties whose rents were very low having actually suffered heavy losses, owners of properties all round whose rents were cheap took the hint and raised the rents so that in case of acquisition of their properties they might get value nearly actual'.\textsuperscript{22}

At the same time, some of the surveyors employed by house owners soon began to argue that it was unfair to value their property on the basis of the net rental method since their plots, although situated in the heart of the city, were occupied only by 'cucha' (rough and ready) one-storied buildings which attracted meagre rents. Instead, they proposed that such buildings should be valued on the basis of the rents they were capable of producing if fully developed. The Tribunal of Appeal admitted their claims, and this method, known as 'valuation by a hypothetical building scheme', was accepted in its entirety with rather disastrous consequences for the Trust. Once the advantages inherent in this method of valuation became apparent, surveyors operating on behalf of claimants came forward, 'bringing in paper schemes for the erection of magnificent buildings upon sites which were already often fully developed according to the requirements of the neighbourhood and claiming an altogether fictitious value for the land on this basis'. Moreover, it was soon recognized that under this method claimants were getting 'not the market value of their property at the date of declaration (to which alone they were entitled under the Act)', but rather 'the profit of a future development that might or might not be realized'.\textsuperscript{23}

As the Tribunal began to recognize the loopholes in this method of valuation the hypothetical building scheme began to be looked upon with disfavour. However, the method that was next adopted was very similar to it. This new method came to be known as 'plotting schemes', and had originally been developed in dealing with large pieces of vacant land in the suburbs. Basically, the scheme involved 'laying out a piece of land of this nature (of course upon paper only) in building sites, providing for roads and passages and ascertaining what each plot would fetch if sold for building purposes by comparison with other sales of more or less similar plots of land in the neighbourhood'. Once again the surveyors and lawyers working on behalf of claimants successfully argued that their clients were entitled to the aggregate of the plot values so realized, less only the cost of developing the land. By 1909, it was noted that,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} RBDC, p. 108.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} BIT Proceedings, 20 April 1909, GOB, General, vol. 25, Compilation no. 833, 1909, MSA, p. 114.
\end{itemize}
referred to are of the greatest moment, and are leading to the payment of very large sums of public money to which the Trust believe that the claimants have no right at all.\textsuperscript{64} There is one further aspect of the Trust's land acquisition policies that is worth noting. As the process of acquisition gradually gained momentum and a great deal of valuable property came into the Trust's possession,\textsuperscript{65} the value of real estate in the city began rapidly to rise and encouraged growing speculation in land. Between October 1904 and October 1907, for instance, there was said to have been 'a great boom in land values' at the height of which 'prices were equal to those obtained during the share mania'.\textsuperscript{66} It is also highly likely that the Trust's compensation policies with regard to acquired land resulted in a rise in speculative land transactions.

In turn, escalating land values intensified competition for urban space and led renewed urgency to efforts by Bombay's ruling elites to prepare a blueprint for the city's future development. In 1907 the Government of Bombay canvassed the opinions of various segments of the city's property classes on this question. A striking feature of this initiative was the government's stated belief that the dwellings of the poor ought to be restricted to specific enclaves to the east of the city and prevented from spilling over into more 'attractive' residential areas. Thus, it argued that 'an attempt should be made to divide the Island into natural areas for the accommodation of the upper, the middle and the lower classes with special reference to occupation'. Moreover, while it was 'not intended to suggest that these three classes should be settled entirely in different compartments ... it is essential that they should, as far as possible, be localized; otherwise the interests of one class will suffer by the intrusion, into areas suitable for them, of residents of another'.\textsuperscript{67}

This view was endorsed by the city's mercantile elites in a subsequent foray into the question on the eve of the First World War. Business magnates who gave evidence to the Bombay Development Committee in 1914 were of the opinion that the working classes should be located close to their places of work in the eastern and northern parts of the island, which in turn would release land in the central districts for office accommodation and upper-class housing. In its report the committee noted that, while it was advantageous to have large industries 'situated away from the residential area of a large town' as this 'automatically removes from the densely populated area a proportion of the population', it was nonetheless imperative to reserve the 'attractive

western frontage' for residential purposes and to 'avoid the location, along the western belt, of industries or trades of an offensive or defacing character'.\textsuperscript{68}

The 'labours of Sisyphus'

While its policies of land acquisition confronted the Trust with legal and bureaucratic dilemmas that it was unable easily to resolve, its policies of 'slum clearance' and 'sanitary improvement' exacerbated the very problems that the Trust had been set up to redress. During the first decade of its existence, for instance, the Trust set about clearing immediately the sites that it had acquired for its improvement and street schemes, 'so that they might be available for permanent leasing unencumbered by temporary occupation'.\textsuperscript{69} This policy was dictated by the Trust's need to secure as quickly as possible a permanent stream of revenue that would offset the large amounts of capital expenditure on the development of acquired lands.

From the very outset the Trust razed dwellings on acquired sites without providing alternative accommodation for those residing in these tenements at the time of their demolition.\textsuperscript{70} A number of contemporary observers drew attention to the haste with which acquired properties were demolished and their residents summarily evicted. For instance, the city's Health Officer noted in 1904 that, 'practically every day houses are being acquired by the Improvement Trust and occupants are being turned out'. He went on to elaborate further:

These persons can find no proper accommodation for themselves or their families. The majority of these persons have to find accommodation in rooms already occupied by other families. The demand for accommodation is so great that the rents of rooms have been raised 4 or 5 times what they were 6 months ago, thereby forcing families occupying single rooms to take in other families as lodgers. Evicted persons who cannot find accommodation in this way have been compelled to occupy U.I.H. houses, and some have been removed and others have been forced to pay up to Rs. 5 rent per month for a shelter of 4 bare walls and no roof. Poor families unable to obtain accommodation anywhere near their work pay a few paise daily for the use of a cooking-place in some room and sleep where they can.\textsuperscript{71}

Indian critics of the Trust were also quick to condemn its methods. Commenting on the first bout of 'slum clearance operations that commenced in 1899, an Indian newspaper reported that while 'several houses' were pulled down daily, the decent accommodation was 'being provided for the unfortunate people
who have much to suffer from cold for want of good and dry houses to live in." Likewise, the Bombay Ratepayers' Association alleged that 'at least 8,000 persons' had been displaced by its first Nagpada scheme alone and pointed out that little had been done to provide suitable alternative accommodation to mitigate the hardship of those who had been evicted from their homes. Similar concerns were also expressed within the Municipal Corporation.72

The sanitary measures simultaneously carried out by the Municipal Corporation exacerbated the problem of dishousing in the congested parts of the Indian town. In the wake of the plague epidemic, Bombay's Municipal Commissioner actively deployed the powers vested in him under the Epidemic Diseases Act to force a number of house-owners to create 'chowks' (interior open spaces) for the admission of light and air into houses that were deemed to be insanitary. But this entailed a reduction in the number of rooms in the overcrowded buildings that were targeted and resulted in further dishousing. In turn, the displacement that this caused compounded the problems of the Trust.

In particular, it was noted that 'improvement of a set of insanitary houses in a slum not infrequently led to the intensification of slum conditions, because, though many houses had chowks cut in them, many also had storeys added, so that more people were brought on to a given area, and at the same time the cost of acquiring the houses was increased'. It also became increasingly evident that the large-scale displacement caused by these policies far from causing the dispersal of the population from the densely built up sections led to the 'overcrowding of the houses in the very slums the Municipal Commissioner was seeking to improve and just outside the areas the Trust were clearing of slums'.74

Families and individuals displaced by the Trust's operations resolutely clung on to the neighbourhoods from which they were evicted. Some utilized their social connections to find alternative housing close to the neighbourhoods where they had previously resided. This was not surprising, since the poor who were displaced by the Trust's operations needed to remain in close proximity to the docks, warehouses, markets and shops where they were mostly employed. Trust officials soon came to acknowledge that 'the portion of the population which is dependent upon casual employment in the markets, in the docks and in the warehouses will, in no circumstances migrate out of the heart of the city', and that it was therefore not possible to 'get the population to move from the present thickly-congested areas to the large areas lying vacant and available for carrying a large and healthy population'. At the same time, it was noted, those who worked in the mill districts to the north of the island objected to moving closer to their workplace because they state that they like living in the immediate neighbourhood of their caste-fellows or members of the villages from which they came and that in such aggregations they feel a sense of security in the event of riots or other disturbances, that in case of illness they have friends to look after them, they like being near large bazaars, and they can live in cheap, though insanitary, quarters in the heart of the city.76

The large-scale demolition carried out by the Trust thus worsened the problem of overcrowding in the neighbourhoods that lay in the immediate vicinity of its schemes. Furthermore, the reduction in the area available for building sites led to an enhancement in the value of property and the rents of houses in these neighbourhoods. 'It is common knowledge', the Bombay Municipal Corporation remarked in a representation to the provincial government, 'the Board cannot compete with the private owner for they acquire property, demolish houses, prepare sites and dedicate one-third to roads and passages. The price of the remaining land must therefore be high'.77 Simultaneously, house-owners whose properties were left intact began quickly to raise rents, 'until a small room, less than ten feet square, could command six rupees a month'. As a result, it was said, the value of land was 'immediately affected' and a keen competition arose, which served 'to fix the enhanced value'.78

Over time, the rise in land values and rents and the heightened competition for land rendered the poor vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the housing market. As some critics pointed out:

The displaced population cannot return to the parts which fall under the Board's Schemes for the minimum rents of the new houses are at least quadrupled which is the beyond the means of most of the dishoused residents. They are naturally driven to find rooms in insanitary quarters. Thus exchange is bad and what is worse is that they have to pay higher rents ... These high rents compel them to share rooms with others.79

The Trust's leasing policies served to accentuate further the problems of overcrowding, rising land values and high rentals in the Indian town. The policy of immediately demolishing acquired properties in order to lease them out had been predicated on the belief that 'the sites would be taken up quickly to meet the demand for accommodation created by rapid demolition'. In the earlier years of the Trust, J.P. Orr admitted in a public lecture delivered in

72 Marathi Mirror, 28 January 1899, in RNNBP, 5, 1899.
73 However, the chairman of the Trust responded to such criticism by stating that he had 'not heard of any of them [those displaced by the first Nagpada scheme experiencing any difficulty] in finding alternative housing', BCoS, 31 May 1902. On a subsequent occasion, the response to the Trust's critics was even more brisk. 'We cannot reconstruct till we have demolished', he declared, 'and in the interval the displaced must be put to a certain amount of inconvenience'. Bt Proceedings, 22 April 1904, 'Note by Chairman', GOB, Judicial, vol. 37, Compilation no. 129, 1904, Appendix, p. 147, MSA.
74 Orr, Social Reform and Slum Reform, p. 23.
75 Bt Proceedings, 22 April 1904, 'Note by the Chairman', GOB, Judicial, vol. 37, Compilation no. 129, 1904, Appendix, para. 7, MSA.
77 IJ, XXIV/279 (1913): 74. See also Hazardsongh, 'Colonial modernism'.
78 Selections from the Bombay Municipal Corporation Proceedings and Debate on the Improvement Trust's Sandhurst Road to Crawford Market Street Scheme, p. 19.
1917, 'too much stress was perhaps laid on the Trust's functions as a slum destroying agency with possibly too optimistic an estimate of the people's readiness to take up land in the Trust's new estates and to build sanitary houses there for the accommodation of people dishoused by the Trust's operations.' But this reluctance was not surprising, given that the Trust had put in place a set of stringent sanitary regulations that instantly rendered its building sites unattractive to prospective lessees. According to Orr, the Trust's building regulations were from the outset 'very much more strict than those of the Municipality, especially in regard to soundness of materials used and the lighting and ventilation of every room and passage in a house'. As a consequence, he contended,

Unaccustomed to such strict building regulations and to such close supervision and sanitary control as the Trust's staff exercise both before and after the completion of the buildings, and preferring freedom to leasehold tenure, builders and investors ... bought any of the Trust's plots and preferred to invest money received from the Trust in compensation for their old properties in building on sites just outside the Trust's estate, especially where they could take advantage of new open spaces created by the Trust for purposes of ventilation, and too often, in consequence of the weakness of the Municipal building by-laws, such investments have resulted in the formation of what will ultimately be recognized as modern slums.\[96\]

Living conditions in the overcrowded tenements in the central districts of the city continued to deteriorate in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1903, the Municipal Commissioner wrote to the Improvement Trust stating that there were many insanitary areas in the city that required immediate attention. He also pointed out that it was the Trust's duty to remedy this state of affairs since it had been established 'as the best agency which could be devised for dealing with the improvement of the City in a comprehensive and reasonably rapid and economical manner'. Very little was done in the matter, however, and a decade later, the Health Officer was able to write that 'the subject has been much discussed but nothing done'. As a result, he noted, 'today the condition of the majority of these areas is as bad as or worse than in 1903'.\[92\]

By the end of the first decade of its operations, Trust officials were forced to rethink their strategy of launching a 'direct attack' on slums. The 'wholesale demolition method', it was argued, was 'too costly to be applied to more than a few small areas here and there'.\[93\] Furthermore, Trust officials contended that the 'complete sanitary regeneration of such areas in Bombay' was 'of no avail so long as insanitary conditions prevail and go from bad to worse in the largely congested areas surrounding them'.\[94\]

The Trust attributed the failure of its existing methods to the laxity of the existing municipal building bye-laws, 'especially in respect of the lighting and ventilation of one room tenements'.\[95\] Defects in the municipal bye-laws pertaining to building regulations were said to have had an impact on the Trust's policies in two ways. First, it was suggested, 'they made the Trust more reluctant than they might otherwise have been to trust to private enterprise for the re-housing of people to be dispossessed in execution of their schemes'. Second, the lack of adequate bye-laws was also held responsible for the 'spread of congestion' outside the Trust's estates. It was argued that unlike the Calcutta Trust, whose operations were complemented by newly amended building bye-laws that had been incorporated into the city's municipal act, 'in Bombay the balance of work to be done by the Improvement Trust is always increasing, because the increase of congestion is not held in check outside their estates'. As a consequence, the complaint went,

Things are always going from bad to worse in the congested areas, and all the Trust's efforts to improve their conditions there must be as the labours of Sisyphus; for the force of circumstances drives them into a vicious circle beginning with slums and ending with more slums. They may buy up a slum and remove the insanitary conditions they find there by applying their own standards of lighting and ventilation to new buildings ... but these operations only encourage extension of buildings in the neighbourhood, which thereby becomes more congested than ever. So the Trust clear up one slum only to see another spring up close by, and that other will have to be tackled by future generations at enormous expense to the public purse.\[96\]

Increasingly convinced of the futility of its direct methods of slum improvement, the Improvement Trust began to adopt from 1910 onwards what came to be known as the 'nursing policy'. This was essentially a way of rendering 'the process of dishousing and demolition as slow as possible'.\[97\] To this end, a building that was acquired as part of a notified scheme was inspected first in order to decide whether it should be demolished wholly or partially to admit of improvement in the lighting and ventilation of neighbouring properties.

\[92\] Orr, Social Reform and Slum Reform, p. 23.
\[93\] Orr, Finances, p. 6.
\[94\] W.L. Harvey, Municipal Commissioner, Bombay, to the Chairman, City Improvement Trust, 27 August 1903, AARBIT, 1912–13, Appendix C, p. 124.
\[95\] Annual Report of the Executive Health Officer, ARMCH, 1914–1915, II, p. 65. The Trust claimed that it did not have adequate funds to take up the areas included in the Commissioner's representations. Trust authorities argued that the required improvements would amount to ten million rupees, a sum that they declared was beyond their means. See Annual Report of the Executive Health Officer, ARMCH, 1918–1919, p. 65. Significantly, Section 23 of the CIT Act, under which the Trust had to compulsorily undertake the improvement of insanitary areas 'represented' by the Municipal Corporation, was amended in 1913 in order to free the Trust of this encumbrance. Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor of Bombay (hereafter Legislative Council Proceedings), 1912, 1 (Bombay, 1913), pp. 643–707.
\[96\] AARBIT, 1911–12, p. 33.
\[97\] Ibid.
\[98\] AARBIT, 1912–13, pp. 34–5.
\[99\] Orr, Social Reform and Slum Reform, pp. 10–21.
whether the Trust's or any other owner's'. In some instances, it was noted, 'a big building is demolished and a part of the site is let out for a temporary ground floor structure, the remainder being kept open for lighting and ventilating purposes'. Selective demolition of this kind was said to result in 'the admission of ample light and air into rooms which were previously unfit for human habitation'.

However, contrary to its earlier practice, the Trust did not summarily evict those who already resided in the acquired properties that were marked out for eventual destruction. Thus, existing tenants in these buildings were 'kept on at their old rents until the house has to be demolished to make way for new houses built under Trust rules'. At the same time, all 'bad rooms' deemed irredeemable according to the Trust's sanitary standards, were 'nailied up, or let for storage purposes and not for human habitation, the original tenants being first provided with sanitary rooms either in other acquired houses or in the Trust's chawls'. In the event of rooms being unavailable for this purpose, the Trust constructed 'semi-permanent sheds of corrugated iron for the displaced tenants'.

The Trust's policy of offering alternative accommodation in its acquired buildings to displaced tenants yielded mixed results. As Orr acknowledged, 'The accommodation offered by the Trust to displaced tenants is not always accepted'. In 1916 for instance, of the 1,049 tenements demolished by the Trust, about half of the dispossessed refused the Trust's offers of accommodation, 'preferring to take rooms in houses which were not liable to be demolished in the next few years as the Trust-acquired houses are'. Two years later it was reported that a large number of those displaced by the Trust's operations were still moving to buildings outside the Trust estates, 'fearing that if they accepted rooms in the houses acquired by the Trust, they would soon have to make a second move when these houses were demolished'.

On the other hand, the 'nursing policy' turned out to be an immediate financial success. For instance, the Trust's triennial forecast for 1912–13 showed an 'improvement of 21.3 lakhs' over the figures forecast three years earlier, an outcome that its officials mainly attributed to the 'nursing policy' adopted in 1910. In other words, by 'keeping old tenants and properties on acquired estates as long as possible' and making the transition from temporary to permanent tenancies 'gradual and continuous', the Trust was able to avoid 'the long no-revenue intervals which result from sudden and drastic dishousing and demolition'.

The nursing policy adopted by the Trust was part of a larger shift in its strategy from 'direct' to 'indirect' methods of 'slum improvement'. While the direct method of tackling insanitary areas had entailed the wholesale acquisition and demolition of 'slum properties', the indirect method focused on 'attracting people away from slums by opening up suburbs and improving communications'. Trust officials increasingly argued that the construction of broad north-south thoroughfares would encourage the migration of the middle classes from the congested inner districts of the Indian town to the outlying suburbs. In turn, it was contended, the reduction of congestion in the central parts of the city would serve to bring down rentals and land values and allow for more direct methods of 'slum improvement' in the future.

Of course, the idea of constructing broad north-south avenues was not entirely new; from the outset, it had been implicit in the Trust's development of estates in the northern districts of the island. But it was only towards the end of the first decade of its existence that the broad lineaments of the Trust's policies in this regard were formulated quite explicitly. Responding to the Government of Bombay's letter of December 1907, soliciting its views on the future expansion of the city, the Trust had noted that 'the full value of the projected Suburbs in the north of the Island cannot be realized without increased facilities for direct and rapid communication with the business quarters'. The Trust argued that in the long term Bombay needed 'three wide north-south thoroughfares' that would connect the city's business districts to the outermost northern suburban areas. The first of these was 'an eastern artery to meet the requirements of the Port, following the Frere and Reay Roads and their extension to Sewri'. The second was a 'central artery' that would connect the Port with Sion via the Crawford Marker. Finally, an avenue was required on the western side of the island, 'giving clear access to the Bandra Causeway through the Mahim Woods'. But the immediate needs of the city would be met, they suggested, by 'a satisfactory connection between the Frere and Reay Roads', the widening of the central artery, and by the construction of the portion of the western artery from Bandra causeway to the southern limit of the Board's East Agripada Improvement Scheme at Sankli Street.

From 1910 onwards, the Trust's resources were largely devoted to the construction or widening of north-south avenues. However, the Trust's changing priorities led it to clash repeatedly with the Indian property classes.

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88 Orr, Social Reform and Slum Reform, p. 25. The Trust's annual report for 1910 explained that 'Often in large batches of insanitary houses the demolition of a few here and there so greatly improves the remainder by admission of light and air as to make their retention for a few years longer sanitorily defensible'. AARBIT, 1910–11, Appendix M (1).

89 Ibid.

90 The chairman pointed out in a note in 1930, the Trust had 'from the very first included in their schemes the formation of a large Estate in the north of the Island' and projects for the construction of north-south roads had been prepared at various times. AARBIT, 1930–31, Appendix M (1).

91 Ibid.

92 The industrialist Jibsham Rahimtoola, a member of the Trust Board, in his testimony to the Bombay Development Committee in 1914 commented: 'During recent years practically the whole of the attention of the Improvement Trust has been directed to the making of roads and the improvement of communications.' He also pointed out that 'less of about 394 acres spent by the
whose interests were affected by the construction of these thoroughfares. At the root of this conflict lay the Trust's ambitious plan to construct what came to be known popularly as the 'Eastern Avenue', a broad thoroughfare that was to connect the emergent northern suburbs of the island to Hornby Road in the Port, via Lal Bagh (in Parel) and Crawford Market.

The idea of an Eastern Avenue had been first mooted by Trust officials in the mid-1900s and by the end of the decade it was reported that not only had lines for the project 'been laid down on maps', but that land for the scheme had 'actually been acquired for a length of some five miles from the north of the Island down to Lal Bagh'. However, the southern section of the proposed avenue, a five-mile stretch from Lal Bagh to Crawford Market, posed all sorts of conundrums for the Trust. Preparations in relation to this part of the scheme were said to have been 'deferred from time to time, mainly on account of practical difficulties in connection with demolition of buildings (particularly mosques and temples) and the enormous outlay and ultimate loss involved'.

The Trust faced its most serious difficulties in the southernmost section of the Avenue where the densely congested zone between Narraw Road and Sandhurst Road has to be traversed'. The Trust had proposed initially to construct two north-south thoroughfares at this zone: an eastern and a western avenue. The Eastern Avenue (which was to link up with Parel Road further to the north) involved widening Abdul Rehman Street, a narrow but busy commercial street that connected the Crawford Market to Sandhurst Road. But even as the Trust contemplated its options and dealt with local opposition, the scheme became unviable on account of the 'constant upward trend of rents' and the constant addition to existing floor space by landlords. Thus, it was admitted in 1910 that, in the light of revised estimates, the ultimate loss on Abdul Rehman Street (part of the Eastern Avenue) had risen from 27½ lakhs to 60 lakhs, while similarly, the cost of acquisition of a part of the East Agrapide Improvement Scheme traversed by a length of about 2,500 feet of the proposed Western Avenue was found to have risen from 19 to 27 lakhs'. Consequently, the Trust abandoned the Western Avenue scheme on account of the 'prohibitive' cost and decided 'to concentrate all available resources on the Eastern Avenue'.

The Trust justified its Eastern Avenue scheme on the ground that Bombay's future welfare depended on the construction of such a thoroughfare. Were such a road not constructed, it was argued, the crowded districts in the centre of the town would function as 'a barrier impenetrable to any but the slowest traffic'. As a consequence, 'the Trust's schemes for development of the north of the Island ... to provide residential areas to which the middle classes now living in the south of the Island may migrate so as to reduce the existing congestion, will be defeated'. At the same time, the Trust stressed that further delays would result in the scheme becoming 'financially impracticable' as new buildings were constantly being erected on the lands that it was keen to acquire for this purpose.

The Trust eventually won this argument. In April 1911, it was awarded a special grant of fifty lakh rupees by the Government of India, principally in order to construct the proposed Eastern Avenue. However, rather than widening Abdul Rehman Street as originally proposed, the Trust chose to construct a new thoroughfare linking the Crawford Market to Sandhurst Road. It was argued that the widening of Abdul Rehman Street would not address adequately the problem of traffic congestion and that the scheme that had originally been contemplated had become far too costly.

Not surprisingly, the Trust's proposal to cut a new road (initially named Sydenham Road; later known as Mohammad Ali Road), running parallel to Abdul Rehman Street through a series of densely clustered neighbourhoods, aroused immense local resistance. In particular, members of the Memoni community were vociferous in their opposition to the scheme, which sought to cut through Memonwada, a neighbourhood where they had clustered together for several generations. Janaat meetings were organized by the aggrieved community, at which the local government was accused of being grossly unfair. Petitions were also organized by local merchants who complained that their 'legitimate business secured after many years' patient and hard labour' would be irretrievably lost and that traders in the area would 'be literally ruined'.

Indian newspapers were equally scathing about the proposed thoroughfare. One newspaper argued that the consequences of the scheme would be the same as that in the case of Princess Street and 'all other big road-schemes'. In other words,

The population will be displaced, rents raised, overcrowding enhanced, improvement of insanitary areas retarded, fresh slums added: magnificent sequel to an expenditure on the road of over a crore of rupees, and twenty years' labour on its operation, to say nothing of disaffection and discontent on the part of the displaced residents!

Indian elites in the Municipal Corporation also launched a blistering attack on the Trust, vociferously criticizing it for the haste with which the proposed scheme had been drawn up and pursued. They argued that the Trust was once again transgressing its powers and failing to perform the tasks for which it had been established. They also suggested that the scheme was 'predicted for' in that there was no public demand for it. On the contrary, they contended, 'an overwhelming majority' of the city's Indian population was 'strenuously opposed to it'. As before, they pointed to the proliferation of congested areas within the central parts of the city, and declared that the Trust's desire for
a 'grand avenue' entailed 'the continued sacrifice of human lives'. Indian ratepayers in the Municipal Corporation also queried the wisdom of the Trust's 'indirect' methods of 'slum improvement', and contended that 'only a very small infinitesimal fraction of the population' would be induced to migrate northwards on account of the construction of broad thoroughfares. Instead, they suggested that the 'only remedy' for the problem of inner-city congestion was the construction of low-cost housing in the suburbs and the provision of adequate and affordable rail services. Building 'cheap houses' in the vacant areas in the north of the island, it was argued, would also bring down rental values in the central districts of the city and allow the Trust to prosecute 'slum improvement' schemes at a more reasonable cost. Finally, the Trust's critics also questioned its estimates of the expenditure entailed by the proposed project and were keen to highlight the adverse financial and fiscal consequences of the scheme for the Municipal Corporation.124

Defenders of the Trust, most notably its valuable chairman, parried these thrusts and justified the proposed scheme in the strongest possible terms. In a speech in the corporation in November 1911, J.P. Orr reiterated the pressing need for a broad north-south thoroughfare and argued that it was necessary to issue a notification as quickly as possible. Failure to do so, he declared, would render the scheme more expensive to undertake and would jeopardise the Trust's attempts to relieve congestion in the heart of the Indian town. Orr also 'protested against the misrepresentation of the new scheme as a scheme for a grand avenue not likely to contribute towards the sanitary improvement of the City'. He argued that 'far from ignoring the necessity of sanitary improvement', the new scheme was in fact 'a part of the larger scheme for the Island, which the Trust have always thought necessary as one of the earlier items in the general programme for the sanitary improvements of the City'. Orr reiterated that the construction of north-south thoroughfares had 'always been regarded by the Trust as a necessary preliminary to the provision of new areas to which the middle-class population of overcrowded areas may migrate, so as to make more room for their poorer brethren, who find it impossible to migrate.' And he insisted that in cutting a swathe through a congested area, the proposed road was 'an improvement scheme throughout its whole length'.125

Even though the Trust won this battle, largely with the backing of the Government of Bombay, its overall strategy of reducing congestion within the central districts of the city by encouraging middle-class migration to the northern suburbs failed to achieve its intended aims. Colonial authorities did not pursue seriously the option of introducing newly available technology such as the electrified railway or 'public interventionist initiatives such as cheap workers' trams which, between them, were widely perceived as the potential answer to the limited availability of land in European inner cities'. Likewise, alternative possibilities of rapid transit such as overhead trackless trolleys and underground railways were also ruled out. As a consequence, in the absence of cheap means of transit to the suburbs, not many middle-class families could afford to move out of the central parts of the city.

Nor was there sufficient funding for the proposed suburban development schemes. The annual grant of forty thousand rupees that the Bombay government helpfully allocated to suburban local authorities from 1913 was far too meagre to bring about any substantial infrastructural transformation in the form of roads, drains, markets, schools and hospitals. As a result, the 'colonial parsimony', suburban 'town planning' only existed on paper. Indeed, even at the end of the 1920s, 'a suburban region about six times the surface of Bombay city only contained one-eighth of its population'.126 More saliently, a vast majority of the city's working classes continued to live and work in the heart of the city, packed together ever more densely in the very localities whose sanitary conditions had prompted the creation of the Bombay Improvement Trust.

While the Trust openly expressed its disenchantedment with direct methods of sanitary improvement that entailed the wholesale acquisition and demolition of properties, it also became clear during the early 1910s that urgent action was needed to redress the increasing congestion in the city's central districts. The census of 1911 had revealed that no less than three quarters of the total population of Bombay resided in one-room tenements, a majority of which were concentrated in the heart of the city. Critics may have been unable to prevent the Trust from pressing ahead with the Eastern Avenue scheme, but their jibes about its dismal record in improving the sanitary condition of the city increasingly appeared to ring true. Even though the Trust continued to enjoy the backing of the Government of Bombay, it nonetheless had to demonstrate that it was still the best agency to tackle the city's civic problems. Moreover, in order to secure further funding from the Government of India, the Trust needed to come up with 'a definite programme for the execution of Improvement Schemes in all the represented areas'.

On the other hand, any new attempt at 'direct slum improvement' had to be much cheaper and less politically contentious than the old wholesale acquisition and demolition method. In a bid to resolve this intractable conundrum, the Trust set about devising a 'general scheme of improvement that could be applied all over the City'. Trust officials 'accordingly devoted much of their time to the study of modern methods of slum improvements', in order to find ways of reducing 'the loss on improvement schemes', the time that they took 'to mature', and the disruption that they caused 'to house owners and their tenants'.127

J.P. Orr, the Trust chairman, presented the outcome of their deliberations in a lecture delivered to the Bombay Sanitary Association in June 1912. In his talk, Orr agreed that a 'cheaper substitute' was needed in place of the 'unjustifiably costly measure of wholesale demolition as remedy for the evils

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124 Corporation Proceedings on Sandhurst Road Street Scheme.
125 Ibid.
resulting from the existence of large numbers of ill-lighted and ill-ventilated one room tenements in Bombay'. He proposed new legislation that would 'veto the occupation of such rooms' and levy 'heavy' fines on occupiers and owners who contravened this rule. In his view, such a procedure was 'the simplest and most direct method' of tackling the problem of insanitary dwellings.

Orr also called for the imposition of 'one standard of light and ventilation all over Bombay'. The uniform standard that he proposed was based on the practice of 'the most important towns in England'. Essentially, this stipulated the provision in 'every living room' of a minimum external air space through which light would strike the floor at an angle of approximately 63½ degrees. House-owners who experienced difficulty in complying with the rule, he suggested, should seek to 'co-operate' with their neighbours in making mutually beneficial structural alterations. Furthermore, he also proposed that in instances in which a co-operative improvement scheme was 'likely to be spoilt by the recalcitrance of a minority, the Improvement Trust should be empowered to acquire obstructive properties at the instance and for the benefit of the majority and at their expense'. In cases where owners were tardy in carrying out the necessary structural alterations, he advocated that the Trust be given 'power to acquire and reconstruct defective houses and ... to acquire and demolish obstructive houses', charging 'a limited betterment rate on the houses benefited by such demolition'.

In order to demonstrate how some of these proposals could be made to work, the Trust applied to the Government of India in 1913 for a special allotment from its new grants-in-aid scheme for urban sanitation. It used the subsequent grant of four lakhs rupees to launch an experimental improvement scheme in Second Nagpada, an area that was very heavily built over and said to be 'thoroughly congested and insanitary'. The Undira Street Scheme, as it came to be called, sought to effect 'slum improvement', but 'without the extensive acquisition and demolition hitherto resorted to'. In carrying out this scheme, the Trust sought to refrain from acquiring houses 'which they find susceptible of being readily brought into a reasonably sanitary condition', but only condition that the owners themselves undertook 'to make the necessary structural alterations and to contribute towards the cost of acquiring and demolishing any buildings or parts of buildings which block out light and air from them'. Where owners were unable or unwilling to do so, the Trust acquired their houses and effected the changes, reselling the improved houses 'instead of reselling vacant land as building sites' as had hitherto been its practice.

The principal structural alteration that the Trust carried out in the Undira Street Scheme was to cut down the backs of all houses, 'so as to create a common rear open space 20 wide'. The height of the houses on either side of this rear space was limited to 40 ft, so that all rear rooms satisfy the 63½ rule. Trust officials subsequently pointed to the Undira Street Scheme as evidence of their commitment to the cause of 'slum improvement'.

Interestingly, this experiment was very similar to the 'backlane improvement' schemes carried out in colonial Singapore a few years earlier. As in Singapore, Trust officials in Bombay harped on the benefits of bringing the 'blessings of light and air' to the ill-ventilated and dingy backstreets of Bombay's congested neighbourhoods. Indeed, the Trust chairman could not resist a bout of self-congratulation in discussing the Undira Street Scheme:

The result as any one will shortly be able to see for himself, is the conversion of a foul gully two or three feet broad reeking with sewage and the overflow of water from latrines and serving also as a general dumping ground for rubbish and refuse of all kinds into a 20 feet tarred open space below which is a pipe sewer connected with W.C.s. in each house so that between the back of houses there is instead of the old 3 feet gully a 20 space which can easily be kept clean admitting plenty of light and air to the back rooms of these houses.

To what extent should one construe the backlane improvement method as 'the latest spatial innovation in the war against disease' and a 'spatial technique' that bears out the Foucauldian insight about 'power through transparency'? While the rhetoric certainly lends some credence to this view, it is nonetheless hard to avoid the conclusion that 'backlane improvement' in Bombay was more of a last ditch effort to prove that the Trust possessed solutions to the problem of 'slum improvement' than it was an attempt to bring about 'subjection through illumination'. Indeed, Trust officials viewed the Undira Street Scheme purely as a one-off experimental measure that was not viable, without substantial modifications, as a long-term solution to the problem of slum improvement. It was argued that, notwithstanding its sanitary benefits, a scheme of this type was financially unfeasible since it still required the compulsory acquisition of whole houses. The Trust contended that in order for any 'direct slum improvement' to be really cost effective, legislation along the lines of the English Housing of the Working Classes Act was required, empowering it to 'acquire parts of houses and levy contributions from the owners of houses towards the cost of the scheme'. Unless this was done, Orr argued, the public finances could 'never stand a strain as this system demands; if it is to be applied to be the whole of the Bombay slums, the area of which is already well over a thousand acres'. In the Undira Street Scheme, it was noted, the cost of acquiring properties was over five lakhs rupees, whereas the actual cost of the works carried out was less than half a lakh rupees. Rather than expending capital on the acquisition of property, Orr declared, the Trust would much rather be free of the responsibility of managing so much house

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100 Orr, Light and Air Dwellings in Bombay: A Lecture Delivered Before the Bombay Sanitary Association on 27 June 1912, in The Proceedings of the Second All-India Sanitary Conference Held at Madras, November 11th to 16th (2 vols, Simla, 1913), II, pp. 19-45.
101 Orr, Social Reform and Slum Reform, p. 29.
102 Yes, Contesting Space, p. 149.
103 Bombay Corporation Debate of July 1913 on Improvement Trust's Park Road Schemes (Bombay, 1915), p. 91.
104 Yes, Contesting Space, p. 149.
property and so be able to devote all their energies to the comparatively small engineering works which constitute the backbone of their improvement schemes.\textsuperscript{113}

At the same time, Orr continued vociferously to advocate the need to enshrine in the municipal bye-laws the principle of 'compulsory rear open spaces between the backs of houses' and to make owners bear the cost of such a 'backlane improvement' to their properties. Yet this was easier to suggest than to implement. As one colonial official remarked, Orr had 'failed to see the wood for the trees' in that he had 'endeavoured to force on the Corporation a standard of construction which it cannot be denied, must result in a material pecuniary loss to the owners of property'. Moreover, the official added, the idea was impractical; while it was possible in some instances to connect the rear open space 'by a continuous street or passage', there were many cases 'where this would be quite impossible and where the leaving of a ten feet rear space would not be of much use either in securing the perfusion of air or the removal of rubbish'.\textsuperscript{114}

Orr's critics in the Municipal Corporation also opposed the attempt to make house-owners pay for the costs of such 'backlane improvement'. In May 1918, a special committee of the Corporation deliberated at length on Orr's proposals and came to the conclusion that if any open spaces were 'required with the object eventually of constructing streets at the rear of the building this should be done as a public improvement at public expense'. The committee also recommended that the power to make such backlanes should be vested in the Municipal Commissioner; and that the creation of rear open spaces should be made 'subject to the same rules as regards street lines and set-backs as the front'. Once again, the strictures of the planner were subverted by the play of politics. As a colonial official who followed the debate remarked, 'I do not see how we can expect landlords at this stage to pass a rule which must entail a considerable pecuniary sacrifice to themselves and the electorate who have returned them'.\textsuperscript{115}

Housing the poor

For all the initial rhetoric about improving the living conditions of the urban poor through the provision of low-cost sanitary accommodation, the Improvement Trust's eventual achievement on this front was relatively meagre. In fact, the repercussions of its policies weaned the housing conditions of the labouring poor of the city. The chairman of the Trust admitted in 1917 that while a few tenements 'for the poorest of those dishoused were provided in the Trust's chawls', they nonetheless 'suffered for only a fraction of the total dishoused, and the new buildings erected on Trust's estates by the Trust's lessees provided for quite a different class and were not created soon enough and on a sufficiently big scale to ensure any approach to an equipoise between dishousing and re-housing, at the rate at which demolition of insanitary properties was carried on in the early years of the Trust's career'.\textsuperscript{116}

Indeed, to some contemporaries it appeared that the only ones to benefit from the Trust's building policies were the city's propertied elites. Commenting upon the Nagpada and Koliwada improvement schemes, the Indu Prakash noted that while the Trust was 'entitled to the credit of having raised an attractive residential quarter for the upper and middle classes in a place which was formerly a breeding ground for all kinds of diseases ... the good done to these classes has entailed misery upon the poor, who have been driven away to nooks and corners or have been crammed up in existing houses, thus increasing overcrowding and disease'.\textsuperscript{117}

At the root of the Trust's failure in fulfilling its objective of providing low-cost sanitary housing lay a basic contradiction. When it was first established, the Trust was vested with the task of constructing sanitary tenements that would minimize the dangers posed to 'public health' by the noxious dwellings inhabited by the poor. In the aftermath of the plague this was seen to be a matter of overriding importance and the prime motive for intervening in the housing market. However, as the initial panic produced by the plague receded, the Trust became reluctant to invest its resources on building housing for the poor in a bid 'to place this part of the Board's work as nearly as possible on a commercial footing'.\textsuperscript{118}

When the Improvement Trust Act had initially been framed it had been declared rather ambitiously that the Trust would provide housing accommodation for the 'poorest and working classes' of the city. Housing was to be provided for 50,000 adults at Rs. 150 each, i.e., at a total cost of 75 lakhs over a ten-year period.\textsuperscript{119} The estimated annual loss on the chawls erected by the Trust was estimated at two per cent, but such was the panic created by the plague that the original promoters of the scheme deemed such a loss more acceptable than the continued threat of epidemic outbreaks.\textsuperscript{120} The first tenement blocks, sanctioned by the Board in 1899, were located at Agerapada and were intended to provide housing for those displaced by the Trust's First Nagpada Scheme.\textsuperscript{121} At the same time it was resolved that the construction of


\textsuperscript{114} 'Minute by Mr. Currie', in Proposed Transfer of Control of the City of Bombay Improvement Trust, pp. 24-5.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{116} Orr, Social Reform and Slum Reform, p. 35. By 1918, the Trust's schemes had displaced 64,000 persons of whom only 15,000 were re-housed. Report of the Indian Industrial Commission, 1916-18 (5 vols., Calcutta, 1918), Evidence, A.B. Mirams, Consulting Surveyor to the Government of India, IV, p. 361.

\textsuperscript{117} Indu Prakash, 26 January 1905, in RNSBP, 4, 1905.

\textsuperscript{118} AARBIT, 1904, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{119} BIT Proceedings, 30 March 1911, GSD, General, vol. 51, Compilation no. 833, 1911, p. 61, MSA.

\textsuperscript{120} Sir Abraham Ramanujun to the Chairman, City Improvement Trust, Bombay, 16 January 1913, AARBIT, 1917-1918, Appendix O-3, p. 116, para. 2.

\textsuperscript{121} Significantly, the Trust was henceforth reluctant to house those displaced by its operations in areas that were considered valuable from a commercial point of view. For instance, in submitting
the working of the four buildings already constructed'.

Their experience, however, was not entirely to the Trust's liking. Several drawbacks were perceived in the Agripada chawls, not least that the rooms were 'costly' and that the location of the chawls was 'not practicable from a financial point of view especially on sites in the more crowded parts of the City where the land would cost possibly Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per sq. yard'. It was argued that 'in Bombay the problem is complicated by the comparative smallness of the wages earned by the working classes'. Moreover, it was noted that, 'To provide cheap sanitary quarters for these classes of 2 kind that will meet the convenience and customs of these people, is a problem that cannot be solved without making carefully thought out experiments and modifying details which are found unsuitable from one point of view or another'.

The Trust therefore came to the conclusion that 'before spending the large amount of Rs. 78,00,000 forecasted [sic] originally for the provision of such quarters, the matter required very thorough re-consideration with a view to the removal as far as possible of the drawbacks stated'. The losses sustained on the Agripada chawls also convinced the Trust that 'even if the provision of these quarters could not be put quite on a commercial footing, endeavour should be made by a reduction of cost and economy in location to arrive as nearly as possible at a commercial footing'.

The Trust thus slowed down the pace of its chawl building operations in its search for a model chawl that would combine the twin virtues of low cost and sanitary principles. Consequently, though it was initially estimated that the Trust would spend seventy-five lakhs on exchequer on chawls for the poor by the end of the first decade of its existence, not more than fifteen lakhs were actually spent for this purpose.

Over time, there were two ways in which the Trust tried to resolve the conundrum that it confronted with regard to the housing of the working classes. First, it tried to involve private employers of labour, in particular the city's millowners, in its attempts to provide low-cost housing. Second, the Trust sought to raise rents in its chawls in order to minimize the losses incurred on them and render them 'self-supporting' over the long run.

Similarly, speaking in the Legislative Council a few years later, Ibrahim Rahimtoola vociferously reiterated that the Trust's obligation to provide housing for the poor was limited to those who were displaced by its operations. He declared: 'No existing public body, however well provided with funds, can cope with the huge problem of providing house accommodation for the whole of the poorer classes of a city like Bombay'. However, in taking this position the members of the Board deftly glossed over the fact that the Act of 1898 had made no such special distinction. As the Chairman of the Trust acknowledged in 1911, 'It is to be noted that the Act contemplates provision for the poor generally, and not only those displaced by the Trust's operations'.

The Trust's reinterpretation of its statutory obligation was also accompanied by a move to encourage private investors in providing housing for the working classes. The Chairman of the Trust argued in 1901 that,

"...we should make every effort to encourage the provision of suitable quarters for the poor by private enterprise, because not only will such private agency be in a better position than we are to find the tenants for the houses constructed, but will also probably make such enterprise a financial..."
success, and therefore, to a large extent relieve the Board from sinking capital in unremunerative operations.\textsuperscript{115}

Negotiations were opened with the Millowners' Association on this issue in the same year and hinged around the question of how such cooperation was to be given a practical shape.\textsuperscript{116} Ultimately, it was agreed in 1903 that the Trust would erect the rooms for millowners who requested it do so, who in turn would pay to the Trust a rental of Rs. 30 or Rs. 50 per room per annum, depending on the size of the room. At the end of 37 years, the chawls would become the property of the millowner.\textsuperscript{117} The proposal loundered, however, when the Bill to introduce these changes in the 1898 Act was overturned in the Legislative Council.\textsuperscript{118}

Finally, in 1913, an amendment called the 'Poorer classes accommodation scheme' was passed whereby the Trust could finance buildings for the working classes. According to its provisions, the Trust was empowered to cooperate with employers of labour for the housing of the workers by 'constructing chawls for their employees and leasing them to the employers at a rent calculated to yield to the Trust in the course of 28 years of the lease the capital sunk in the scheme plus four per cent interest, the chawls then becoming the property of the employers'.\textsuperscript{119} As it transpired, however, Pherozeshah Mehta's sceptical assessment that 'not more than three or four people will come forward to avail themselves of the provisions of this Bill',\textsuperscript{120} was borne out by the fact that eventually only one mill participated in the scheme. Initially, this was attributed to the pressures imposed by the war situation, and it was noted that the war had affected the Trust's expenditure, since 'the difficulty of getting materials is again great'.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{115} \textit{ITJ}, XIX/129 (June 1901): 231.

\textsuperscript{116} Frank Coton, 'Industrialization and the Housing Problem in Bombay', pp. 162-3.

\textsuperscript{117} Commenting on the interest shown by the millowners in the housing scheme, the Indian Spectator noted wryly that: 'The majority of Bombay capitalists were not disposed to incur a capital outlay for this purpose, albeit they are greatly desirous that they should be able, more effectively than at present, to exercise control over their work-people'. \textit{Indian Spectator}, 26 May 1921, p. 11.

\textsuperscript{118} \textit{BHT Proceedings}, GOB, General, vol. 32, Compilation no. 833, 1903, p. 214, MSA.

\textsuperscript{119} The matter nevertheless continued to be debated endlessly during subsequent amendments in the Council, with Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, the Gajaratia group millowners, taking a poised interest in it. Meanwhile, in 1903 a group of mill workers submitted a petition to the government to erect a few sanitary chawls at reasonable rates for rooms in the vicinity of their labourers – for example, in the 'Far East Road'. \textit{ITJ}, XXVII/229 (1909): 83. The Trust's denial of its obligation to house anyone other than those displaced by its schemes led to a suit for an order to rectify this. The only assurance it could offer the mill workers was that their demands would be considered in a future scheme between the Soperpura Road and the Parsee Government House. Workers' chawls were constructed by 1911, but were not readily taken up since their rents were considered 'too high' in comparison with private chawls. Coton, 'Industrialization and the Housing Problem', p. 163.

\textsuperscript{120} \textit{AARRRIT}, 1912-13, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{121} \textit{Legislative Council Proceedings}, 1930, LVII, p. 564.

\textsuperscript{122} Chandrakars, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, p. 292.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Corporation Proceedings on Sandhurst Road Street Scheme}, p. 29.

\textsuperscript{124} 'Chairman's Report on Rents of Trust Chawls', BHT Proceedings, 3 June 1911, GOB, General, vol. 31, Compilation no. 833, 1911, p. 61, MSA.
is how far we can justifiably raise the rents of our chawls with a view to reducing their cost to the ratepayer. 115 (Italics in original)

He went on to argue that rather than catering to a small section of the 'exceptionally poor' who could not afford to pay more than the bare minimum, the Trust should aim to house 'large classes' who could afford to pay higher rents. 'By catering for a large class', he suggested, 'we interfere less with private enterprise [sic] than by catering for a small, and also take less risk of vacancies and are able to provide for more.' Moreover, in adopting this policy 'we may put some limit on the annual loss that public funds must bear on account of these chawls'. In other words, he stressed, the Trust 'should provide a large number of chawls at moderate rents than a small number at very low rents involving heavier loss per head'. Therefore, he concluded,

our policy should be to fix the minimum standard of sanitary accommodation and make rents as high as possible, consistently with keeping them at a level not higher than that paid by the lower large class of poor in the neighbourhood, regardless of the size of our rooms, as compared with those in private chawls. 116

Such an increase in rent was justified on three grounds. First, it was claimed that Trust chawls were more sanitary than the other dwellings generally occupied by the poor. Second, it was asserted that the Trust's rents were far lower than those prevailing in the housing market and therefore needed to be brought in line with the rest of the market since the poor could afford to pay such rents. Finally, it was argued that in order to encourage private entrepreneurial activity in chawl-building it was imperative that the Trust did not depress the rental market by pegging its rents too low.

In accordance with the proposals put forward by the Chairman of the Board, it was decided to fix uniform monthly rents ranging from three rupees four annas to five rupees per room in the Trust chawls, with a view to making them 'self-supporting'. The Board also decided to charge newcomers to its tenements at the increased rates, subject to a personal minimum of ten per cent of family earnings or the rent hitherto paid and to gradually increase the rents by four annas every three months. 'The result of this policy', the Chairman announced with satisfaction in 1918, 'has been to reduce the annual loss on the Board's chawls to Rs. 27,654 or 0.65 per cent on the capital cost.'117

The Board's decision to raise rents worsened the situation for the poor who could not afford the Trust chawls even at the existing rents. D.E. Wacha, the lone dissenting voice on the Board, argued that the question of rent increases by the Trust was dependent on the earnings of the poorer classes as well as on the prevailing prices of food. Wages of workers, he pointed out, 'have not moved up to anything in proportion to the rise in the price of food and house rent'. He went on to add that the very factor on which the Trust sought to

base its case for an increase in rents, namely, that its rents were lower than those generally prevailing in the housing market, was itself a product of its operations. In other words,

the Trust is doing no good to itself and doing the greatest harm to the poor public by raising the rent of Chawls—dear as rent has been presently made by the operations, chiefly of the Trust itself. The Trust is penalising the poor both ways. It drives them away from their old and cheap tenements, however insanitary, and thus creates dearth for accommodation, with the net result of running up rents. And when such rents have all round risen high, the Trust points to these as a reason for raising the rents of its own Chawls for the Poor.'118

The policy of raising rents resulted in Trust chawls being taken up by classes other than those for whom they were originally intended. 'It is', wrote one official, 'the almost universal experience that accommodation provided for the working classes in crowded areas is occupied by a class superior to that for which it was designed.' He went on to add that, 'This has been found to be the case with the Improvement Trust Chawls already erected in Bombay.'119 This was corroborated by J.P. Orr, who acknowledged that there were 'more of the middle class accommodated on the Trust's estates at present than of the poorer classes.'120

Many sections of the poor also showed a reluctance to live in Trust chawls. By 1913, Board members were forced to acknowledge that the poor for whom they had been built were not filling up their chawls. J.P. Orr, the Chairman of the Trust Board, wrote to the press stating that over a thousand rooms in Trust estates were bereft of any occupants.121 Similarly, Ibrahim Rahimtoo, declared ruefully in the Legislative Council that

The sanitary accommodation we have provided for fifteen thousand people has not been wholly occupied by the people who were displaced by our schemes. I might go further and say that not even a very large number of the people who have come forward to occupy these chawls in spite of our earnest desire to offer all sorts of facilities. For reasons we are unable to ascertain we find it difficult to fill the chawls with people whom we have displaced.122

Some sections of educated middle-class opinion saw in this evidence of the inherent conservatism of the poor. Thus, according to the Rast Goftar: 'The one great reason of their aversion is religious susceptibility and the fear of losing caste which a Hindu incurs in having to live in a tenement occupied by

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115 Minute by D.E. Wacha, BIT Proceedings, 30 March 1911, GOB, General, vol. 51, Compilation no. 833, 1911, p. 66, MSA.
116 GOB, General, vol. 41, Compilation no. 411, Part IV, 1912, p. 102, MSA.
118 Rast Goftar, 11 May 1913, in RNNBP, 19, 1913.
119 Legislative Council Proceedings, 1912, 1, p. 673.
120 Ibid.
121 Ibid., p. 62.
122 Minute by Chairman, 9 March 1918, AARBIT, 1917-18, Appendix 0-3, para. 11.
persons of various social grades'.\textsuperscript{110} Such explanations glossed over the fact that a large majority of the displaced poor could not afford to pay the rents charged in Trust chawls.\textsuperscript{111} Trust officials, in claiming that the rents in their chawls were the same or lower than those to be found in the neighbourhood, did not take into account the fact that their efforts at restricting the number of occupants per room raised the individual burden of the rent that had to be paid.

An equally significant factor was the manner in which rents were collected. A majority of the city's poor who were dependent on casual labour for their livelihood, for instance, could not afford to pay rents on the regular basis that the Trust chawls demanded.\textsuperscript{112} In the case of the first Nagpada chawls, for instance, it was stipulated that rents were to be paid in advance and not later than the fifth day of the month. Moreover, tenants had to give a month's notice prior to vacating a room.\textsuperscript{113} As a result, the poor found the accommodation offered by private enterprise more attractive since in such chawls the timing of rent payments as well as room-sharing arrangements were characterized by flexibility.\textsuperscript{114}

However, those who did take up Trust chawls appear to have managed to circumvent the Trust's attempts to control overcrowding. Thus, as early as 1903 it was alleged that while the Agripada chawls were designed to provide accommodation for 612 persons, there were actually 937 persons inhabiting the tenements.\textsuperscript{115} This was a phenomenon that was to repeat itself with other Trust chawls over the years. The Trust also found collecting rents from its tenants to be far from straightforward. One observer noted that the Improvement Trust had 'often to sue tenants for rent in spite of its costly machinery for the collection thereof'.\textsuperscript{116} This trend again seems to have intensified over time and especially in the aftermath of the passing of the Rent Act of 1916. 'The tenants are fully alive to the main feaures of the Rent Act and the reluctance

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{110} Ratn Goswami, 15 May 1913, in RNBN, 19, 1912. Colonial officials shared this perception and the Improvement Trust chawls were characterized by community-based segregation in order to cater to the perceived religious susceptibilities of the poor. AARNT, 1920–21, p. 27. However, there were some dissenting voices too. According to the Jam-e-Jamshed, for instance, the economic factor is possibly more at the bottom of the difficulty of the poor occupying these more healthy rooms than their inherent conservatism.' Jam-e-Jamshed, 13 May 1913, in RNBN, 20, 1913.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{111} TF, XXVII, 320 (1917): 242. For instance, in spite of the provisions of sections of the Labour Act 1908 that houses close to their places of work, the Subahuld chawls built in 1913 were slow to fill up since their rents of Rs.3-12-0 (three annas and twelve paise) were considered too high being 8 to 10 annas more than the private chawls in the neighbourhood.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{112} As the Jam-e-Jamshed acknowledged, 'rent is an high and the conditions attached to the occupation of these rooms are so stiff that the people cannot afford to pay the former or to agree to the latter.' Jam-e-Jamshed, 13 May 1913, in RNBN, 20, 1913.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{113} BCOS, 2 February 1904.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{114} This appears to have been the case even in the mid-1920s. Thus, according to S.M. Ratnagiri, the chawls constructed by the Government had 'not been taken up to any appreciable extent and their unpopularity has resulted in overcrowding in the mill chawls'. Ratnagiri, Bombay Industries, p. 496.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{115} Jam-e-Jamshed, 13 May 1904, in RNBN, 20, 1904.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{116} Bombay Law Reporter, VIII (1906): 8.}}

of the Courts to enforce eviction', the annual report of the Trust for 1919 complained, 'and the consequence is that many hold back their rent as long as possible'.\textsuperscript{117}

One final point needs to be noted regarding the Trust's attempts to provide accommodation for those displaced by its operations. From the outset, local property elites vehemently opposed any proposals by the Trust to relocate the poor in the vicinity of their neighbourhoods. For instance, in July 1903 the Chairman of the Improvement Trust, responding to reports about the hardship inflicted on the poor who were displaced by its operations in Dhobi Talao and Lohar Chawl, proposed to erect huts for their benefit on the Kennedy Sea Face, close to the city's elite residential areas. The proposal provoked an immediate outcry from local elites, European and Indian alike. 'To suddenly bring into hither a plague free part of Bombay masses of the poor crowded together as they assuredly will be,' ventilated one appalled member of the Board of Trustees, 'is in my opinion to import disease into one of our last healthy localities.'\textsuperscript{118} He was vociferously backed by the Bombay Gazette which declared vehemently that the displaced poor should be relocated 'not to Kennedy Sea Face, or to any other locality ... but clear away from the island on the B.B. & C.I. Railway, whence they can conveniently return to their roil, and let them on no account be permitted to sleep on their business premises a single night, on penalty of fine or imprisonment'.\textsuperscript{119}

In some cases, local land developers and property elites also vehemently opposed the construction of tenements for the poor in what they regarded as 'elite' residential areas, claiming that these would be devalued thereby. In January 1906, for instance, the Trust received a petition complaining about the intention of one of its lessees to build chawls for the working classes. The petitioners, whose properties lay adjacent to that of the Trust's lessee, touched their grievances in the following terms:

Your petitioners ... have recently heard with regret that the lessee of Plot no. 18 on the said Estates intends to build chawls for the lower class who are principally dirty and unclean in their habits. Your petitioners propose to erect buildings suitable for middle class people who are generally cleanly in their habits. (sic) Your petitioners are afraid that if the said chawls are allowed to be erected on Plot No. 18, then their own buildings intended for the better class are very likely to remain vacant.\textsuperscript{120}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{117} AARNT, 1919–20, p. 2.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{118} BCOS, 25 July 1903.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 19. Such sentiments were also echoed by sections of Indian opinion in the press. Thus, according to the Kaiser-i-Hind, who are most susceptible to prejudice, as to manufacture that disease and give it the greatest stimulus, and thereby to contaminate with its poison the only open space in the city hitherto unaffected.' Kaiser-i-Hind, 31 July 1903, in RNBN, 21, 1903.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{120} Letter from A.M. Pinto and others in the Chairman, City Improvement Trust, Bombay, 8 January 1906, COB, General, vol. 27, Compilation no. 833, 1906, MSA.}
Similarly, two years later the Trust received complaints from some of the city’s prominent merchants and property elites regarding its proposal to build cheap housing for the poor near the Charni Road. The land in the area, they claimed in their petition, was occupied by the residences of ‘respectable’ citizens and ‘any price paid for the acquisition of such valuable piece of land, would be such money thrown away’ since the locality in question ‘is most likely to be more valuable and important in the near future than it now is’. Their plea was greeted with great sympathy and the Chairman agreed that the petitioners ‘would have good grounds for complaint were several blocks of noisy chawls to be erected in their midst’, and that the Trust ought to ‘accede to the request and refrain from acquiring this property for the purpose’. 161

Conclusion

By the end of the First World War, it was widely acknowledged that the Bombay Improvement Trust had failed to redress the civic problems that had led to its creation. On the contrary, most contemporary observers agreed that the Trust’s activities had worsened Bombay’s housing and sanitation problems. In July 1919, it was reported that nearly 892,000 inhabitants out of a total urban population of 1,200,000 resided in single rooms and that there was an overall shortfall of 60,000 tenements in the city. 162 Critics pointed out that the Trust’s operations had contributed in large measure to this sorry state of affairs. They argued that the Trust’s initial demolition of existing tenement blocks, without the provision of alternative accommodation for those displaced, had rendered many thousands homeless and worsened the problem of overcrowding within the city. Its operations were thus blamed for leaving the poor more vulnerable than before to the vagaries of Bombay’s housing market. At the same time, the Trust’s appropriation of vast tracts of urban land, acting in conjunction with its leasing and compensation policies, was said to have fuelled a speculative boom in property prices. Responding to the growing chorus of public criticism directed at the Trust, and in belated recognition of its inadequacies as an agency of civic renewal, the Government of Bombay set up a new Development Directorate in 1920 to oversee the future course of urban development in the metropolis.

This chapter has sought to draw attention to the contradictions that underpinned the Trust’s policies as well as to account for the glaring gap between its intended aims and eventual outcomes. The Trust’s lack of success during the first decade of its existence was largely on account of a flawed method of sanitary improvement that had been widely discredited in the metropolitan contexts in which it had originally been deployed. Equally, the underlying imperatives that governed its functioning and the mechanisms that informed its interventions served to accentuate the Trust’s inadequacies as an agent of civic renewal. On the one hand, the constant need to reconcile the need of ‘economy’ with those of ‘efficacy’ constrained its effectiveness; on the other hand, its legal and bureaucratic procedures confronted the Trust with dilemmas that it was unable easily to resolve. From the outset, moreover, the Trust was unable to establish untrammelled sway over urban space. Indeed, the Trust’s eventual restructuring of the built form of the city was the contingent outcome of processes of contestation and conflict with different groups within local society. Significantly, the most effective resistance emanated from property owners who were able to subvert the very legal and bureaucratic mechanisms by means of which the Trust sought to alter the urban built environment. At the same time, this chapter has also tried to suggest that notwithstanding the Trust’s failure to carry out the tasks for which it had been established, its policies had profound, albeit unintended, consequences for the development of Bombay’s spatial organization and social geography.

161 Petition from Tribhubandas Mangaldas Narkhadiya and others, to the Chairman, City Improvement Trust, Bombay, 31 January 1908, GOB, General, vol. 27, Composition no. 833, 1908, pp. 98-100, MSA.
CHAPTER FIVE

‘The Ultimate Masters of the City’:
Policing Public Order

On 11 August 1893, a Muslim congregation emerged from Friday noon prayers in Bombay’s Jama Masjid and rushed towards a nearby Hindu temple. At this, a small police party stationed in the vicinity sprang into action and tried to charge the congregations back towards the mosque. Their intervention provoked the ire of the crowd and soon a clash broke out. The policemen, as well as Hindu shopkeepers in the neighbourhood, were pelted ceaselessly with stones. When the Commissioner of Police rushed to the spot, he found that ‘the tumult was enormous; fighting and especially stone throwing, was going on in half a dozen different directions’. Thus began the bloodiest riot in the history of nineteenth-century Bombay.

The authorities were soon forced to requisition military reinforcements but even this was not enough to arrest the progress of the riot. Indeed, far from restoring order, the actions of the law enforcement agencies fanned the flames. As news of the clashes between Hindus and Muslims spread rapidly through the city’s mahallas and gallis, street gangs formed instantly and sought to assert control over their respective neighbourhoods. From time to time these gangs salved forth to inflict punitive damage on other localities. When the forces of law and order attempted to intervene in such conflicts, ‘the Musalmans ... as well as the Hindus turned upon the European and Native police and the military’. It would be a week before the British could claim to have fully re-established their control over the city.

If the outbreak of the plague epidemic brought home to Bombay’s rulers the perils of ‘sanitary disorder’, the events of August 1893 confronted them with the equally grave consequences of large-scale collective violence. As the decade wore on, colonial officials grew apprehensive about the threat posed to


2 Report of the Police Commissioner, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 9 September 1893, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, January 1894, MSA.
‘public order’ by rapid industrial urbanization and massive labour migration. This chapter shows how the anxieties provoked by Bombay’s swiftly changing environment prompted a reappraisal of colonial policing strategies, especially vis-à-vis the control and regulation of urban space.

It is now widely accepted that, historically, ‘order maintenance’ rather than crime prevention has constituted the ‘core mandate’ of modern policing. Historians have highlighted the manner in which the police responded to this imperative in diverse political contexts, both metropolitan and colonial, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Significantly, recent writings on the colonial police in British India have emphasized its relative weakness as an instrument of social control. This, an account of ‘everyday policing’ in colonial Bombay has noted that the ‘daily operations of the police were determined by the financial and political constraints within which they developed’. Furthermore, the police ‘operated less as simply an instrument of social control, but proved more responsive to influences which were relatively autonomous of their own internal structure of command’ and hence could not ‘fulfil their disciplinary, even coercive, function systematically’. At the same time, ‘at lesser levels, albeit less systematically, the working classes too could draw upon, appropriate and deploy their personal and social caste and kinship connections with the police’. This analytical framework has drawn attention to the shortcomings of institutional approaches that tended to perceive the police as a ‘monolithic’ instrument of coercion, emblematic of an omnipotent colonial state.

The pendulum has now swung to the other extreme. If earlier studies of the colonial police represented it as the repressive arm of an all-powerful state, the revisionist view emphasizes the ‘fragility of its control’. In the process, some accounts within the revisionist framework are inclined to overstate the weaknesses of the colonial police and the extent to which it became ‘imprisoned’ within the confines of local networks of power in particular urban contexts. Furthermore, in highlighting processes of mutual accommodation and reciprocity, there is a tendency to underplay the conflictual logic that governed the quotidian relationship between the colonial police and the urban working classes. However, as a recent social history of North Indian towns in the late colonial period has shown, while a lack of numbers precluded ‘intensive policing on a regular basis’, everyday relations between the colonial police and the poor were nonetheless marked by persistent antagonism and friction. This chapter argues that the turn of the nineteenth century witnessed an important historical shift in the policing of public order in colonial Bombay. In particular, it shows how the institutional limitations that impelled the city’s police force to expand its network of local allies were simultaneously offset by an augmentation of its regulatory powers over the use of urban space. In particular, it highlights the salience of a new police act, introduced in 1902, which rendered the police an increasingly intrusive element in the social relations of the streets and the neighbourhood. The wide discretionary powers granted to the police by the new act, in a context where its very structural weaknesses precluded a comprehensive and consistent enforcement of the law, served especially to magnify the scale and dimensions of the friction between the police and plebeian society in the years leading up to the First World War.

Fin-de-siècle Bombay: a ‘crisis’ of urban order

Despite the quickening pace of industrial development and the growing influx of rural migrants, the city’s British rulers had not experienced a serious threat to ‘public order’ prior to the 1890s. Indeed, in the half century preceding the 1893 riots, the city had experienced popular ‘disturbances’ on only two occasions. In both these previous instances (in 1851 and 1874) the scale of the violence had been relatively small and of limited political consequence. As one historian has noted, such incidents of group violence as had occurred in the city before the 1890s were largely small-scale, confined to the ‘internal social world’ of the neighbourhood and the participants who were involved in them ‘operated within a reasonably narrow territorial space’. The meanings of such disturbances were determined not by imperial politics but by the internal power relations of urban communities and localities. Thus, instances of group violence had posed no real danger to public order in the city at large and were notable for their ‘disjunction from the Imperial presence’. During the 1890s, however, the city’s ruling authorities were confronted with two major urban riots that were not only unprecedented in the scale and

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5 Ibid.

6 Goopla, *Politics of the Urban Poor*, pp. 111–39. Goopla notes that police coercion and repression during moments of political unrest, ‘gave rise to increasing confrontation between the police and various groups among the poor and contributed to hostility and resentment against the police’. This animosity also ‘influenced the response of the poor to day-to-day encounters with the police in other spheres, especially with regard to the implementation of sanitary measures, municipal regulations and other local policies of town improvement’. Ibid., p. 132.

7 As the Bombay Gazette pointed out, both these previous instances of violence were ‘insignificant’ when compared with the Bombay riots, both ‘as regarded the area of the localities affected and the enormous mass of rioters’. Bombay Gazette (hereafter BG) 11 August 1893.

intensity of the violence but also ominous in their wider political implications. According to official estimates, eighty people were killed and five hundred and thirty wounded in the 1893 riots. Over fifteen hundred were arrested on grounds of 'unlawful assembly' before the riots were finally suppressed. The three days of rioting, the Bombay Gazette declared, had been 'made memorable in local history by the destruction of temples and of mosques, and the looting of shops, to the accompaniment of fierce faction fights in the streets, varied with senseless assaults on the police and the military'. There were no instances in the history of the city over the past half century to match it, it added, 'of more serious riots, considering the area over which they extended and the enormous numbers of people who took part in them'.

The other riot that erupted in this decade was equally momentous, both in terms of the intensity of the violence as well as its larger political significance. On 9 March 1898, a search party looking for concealed plague victims attempted to remove a young girl who had supposedly contracted the disease in a neighbourhood in Muslim-dominated Madempora, inhabited by the Juhala community of weavers from South India. The search party encountered stiff resistance and soon the police were called in to quell the tumult. The decision of an official present at the spot to open fire on the crowd of protesting weavers rapidly turned the affair into a riot that once again engulfed the Indian town. The protests were joined by a large number of Marathi mill workers who were overcrowding the streets in the aftermath of Holli, the Hindu spring festival in which participants sprinkle coloured powder on one another. The rampaging crowds proceeded to attack the local jail and fire station. In other places, Europeans were set upon by angry mobs. It was the first time in the history of the city that the European population had confronted a physical threat to its presence.

The riots of 1893 and the popular protest against the plague measures rendered colonial authorities anxious about their ability to prevent conflicts from breaching the boundaries of the neighbourhood and engulfing the city at large. One source of concern for the city's rulers stemmed from the widespread participation in the riots of the city's largely Marathi-speaking industrial workforce massed together in the vicinity of the textile mills on the northern outskirts of the city. In the wake of the August 1893 riots, the Government of Bombay voiced its unease at the 'capacity for cooperation which the Bombay mill-hands are beginning to display' and worried about how serious a factor this may become in a city which is liable to outbreaks of religious excitement. They live mostly together in large chawls beyond the city proper, where the Police is weakest', noted a police report barely a month after the August riots, and 'in case they should resort to violence in lieu of argument the danger to the public peace will be very serious'. This view was reiterated by the Police Commissioner who wrote:

During the last twenty years the mill industry in Bombay has made enormous strides and we have now in this city about 60,000 able-bodied mill hands, many of whom took part in the recent disturbances. They have been our striking this before, and some thousands are just now again on the eve of striking, and how to control them even when there is no general riot is at all times a matter of great difficulty.

The 1893 riots had also occurred at a time when the city's textile industry experienced what one contemporary described as a prolonged 'strike mania', with workers in many individual mills striking over wage reductions. As the official historian of the city police noted, these strikes were the first of 'any magnitude that occurred in the industrial area' and necessitated the posting of police parties in the mill districts in order to guard mill property and quell possible disorder. Following this wave of strikes, colonial authorities began to respond ready to request for assistance from employers of labour. For instance, when workers struck work in protest against the return to monthly wages by employers in June 1897, the police were out in force in the mill areas. At the turn of the century again, when the cotton mills resorted to working short time and employers reduced the wages of their workers, the police were regularly called in to break the strikes that followed. When

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11 Among those killed in the riots were forty-six Muslims, thirty-three Hindus and one Jew who died accidentally in police firing. While the occupations of thirty persons killed in the rioting could not be ascertained of the remainder a majority were drawn from the labouring classes. See Mahomedan and Hindu Riots; and Bombay Riots.
12 Mahomedan and Hindu Riots, p. 1.
13 TO, 10 March 1898. Five members of the crowd were killed in the firing.
14 Commissioner of Police, Bombay to the Secretary, GOB, General (Plague Branch), vol. 389, Compilations no. 298, paras. 18, 1898, MSA, Bombay.
15 ibid., para. 27.
16 TO, 10 March 1898.
17 Europeans had been singled out for attack on the streets in earlier instances and one agitated correspondent wrote to the Times of India about the 'infamous' behaviour of the lower orders. Soon there was thrown into his carriage on the streets, he complained, and went on to suggest that the police 'might well apply the stick in turbulent neighbourhoods more firmly than they do'. TO, 12 March 1898. In the aftermath of the riots too, the Police Commissioner admitted that stones were 'occasionally thrown at solitary Europeans in out-of-the-way places or from houses where it is impossible to trace the offenders'. BPSSAI, vol. 12, 1898, para. 498.
workers in the David Sassoon Mill struck work following a reduction in their wages in January 1900 and ‘commenced to throw the bobbins about and show signs of becoming obstreperous’, the Police ‘had to be sent for, and after some time the hands were persuaded to resume work’.25 A week later, when workers in other mills attempted to protest against wage cuts, the police again played a prominent role. There had been no ‘disorderly conduct’ on the part of the striking workers, the Police Commissioner reported, ascribing this to ‘the police precautions that have been taken and the knowledge that the Police have been keeping an eye on what is going on’.26

The sectarian character of the 1893 riots also evoked fears about the increasing number of Muslim migrants from northern India, supposedly imbued with a primordial religious fanaticism that rendered them a ‘dangerous’ element within the city.27 In the future, the civil servant James Campbell warned, the influx of North Indians, ‘the thousands of Pathans, Afghans, Sisias, Arabs and Persians, all fighting men and many of them reckless’, was likely to cause problems for urban authorities.28 Interestingly, Campbell presided over the Bombay Plague Committee in March 1898 when the resistance of the Julahas weavers to the plague search party ignited the riot in Madanpura. In his account of the riot, Campbell was quick to remind the government that the Julahas ‘have for years been known to be excitable and somewhat disaffected’ and that they were ‘the most dangerous classes of rioters in 1893’.29 This view was echoed by the Police Commissioner who agreed that the Julahas, ‘a sect of fanatical and bigoted Mussalmans’, whose numbers had ‘greatly increased by immigration since the construction of railways’ were undoubtedly the most ‘turbulent’ of the city’s inhabitants.30

The participation of the working classes in the urban riots was not the only source of anxiety for Bombay’s ruling authorities in the 1890s. An equally pressing concern was the emergence of a plebeian casual economy and public culture centred on the street. The presence of a large working-class population in the city, a major portion of which was employed on a casual basis, was accompanied by the rapid expansion of a ‘secondary economy’ of the street to service its material needs. The secondary economy of the working classes was not only a source of employment, housing, credit and the necessities of daily life, but also catered for the sexual needs of the predominantly male

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14 BPPSAI, XIII: 2, 1906, para. 123.
15 BPPSAI, XIII: 3, 1906, para. 179.
16 For an account of the colonial stereotypes about the innate religious bigotry of some north Indian Muslim communities, see Gyanendra Pandey, The Colonial Construction of Communalism in North India (Delhi, 1992).
17 Minute by Mr Campbell in Report On Increase In Police Force Recommended by Commissioner of Police (18 September 1893), GOI, Home (Police), August 1894, A 117–46, p. 819, Oriental and India Office Collections (hereafter OIOC), British Library, London.
18 Chairman, Plague Committee, Bombay, to the Secretary, GOB (Plague), 18 March 1898, GOB, General (Plague), vol. 388, Compilation no. 293, 1898, para 5, MSA.
19 Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to the Secretary, GOB, 1 April 1898, GOB, General (Plague), vol 388, Compilation no. 298, 1898, para. 7, MSA.
21 Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, p. 76.
22 For a contemporary official account of aspects of this culture, see S.M. Edwards, Byways of Bombay (Bombay, 1912).
23 Chandavarkar, Imperial Power, p. 103.
25 Chandavarkar, Imperial Power, p. 147, pp. 159–63. See also Gooper, Politics of the Urban Poor, pp. 11–12, 126–12.
26 See, for instance, the reports in Bombay Riots and Mahomedan and Hindu Riots; see also, Maselos, ‘The City as Represented in Crowd Action’, pp. 182–8.
in May 1890, friction between rival talims leaders in Gligaram was said to have resulted in a Pardeshi milkman being beaten up by five mill hands belonging to the rival group. A few months later, members of a talim at Mazagon assaulted one of their associates who had left the gymnasium two years earlier. And in 1893, two talims clashed violently in the wake of a dispute. 19

In the 1890s colonial authorities also began to register a growing concern about the popular festivities associated with the annual Islamic commemoration of Mutarram. The observance, which recalls the martyrdom of Husain at Karbala, was followed in the city in a variety of ways over a ten-day period each year. Some of the rituals associated with it, such as the waaz or religious sermons held at the jamat gatherings, were common to all the Muslim mobolias of the city. 20 Other aspects of Mutarram, however, were specific to particular groups. The Shias visited their imambadas to attend collective mourning ceremonies known as majalis. Similarly, at the tomb of the first Aga Khan at Hasanabad in Mazagaon, a Persian passion play was performed which attracted the Khojas, Moghuls and other Persian elements of the city. 21 Among some Shia groups, after the majalis had ended, pehis (model coffins), szals (black banners and symbols) and panyas (model hands with five fingers extended, each representing a member of the Prophet's family), were carried around the meeting place while followers gave vent to a collective outpouring of grief or mutam. 22

From the early nineteenth century, the most prominent mode of observance in Bombay was predominantly Sunni, with model tombs known as tazias or tabuts paraded by wandering street bands or tolls. These tabuts, normally built a few days before the beginning of Mutarram, were made of a framework of bamboo in the shape of a mausoleum (intended to represent Husain's tomb at Karbala) covered with tassel and paper. 23 Each mobolla spent considerable sums on its tabut, the funds for which had traditionally been collected from the shop-keepers and merchants of the neighbourhood. The size of the tabut depended on the influence of the mobolla or the fund-raising abilities of its toll leaders.

The tabut in each neighbourhood that observed Mutarram was financed through subscriptions and 'enforced collections' from local merchants and shop-keepers. 24 For the first four days of the festivities, the tabuts lay where

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20 This information is drawn from S.M. Edwards' account in Bombay Confidential Proceedings, Judicial, October 1911, A 2, p. 480, OIOC.
21 Ibid. For a description of the passion play, see James M. Maclean, A Guide to Bombay: Historical, Statistical and Descriptive (Bombay, 1902), pp. 349-50.
22 The pehis were generally taken about the town on the first four days of the festival. See Edwards's account in Bombay Confidential Proceedings, Judicial, October 1911, A 2, p. 480, OIOC.
24 Gazetteer, 1, p. 185. See also Masselos, 'Change', p. 53.
they had been prepared and decorated. On the fifth day they were transported to the mandwa in their respective mohallas, where they were admired by the crowds who came to see them. On the final night, known as Kail-ki-ras, the tabuts were taken out in a procession by each moholla accompanied by the tuls, musicians and an assortment of entertainers. On the afternoon of the tenth day the mohollas came together in an enormous procession that passed through the Muslim neighbourhoods of the town and headed towards the sea where the tabuts were immersed. Hindus, especially Marathas and low-castes drawn from the ranks of the labouring poor, were prominent participants in the festivities, which had come to be known amongst them as Imam jayants. Among Maratha mill-workers living in the northern parts of the island, it was customary to obtain a holiday and pour into the central parts of the city to join the celebrations on the last day. As the Times of India noted in 1884, Bombay’s Muhammadans were ‘a carnival ... the like of which for extent and eccentricity, is to be found in few other cities in the world.’

It was the wandering tuls that gave the Bombay Muhammadans its singularly carnivalesque character. Each street or neighbourhood had its own tuls, comprising of youths of the moholla who were mostly drawn from amongst the labouring poor. The practice of having tuls accompany the tabuts is thought to have been derived from the custom of driving away evil spirits from the tomb of Husain by mimic warfare. Starting out from its moholla, each tuls moved around the various neighbourhoods from the fifth to the ninth day of the celebration, singing and dancing to improvised music, drawing in more and more numbers, mostly from amongst the Muslim and Hindu labouring poor. The size of these tuls varied from about fifty to two hundred, but in the early twentieth century there were some neighbourhoods like Rangari moholla, Halai Memon moholla, Kalsa moholla, Chuna Bhatti moholla as well as the Julaha moholla of Madanpura whose tuls were said to number in the thousands. Elements of the carnivalesque were also evident in the presence of clowns, men dressed up as tigers, minces, acrobats and fakirs in the tuls.

There was also a great deal of ritualized rivalry between the tuls, which was liable at times to result in violence. For a brief period in the early nineteenth century, Muhammadans had threatened to become an occasion for sectarian violence amongst Bombay’s Sunnis and Shias. The influx of Shias from Persia had given rise to a new ritual known as the Zoolzunnab or the ‘Horse Procession’ which paraded around the Muslim localities of the Indian town and rivaled the tabuts and tuls of the Sunnis. After a series of violent clashes in the 1830s, some on account of factional conflicts amongst the Shias and others that pitted them against the Sunnis, the British were forced to intervene. After 1836, the city’s ruling authorities banned the horse processions of the Persians and decreed that they were not to parade outside the darbaras though they might do so within their respective compounds. Notwithstanding the fervent pleas of those who called for their reinstatement, the ban on the horse processions was strictly enforced in the following decades. As Masselos has pointed out, after the banning of the horse processions, the Konkani Sunni mode of celebrating the festival ‘remained the dominant visible form for Bombay during the rest of the century’ and was ‘accepted as customary’. Even though Muhammadans was a time of heightened anxiety for colonial officials on account of its potential for violence, Bombay’s ruling authorities had chosen generally to avoid any measures that might lead them into direct confrontation with the processions. Of course, police presence on the streets tended to be stepped up at the time of the festival and soldiers were usually kept ready on standby duty. Colonial authorities also tried to regularize the format of the festival by stipulating where the tabuts might parade and imposing traffic rules for the conduct of the processions, especially during the final night when the processions came out on the streets. After 1827, the processions were ‘confined to the rough square which formed the main streets of the Muslim quarter’. In the early nineteenth century, the rules also sought to prohibit the tuls processions ‘from entering side-alleys’. Nonetheless, from time to time a procession would ‘suddenly dart off into a side-alley’ leading to a tense confrontation with a rival procession, a potentially explosive situation as far as the accompanying police escort was concerned. But the usual outcome in such situations was at best wordy dispute, at worst scuffles, violence or riot.

In the early 1850s, colonial authorities occasionally responded to such incidents by renewing the ban on entry into side streets. However, local protest usually ensured that the decision was quickly rescinded. Thereafter, colonial authorities reverted to their usual mode of pragmatic policing and deployed a minimal set of restrictions vis-à-vis the Muhammadan processions.

Edwardes, By Ways of Bombay, pp. 50–51. Rivalry and competition between different urban localities had been a feature of the Muhammadan festivities in Bombay from the earliest times. Masselos, ‘Change’, p. 50.

Edwardes, By Ways of Bombay, pp. 50–51.

Edwardes, By Ways of Bombay, pp. 50–51.

Edwardes, By Ways of Bombay, pp. 50–51.

Edwardes, By Ways of Bombay, pp. 50–51.

Edwardes, By Ways of Bombay, pp. 50–51.

Edwardes, By Ways of Bombay, pp. 50–51.

Edwardes, By Ways of Bombay, pp. 50–51.
It was a policy that appears to have worked rather well for the most part. Indeed, barring the occasional skirmish, the Muharram festivities had not posed a serious threat to public order since the 1830s. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century an intensification of inter-neighbourhood competition and rivalry, as well as the growing size of the street gangs, raised the specter of a threat to general stability in the official mind.17 For instance, the Commissioner of Police reported in 1859 that the crowds attracted to the festival that year were ‘unprecedentedly large and exceeded those of any previous Moharram’. He also noted a new development in relation to the celebrations, namely, ‘the attendance in much larger numbers than before of the riff raff of Hindustani Musalmans (Sunites), who in parties of several hundreds formed part of the Sunni procession’. Their doing so and their sham fights in circles formed often ten deep in the streets, he noted darkly, ‘have nothing in common with the Moslem religion, and is simply a species of rowdism which can only be kept in check by a large escort of Police in constant attendance on them’.18

Urban street life also aroused colonial anxieties in the last decade of the nineteenth century for other reasons. Fears began to be entertained about the presence of officially defined ‘criminal classes’ and ‘criminal tribes’ that supposedly infested the city’s streets. Bombay was said to be ‘well represented in the matter of members belonging to the criminal classes and foreigners’ since it was ‘a haven of refuge and an emporium of labour for such people’ who did not ‘appear in gangs and cannot locate themselves together in large numbers anywhere’, but were said to be ‘lost in the teeming population of the city’. Thus the city had a fair share of ‘Mahr and Mang dacottis from the Deccan, Kathiawadis, Waggis and others’, groups not only designated by colonial sociology as being innately predisposed to thieving and law-breaking, but also perceived as a source of danger if the city ever erupted into a riot.19

As famine and epidemic disease ravaged many rural districts of western India at this time, colonial officials also grew alarmed about the influx of ‘beggars’, ‘vagrants’ and ‘pauper immigrants’ who were perceived to be repositories of disease and imbued with criminal tendencies.20 Indeed, T.S. Wec, the city’s Health Officer, was convinced that ‘the criminal, the destitute, the diseased in every land of India, in easy communication with Bombay, even as distant as Upper India, trudge here in the hopes of an easy sustenance’.21 This view was endorsed by the Police Commissioner who noted that such people were ‘as

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17 Ibid., p. 58.
18 Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 5 July 1855, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, 10 July 1855, MSA.
19 Annual Report of Police for the Town and Island of Bombay (hereinafter ARPB) for the year 1899 (Bombay, 1900), p. 107.
20 For an interesting discussion of this theme, see J.C. Masseus, ‘Migration and Urban Identity: Bombay’s Famine Refugees in the Nineteenth Century’, in Sujata Patel and Alice Thomson (eds), Bombay: mosaic of Modern Culture (Bombay, 1996), pp. 25–60.
21 GOB, General (Plague), vol. 704, Compilation no. 622, 1899, p. 77, para. 3, MSA.
22 Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 23 July 1898, GOB, Judicial, vol. 105, Compilation no. 1991, 1901, para. 7, MSA.
23 GOB, General (Plague), vol. 704, Compilation no. 622, 1899, para. 5, MSA.
24 C.J. Fyall, Official Secretary, GOI, Home, to the Secretary, JD, Bombay, 10 December 1889, Home (Public), December 1889, A 92, para. 5, 146.
25 GOB, Judicial, vol. 105, Compilation no. 1991, 1901, MSA. For a recent analysis, see Masseus, ‘Migration and Urban Identity’.
26 Minute by Sir Charles Ollivant, 26 September 1898, GOB, Judicial, vol. 105, Compilation no. 1991, 1901, MSA.
27 Gazetter, II, pp. 238–45.
strength of Calcutta and considerably weaker than London. In the 1880s, the ratio of policemen to the city's population stood at 1:507 (almost twice the figure for the Calcutta city police force which had an estimated ratio of 1:227) and this figure did not change significantly in the following decades. The distribution of the police force over the island was also skewed in favour of the more elite enclaves of the city. Statistics compiled in 1892 showed, for instance, that the ratio of policemen to the total population in the A division, an area predominantly inhabited by Europeans, was 1:324 as compared to the figure of 1:1,142 in the E division which was largely working class in its social profile.

Moreover, the combination of a heavy workload in the absence of a sufficient reserve force and the low rates of pay tended to deter the local population from seeking employment in the police force. Thus, 'there was a substantial turnover of policemen every year roughly at the rate of 10 per cent' on account of the rural connections of those who served on the force, a phenomenon which frequently 'proved incompatible with the maintenance of police discipline'. Given the low pay associated with the police, desertions from the lower ranks of the force were a common occurrence during times of buoyancy in the urban economy.

Low pay and harsh conditions of work could, at times, result in a breakdown of discipline in the lower ranks. In March 1907, following a rise in inflation and an increase in house-rents, sections of the Indian constabulary went on strike and refused to accept their pay. The constables demanded an increase in pay as well as an enhanced house-rent allowance. Although the strike ended after concessions made by the authorities, seeds of doubt about the discipline of the lower ranks of the force were nevertheless sown in the minds of the European officers who manned the upper ranks.

Their concerns on this score were heightened by the knowledge that a large proportion of their Indian constabulary was drawn from the same area, Ratnagiri District, as the bulk of the city's working classes. When a major riot erupted in the city in the wake of Raja Gangadhar Tilak's trial for sedition in 1908, the Director of Criminal Intelligence declared:

From the 1890s onwards the issue of police reform and reorganisation, especially the augmentation of its numerical strength, began to attract sustained official attention. While there had been a decrease in the size of the force during the two decades between 1865 and 1885, numbers increased appreciably in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In particular, the armed mounted police was trebled in the wake of the 1893 riots to provide a reserve force for future emergencies. Pecuniary increments to the size of the force were introduced in the following decade too, usually prompted by major episodes of urban rioting. Yet, as historians have noted, there were limits to what the colonial administration could achieve in this regard since financial considerations were a constant obstacle to any major attempt to augment and strengthen the police. As the costs of policing until 1907 were borne by local ratepayers who resisted any rise in this item of expenditure, the colonial administration generally proceeded with caution in the matter. Thereafter too, expenditure on the police was constrained by the colonial state's endeavours to keep costs down.

Nonetheless, an attempt was made to redress the severe housing problem faced by the city's police force. One of the key tasks of the Bombay Improvement Trust was to build new accommodation for policemen. Of course, the provision of new, centralized police accommodation was also designed to facilitate the rapid mobilization of the force in times of crisis and avoid the dangers of allowing the lower ranks of the force to share tenements with the working classes. 'The events of the past year', Lord Sandhurst declared in the wake of the 1898 riots, 'have brought out very clearly the fact that the continued

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48 Chandavarkar, Imperial Power, p. 185.
49 ARBP, 1884, para. 68.
50 Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Under Secretary, JD, Bombay, 8 July 1892, GOI, Home (Police), February 1893, A 390, pp. 40-41.
51 It was reported in 1896 that the rate of pay of the native constabulary had 'practically remained stationary since the year 1865'. L.B. Scouler, Acting Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Under Secretary, JD, Bombay, 7 July 1906, GOI, Home (Police), February 1907, A 23-4, para. 3, OIOC.
52 Chandavarkar, Imperial Power, p. 187.
53 Thus an increase in wages in the textile industry and a spurt in building activities in the city in 1906 led to an exodus from the force as the lower constabulary sought alternative employment.
54 L.B. Scouler, Acting Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Under Secretaries, JD, Bombay, 7 July 1906, GOI, Home (Police), February 1907, A 23-4, para. 5, OIOC.
55 H.G. Gell, Commissioner of Police, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 10 April 1907, GOI, Home (Police), May 1907, A 91-3, pp. 695-709, OIOC.
56 G.J. Stevenson-Moore, Officiating Director, Criminal Intelligence, to Sir Harold Swart, Officiating Secretary, GOI, Home, 5 August 1908 in GOI, Home Political, December 1908, A 149-69, NA. Quoted in Chandavarkar, Imperial Power, p. 197.
57 On the reductions to the police force, see Acting Secretary, JD, Bombay, to Secretary, GOI, Home (Police), 16 June 1893, GOI, Home (Police), June 1893, A 139, pp. 3-6, NA.
58 Garrow, II, p. 245.
59 For a detailed discussion of these structural constraints, see Chandavarkar, Imperial Power, pp. 184-207.
60 The question of who should pay for the local police produced a protracted bout of wrangling between the Bombay Municipal Corporation and the provincial government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Details of the controversy can be found in GOI, Home (Police), October 1893, A 75-85, NA. See also GOI, Home (Police), February 1893, A 386-401, NA. For the arrangement finally agreed upon by the Corporation and the Government of Bombay in 1907, see GOI, Home (Police), January 1907, A 81-2, OIOC.
61 Chandavarkar, Imperial Power, p. 189.
existence of Bombay as a civilised community depends upon the discipline and efficiency of its conservancy staff and of its police.¹³¹

Misgivings about the efficiency and reliability of the Bombay police, highlighted by the findings of the Police Commission of 1902-1903, also directed attention to the vexed question of organizational reforms. In 1908, after two major riots, the provincial government appointed the Morison committee to investigate the functioning of the city's police force, which concluded that the city lacked adequately equipped police stations and a modern system of crime detection. It also contended that the existing methods of crime prevention were inefficient because of 'an absence of educated men in the ranks of the native constables and jemadars' and the inability of European officers to exercise proper supervision since they did not 'know the language of the people of the City as well as they ought to'. No increase in the numerical strength of the police, the committee argued, would be of any use 'unless the control from above is made much more efficient from the top downwards'.¹³²

S.M. Edwardes, a member of the Morison committee, subsequently became the city's new Commissioner of Police. He was the first officer from the Indian Civil Service to hold the post of Police Commissioner in Bombay and was well acquainted with the city and its inhabitants.¹³³ Edwardes, who was in London at the time his appointment was announced, used the opportunity to acquaint himself with the latest developments in the policing of the metropolis. With the approval of the Home Office, he spent the early months of 1909 experiencing at first hand the modern methods of crime prevention and detection in a 'typical' police division in the city, as well as the 'staffing, equipment, structural features and general management of one of the latest and most up-to-date London police stations'. He also observed closely the workings of the metropolitan 'beat-system', the Finger Print Bureau, and the training school for police constables at Westminster.¹³⁴

On his return to Bombay, Edwardes set about devising a new police reorganization scheme that was based to a large extent on the principles and practices he had witnessed in London. After calculating the existing strength and distribution of the force in Bombay, the new Commissioner concluded that 'a greater part of the city cannot be said to be policed at all by day and is very indifferently policed at night'.¹³⁵ He proposed a number of reforms, the most significant involving the introduction of modern methods for the registration of crime and redesigned police stations manned by a superior and subordinate investigating agency.¹³⁶ He also advocated replacing the old fixed point system of crime investigation with a new system of mobile patrols. His scheme entailed a total increase of 1,639 policemen to the size of the force in order to make the system practicable and would have ensured 'a proportion roughly of one policeman to every 247 of population'.¹³⁷ Edwardes also demanded an increase in the European element in the force since 'people have imbibed new doctrines and require to be taught that even if the native ranks prove partial or indifferent to duty, there is still on the side of authority a sufficient body of European officers'.¹³⁸

Predictably, Edwardes's proposals were whittled down under government structures on the need for economy and,

the increase in the strength of the constabulary which would have been necessitated by a patrol system had to be abandoned with the result that the small addition to the constabulary was practically absorbed by the investigation staff attached to each police station and by the formation of a totally inadequate reserve of 30 men intended to form the training reserve of the Headquarter division.¹³⁹

Thus, a subsequent reorganization scheme found the next Commissioner of Police reciting a familiar litany of woes: there was a 'greater strain' on the urban police on account of the 'increased work thrown on the force as a direct result of the shortage of men'; the force was having to accept 'recruits of lower physical standard in order to cope with vacancies', the men were underfed 'owing to dearth of all commodities', and a majority of the policemen lived in insanitary housing since 'one half of my force ... is still unprovided with lines'.¹⁴⁰

However, Edwardes was able to secure some of his intended reforms. For instance, the government sanctioned his proposal for the creation of new police stations based on the 'London model'. A majority of these stations were housed in buildings erected by the Improvement Trust. Each was 'equipped with a staff composed of one Inspector, one Deputy Inspector, three Indian Sub-Inspectors for criminal investigation, plain-clothes constables and a clerical staff'. The officials in charge of the station maintained a 'first-information sheet' and 'case-diary' so as to 'secure a complete record of every case taken up by the police'. Moreover, the schedule of duties was 'so arranged that at any moment in the twenty-four hours an English-knowing officer, with power to record complaints and commence enquiries, would be found in the general charge-room of the station'. By the end of 1916, thirteen police stations based

¹³¹ Council Proceedings, 1898, XXXVI, p. 10. Yet progress on this front was slow. By 1914, the Bombay Improvement Trust had completed seven police accommodation schemes, which housed a total of 21 officers and 392 men with their families. AARBST, 1913-16, p. 3.
¹³² GOI, Home (Police), February 1910, A 39-41, Accompaniment No. 3, OFOC.
¹³³ The three-volume Bombay city gazetteer compiled by him was published in the year that he became the chief of the police force.
¹³⁵ S.M. Edwardes, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 22 February 1910, GOJ, Judicial, April 1910, A 9, pp. 535-69, OFOC.
¹³⁶ Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 22 February 1910, GOJ, Judicial, April 1910, A 9, para. 2, OFOC.
¹³⁷ Ibid., para. 15.
¹³⁸ Ibid., para. 6.
¹³⁹ F.A.M. Vincent, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Chief Secretary, JD, Bombay, 19 February 1918, GOJ, Judicial, August 1918, A 22, para. 1, OFOC.
¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 1279-1305.
on the new model had been established 'with a full complement of officers and men'.

Edwards's tenure as Police Commissioner also saw the introduction of a 'Police Gazette', which appeared three times a day and listed 'full details of all reported crimes' committed in the city. Under this system, which was also inspired by metropolitan practice, when a crime was reported the duty of the section officer consisted simply in telephoning full details to the Deputy Commissioner C.I.D. who arranged for their insertion in the next issue of the Gazette, copies of which were delivered at every police station within a few hours of the occurrence. In 1915, for instance, the Police Notice office, composed of a European inspector and an Indian head constable, circulated in this way nearly 10,000 paragraphs and 67 supplements dealing with murders, thefts, deserters and persons wanted, and also published and circulated to the divisions forty pages of special orders concerned with daily routine.11

A 'Limited Raj'?

The heightened social tensions in fin-de-siècle Bombay also forced colonial authorities to reassess their relations with the urban neighbourhoods. Prior to the last decade of the nineteenth century, the city's rulers had by and large tended to stay aloof from the affairs of the neighbourhood. For much of the time, Catanach has noted, 'the nineteenth century British did not normally see control of the Indian Town as a problem of great consequence'.12 However, the turbulence of the 1890s prompted them to engage more actively with the world of neighbourhood politics. In particular, through the agency of the police, the colonial administration sought to cultivate closer links with those who could be identified as 'leaders' within the localities in order to forestall threats to urban public order.

For the better part of the nineteenth century, formal authority in the urban neighbourhoods had generally been exercised by legitimated structures of ostensibly 'traditional' corporate authority: caste and community headmen as well as masalas (Islamic sectarian authorities) and priests.13 The colonial state had relied upon these 'traditional' sources of leadership to preserve cohesion within the neighbourhoods.14 Of course, the source of 'traditional' leadership in the various indigenous communities were often the creatures of British rule, as it set about formalizing structures that had previously been more fluid in

11 Edwards, Bombay City Police, pp. 154-7.
13 J.C. Maselos, Power, pp. 79-80.
14 In some cases, influence over its affairs was also exercised by those of wealth or of some other kind of eminence in public life who had moved away from the territorial confines of the neighbourhood but who still retained contact with it either through the formal installation of the caste jamat or through judicial pressure upon non-hulla leaders wherever the occasion demanded. For a general delineation of this theme, see Maselos, Power, pp. 78-81.

nature, and derived their status from the recognition bestowed upon them by the colonial administration at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Yet until the beginning of the 1890s the colonial administration had maintained only the most 'tenuous and haphazard' links with these 'traditional' sources of authority.15 Arguably, it was this 'tenuous' link with the world of the neighbourhood that was responsible for the impotence with which the police dealt with events in August 1893. Colonial authorities did not utilize the services of the so-called 'natural leaders' during the riots until long after the violence had abated. However, during the plague campaign of the late 1890s and especially after the change of policy induced by the riots of March 1898, an attempt was made to work through the traditional leaders of the local communities such as jamats leaders in the prosecution of plague policies.16

As the decade wore on it became apparent to colonial officials that the large influx of new migrants in the preceding two decades had wrought a significant change in the power relations of the neighbourhood. Power and influence no longer resided solely in formal, legitimated sources of corporate authority but was increasingly exercised by those who controlled the informal networks of patronage that had begun to coalesce within the plebian secondary economy and culture of the streets in the late nineteenth century. These new local points of authority and influence included jobbers, rent-collectors, petty landlords, Pathan moneylenders, the proprietors of taverns and tea-shops, brothels, gymskhana and street-bosses of various kinds commonly known as dadas.

Consequently, while the traditionally legitimated structures of corporate authority continued to be utilized, the colonial administration sought to forge links with some of these new sources of influence. 'When there are possibilities of disturbance in Bombay', revealed S.M. Edwards, 'the Commissioner of Police calls in to his assistance a class of persons who cannot be called leading citizens, who are often uneducated, who are ordinarily never heard of, and who themselves live in the quarters where the trouble is fomented.'17 Disorder of a violent kind, he argued, 'is not created as a rule by members of the Municipal Corporation; but by the members of a lower stratum, which is rarely seen in society, is largely uneducated, but which controls the bazaar.'18

Access to this lower stratum of the bazaar was facilitated by a variety of intermediaries, both official and unofficial, who operated between the world of the neighbourhood and the colonial administration. Some of these intermediaries had developed extensive connections with the informal networks of power and patronage by virtue of their position in the local police hierarchy. In the 1890s, for instance, Khan Bahadur Mir Abdul Ali and Mir Akbar Ali were reputed to be indispensable members of the police force as their duties included the 'constant supply of information to the Commissioner of the

15 Catanach, 'Who are your leaders?'; pp. 209-261.
16 MCRP, 1899, 2, passim.
17 Maselos, Power, p. 79. For an extended discussion of these social relations of the neighbourhood, see Chandavarkar, Imperial Power.
18 Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, J.D. Bombay, 24 September 1914, GOI, Home (Police), December 1915, A 96-108, para. 6, OIOC
state of public feeling in the city, and the exercise of a vigilant and tactful control over the inflammable elements among the masses at such seasons of excitement as the muttars'.\(^9\) Mir Abdul Ali, a Deccani Muslim, was said to have 'wielded a degree of control over the badmashes of the city wholly disproportionate to his position as superintendent of the *Safed Kapadwale* or plain-clothes police'.\(^1\) In later years, men such as Ubedulla Khan, Roshan Ali, Sheikh Ibrahim, Sheikh Imam and the Taki brothers were said to have exerted similar influence.

Local businessmen, who were often integral to the flows of credit within the neighbourhood, also functioned as conduits in connecting higher police officials to the lower depths of the bazaar. Men like Umar Jamal, a Halai Memon resident of Memon Mohalla, who was said to possess influence over the Julahas of Madanpura, best exemplified this type of figure.\(^1\) At the time of his death in 1901, Umar Jamal was a commission agent who also owned a stable opposite the Byculla Club. He was said to have arrived in Bombay during the 1880s to establish his business and his rapid rise appears to have been facilitated by the assistance he lent local colonial officials during the 1893 riots. Another such figure was Haji Cassim Mitha, a Halai Memon resident of Koliwala. Cassim Mitha, a man with extensive trading and money-lending interests, was said to possess influence not only over his own community but also the Konkani Muslims of his neighbourhood and became an increasingly ubiquitous figure in mediating neighbourhood disputes in the 1890s.\(^1\)

In some instances, colonial authorities sought to vest the sources of informal leadership that they identified with the trappings that they reserved for more traditional sources of authority. For instance, in 1895 the Police Commissioner was said to have been instrumental in 'restoring harmony' among the north Indian Muslim migrants of the city. After efforts by one of his Muslim subordinates, Sardar Khan Babadur Mir Abdul Ali, a meeting was convened at which the leaders of the various sections of the north Indian Muslim migrants were prevailed upon to settle their 'quarrels':

> The principal leaders were subsequently invited by the Police Commissioner, who congratulated them on the happy event, exhorted them to live peacefully, appointed six Sardars (umpires) from the three principal divisions to settle future differences, and presented each of the Sardars with a shawl on behalf of the police.\(^1\)

While the upheavals of the 1890s prompted colonial authorities to improve ties with the world of the neighbourhood, they also induced the recognition that a mere reliance on traditional and informal sources of influence at this level was not in itself a sufficient guarantee against disruptions of public order. For one thing, the complicity between their own ranks and those with influence in the neighbourhood could lead to the pursuit of private agendas that ran counter to the wishes of those who occupied the higher echelons of the colonial administration.\(^1\)

Moreover, the local sources of influence that the police relied upon did not always prove to be dependable allies. During the plague campaign, for instance, many of the neighbourhood leaders became wary of associating themselves with the plague regime for fear of losing their influence over their followers. As one colonial official noted, 'there are a good many instances of long enjoyed influence being lost on account of active assistance rendered in plague measures'.\(^1\) Indeed, it was noted that men of influence who rendered help to the plague authorities, 'do not desire that the assistance given by them in some matters be made known, and amusing instances not infrequently occurred of influential Volunteers using the most careful endeavours to avoid any open recognition of their assistance'.\(^1\) Thus more than one other has for his honest endeavours in recent years to help the plague authorities reaped a harvest of hatred and abuse [sic].\(^1\) Thus there were men like Chaudhari Nur Ali, one-time leader of the Julahas weavers, who it was said was 'hailed by them more than he was popular before'.\(^1\) During the riots of March 1898, the police had sought to pacify the crowd of Julahas in Madanpura by calling upon the services of Nur Ali who had hitherto been able to maintain control over his people, to assist the plague officials.\(^1\) However, Nur Ali expressed an inability to pacify the crowd noting that 'the people’s heads were turned' and that they would not listen to them, their own Sardars, or any one else.\(^1\) Indeed, the District plague Officer of the E ward observed that the Julahas were much excited at the sight of their Chaudhari, Nur Ali, against whom they seemed greatly incensed.\(^1\) As Chandavarkar has argued, colonial authorities 'often tried to invest those they perceived as neighbourhood leaders with power and influence which they never possessed' and this strategy for the maintenance of public order was 'found on shifting sands'.\(^1\)
A new interventionism: the 1902 City Police Act

Another response to the upheavals of the 1890s was to have a far more profound impact on the policing of public order in Bombay. In July 1902, a new piece of legislation was introduced that extended police jurisdiction over a range of activities and sites that had hitherto been outside its purview and concentrated enormous discretionary powers in the hands of the Commissioner and his deputies. In a context in which the influence of the traditional neighbourhood leaders was perceived to have waned and the newly emerging informal networks of patronage based on the street were not considered entirely reliable, colonial authorities fortified themselves with draconian powers that allowed them to discipline and modify the everyday conduct of their subjects in the interests of 'public order'. Most notably, they sought to regulate the use of urban public space in a manner that was quite unprecedented.

The nature and scope of the provisions that were introduced by the new act for the 'preservation of order' suggest that the developments of the 1890s had registered a significant impact on the official mind. First, the act vested the police with an exhaustive array of 'special powers' for regulating and controlling all collective activities in public spaces that might potentially compromise the 'public peace'. Thus, police officials could now 'direct the conduct of, and behaviour or action of persons constituting, processions and assemblies in streets'; 'prescribe the routes by which and the times at which any such processions may, or may not pass'; 'prevent obstructions on the occasion of all processions and assemblies in the neighbourhood of all public places of worship'; 'keep order on and in all streets, squares, wharves, landing-places and all other public places or places of public resort'; and 'regulate and control music or singing in any street or public place, and the beating of drums, tom-toms and other instruments and the blowing or sounding of horns or other noisy instruments, in or near any street or public place'.

In the 1890s, the demands for enhanced powers had frequently emanated from the European officials who manned the higher ranks of the police force. The necessity for a separate City Police Act for Bombay had been repeatedly stressed at the beginning of that decade. Local authorities had responded by drafting a bill in 1895 that borrowed heavily from the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code of 1882. However, before the proposed bill came up for discussion in the Legislative Council, a new Criminal Procedure Code was enacted in 1898. This prompted the Bombay Government to argue that much of the special legislation embodied in the new city police bill would be unnecessary if the provisions of the revised criminal procedure code were to be adopted with suitable modifications, keeping in mind the needs of the city. The Government of India differed on this point as it believed that the special legislation proposed by the Government of Bombay, far from being merely 'necessary modifications', involved 'substantial alteration' of the provisions of the new code. By this time, however, the Commissioner of Police had begun to concern himself with the many ways in which the absence of a comprehensive police act. Finally, in 1902 it was decided to proceed with the drafting of a new city police bill in view of the 'special conditions' that prevailed in Bombay' (GOB, Judicial, January 1902, A 46, p. 221, OIOC).

In 1902, the Police Commissioner was especially keen to acquire greater powers of regulation over such sites arguing that 'real danger to the peace of the city might be caused by the location near a Mahomedan Mosque of a Hindu eating-house, or near a Hindu Temple of a Mahomedan eating-house'. Likewise, he added, 'if eating-houses held by persons of one religion are open in the midst of people of another religion, it is more likely that a serious disturbance of the peace might take place... The Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Under Secretary, ED, Bombay, 28 February 1902, GOB, Judicial, March 1902, A 24, OIOC.

Second, the definition of 'public' sites and spaces that were subject to police regulation was rendered as comprehensive as possible. For instance, a 'street' was construed to mean 'any road, footway, square, court, river or passage, whether a thoroughfare or not, to which the public have permanently or temporarily a right of access'. Similarly, a place of 'public amusement' encompassed 'any place, enclosure, building, tent, booth or other erection, whether permanent or temporary, where music, singing, dancing or any diversion or game... is provided'; and included any 'race-course, circus, theatre, music hall, billiard-room, bagnolle-room, gymnasium or fencing school'. A place of 'public entertainment' included any 'refreshment-room, eating-house, coffee-house, liquor-house, boarding-house, lodging-house, hotel, tavern or wine, beer, spirit, arrack, toddy, ganja, bhang or opium shop'.

Furthermore, the new Act also consolidated and extended the formal powers of regulation and control vested in the police by criminalizing a range of activities in 'public' sites and spaces. In some instances, pre-existing punitive provisions against some categories of offences were rendered even more stringent than before. Especially noteworthy in this respect were the provisions with regard to 'pauper immigrants' and 'beggars'. Those who were arrested under either of these categories now faced a maximum punishment of a one-month prison sentence or a fifty-rupee fine. The Act also enabled the police to deport 'pauper immigrants' and persons convicted twice of begging. Any such deported persons who returned to Bombay without the permission of the police could be jailed for up to two years.

Significantly, the new Police Act vested a range of discretionary powers in the Commissioner of Police and his subordinates. The most significant of these were in relation to the newly framed 'special orders' for the 'preservation of public order'. Whereas prior to the introduction of the 1902 Act the Police Commissioner could only issue general rules for the conduct of public assemblies and processions, the newly introduced legislation vested him with a detailed and exhaustive list of powers. No collective activity or display in public was now possible without the prior permission of the police. If the Police Commissioner considered it expedient, he could prohibit 'any assembly or procession whenever and for so long as he considers such prohibition to be necessary for the preservation of the public peace or public safety'.

The Commissioner of Police was also empowered to prohibit, whenever he deemed fit, 'the carrying of swords, spears, bludgeons, guns, or other offensive weapons, in any public place', 'the public utterance of cries, singing of songs,
playing of music' and 'the delivery of harangues, the use of gestures or mimetic representations, and the preparation, exhibition or dissemination of pictures, symbols, placards, or of any other object or thing' that in his view was likely to 'inflame religious animosity or hostility between different classes, or incite to a commission of an offence, to a disturbance of the public peace or to resistance to or contempt of the law'.\(^{111}\)

If he was satisfied that in an 'actual or intended religious or ceremonial or corporate display or exhibition or organized assemblage in any street or public place' there was the likelihood of a 'grave disturbance of the peace', the Police Commissioner could 'give such orders as to the conduct of the persons concerned towards each other and towards the public' as he thought necessary.\(^{112}\) Moreover, the Police Commissioner had the power to direct those whose movements he suspected of causing 'danger or alarm' or manifesting 'unlawful designs', to 'disperse and remove themselves' to any place within or outside the city that he might designate.\(^{113}\) Refusal to do so could result in their forcible deportation from the city by the police.

The powers of the Police Commissioner were also augmented in other ways. In particular, the new act vested the Commissioner with wide discretionary powers with regard to the licensing of all commercial activities that were carried on in spaces designated as 'public'. Prior to the introduction of the act, the Commissioner of Police was bound by the law to issue a license to anyone applying for one. Now, however, he could refuse to grant licenses to those who were reckoned to possess 'a notoriously bad character'.\(^{114}\) In some circumstances, the act also allowed the Police Commissioner to exercise the judicial powers of a presidency magistrate.\(^{115}\)

It is not intended to suggest, of course, that such capacious formal powers were automatically translated into pervasive police surveillance on the ground. Nonetheless, the introduction of the new police act was to have significant consequences for the relationship between the police and local society. In particular, the 'special orders' for the 'preservation of order', the discretionary powers to license activities in 'public' spaces as well as the strengthening of the punitive powers in relation to various categories of 'street offences', amplified the scale and dimension of the potential conflict between the police and local society.

Policing the plebeian public sphere: the Bombay Muharram

One significant consequence of the 1902 Act was that the vast discretionary powers vested in the Commissioner of Police and his immediate subordinates served to entrench them in a pivotal role within the politics of the urban neighbourhood and the street. Of course, colonial police officials had intervened from time to time in local disputes on an informal basis even before the passing of the 1902 Act. But the police could now actively deploy the detailed and sweeping powers borrowed by the new act in dealing with recalcitrant elements. At the same time, those who rendered themselves useful to the police could reap the reward for their services by being granted 'favourites' of various kinds, most notably with regard to licences for activities that now required police permission. Furthermore, by widening the discretionary powers of the police, the new act also prompted the European upper ranks of the force to act on their anxieties about the threat to public order in an 'oriental' city and to intervene forcefully in local disputes. The corollary to this, however, was that the police became more directly exposed and vulnerable to popular resentment on account of their actions.

The 'Muharram riots' that repeatedly rocked the city in the first decade of the twentieth century are illustrative of some of these themes.\(^{116}\) As noted previously, in the late 1890s European police officers had begun to perceive the Muharram festivities as a threat to public order on account of the seemingly 'licentious' and 'riotous' behaviour of the lower classes who participated in the festival in large numbers.\(^{117}\) In the early years of the twentieth century, the powerlessness of the 'traditional' leaders in the face of these elements and the inability of the police to manipulate adequately the informal sources of influence within the neighbourhood, precipitated a more direct application of force from above. Most notably, the Police Commissioner literally deployed the 'special powers' bestowed by the 1902 Act in an attempt to signify British authority over 'public space' in the city.

Although scholars have noted that in the first decade of the new century 'the world of the administration which the British represented was moving in on the mobholla',\(^{118}\) it has not been adequately recognized hitherto that the response of the colonial authorities to the conflicts over the conduct of Muharram was shaped to a large extent by the anxieties that were generated by the upheavals of the 1890s. Nor have historians sought to locate the central role played by the Commissioner of Police in this drama within the wider context of the newly enhanced discretionary powers of the law-enforcement agencies through the introduction of the new Police Act of 1902. Furthermore, while existing scholarly interpretations of these riots have alluded fleetingly to the spatial dimension of these riots, this aspect has not been fully considered. In showing how the colonial regulation of 'public space' produced its own logic of conflict, the following account of the Muharram riots attempts to bring these themes into sharper focus.

\(^{111}\) ibid., section 23 (2).
\(^{112}\) ibid., section 25 (1).
\(^{113}\) ibid., section 27.
\(^{114}\) ibid., section 22 (3).
\(^{115}\) ibid., Chapter IV, section 56 (1).
\(^{116}\) A contemporary official account of these riots is to be found in Edwards, Bombay City Police. For a seminal scholarly analysis, see Masselos, 'Power', 75–95; and Masselos, 'Change', 47–67.
\(^{117}\) See, for instance, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD Bombay, 3 July 1895, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, 16 July 1895, no. 1264, MSA.
\(^{118}\) Masselos, 'Power', p. 87.
The tensions aroused by the conduct of the Muharram festivities largely centred on Doctor Street, a locality that had been predominantly inhabited by the Sunni lower classes until the 1890s. The Bohras, who were of the Shia sect, gradually began to move into this street in the last decade of the century. By the turn of the century the neighbourhood had come to be dominated by the houses and mosques of the Bohras, a reflection of the economic prosperity of this 'respectable' trading community. It is likely that their economic and social superiority began to arouse resentment among their poorer neighbours, a feeling that was aggravated when the Bohras sought to assert their authority over Doctor Street by preventing the passage of the Muharram toils through the locality.

On 23 March 1904, when a toil made its way through Doctor Street 'playing music as is, and has been for many years, the custom in this street, a number of Bohras rushed out and attacked the musicians with the result that the procession broke up in disorder and the members fled in all directions'. The ensuing incident prompted the police to immediately move in to register its presence in the neighbourhood. The next night when the Bengali toil entered Doctor Street, a police party stationed outside the Bohra mosque stopped the music, resulting in a minor affray. The following day the police party, which had in the meantime been augmented, prevented the Kasai mohalla from playing music before the Bohra mosque. However, as soon as the toil passed the mosque it once again commenced to play music, at which point several Bohras armed with sticks rushed up and attacked the toilwallahs. Two nights later the toilwallahs of Rangari mohalla, a locality predominantly inhabited by Bohra and Muslim labourers of modest means, were prevented from going into Doctor Street and were stoned by the Bohras living in Abdul Rehman Street when they passed through that area. The Rangari mohalla toilwallahs then commenced to attack any Bohras whom they encountered on the streets.

The following day the Police Commissioner cancelled the toil licence of the Rangari mohalla whose toil was held responsible for the attack on the Bohras and closed Doctor Street to all the toils on the Kali-ki-raft as well as on the Immersion Day. The Police Commissioner justified his decision by arguing that the Rangari mohalla had a previous history of violence and that it was 'notorious for being composed of turbulent persons ever ready and eager to have a fracas with other processionists on the slightest pretext'. While this decision invoked their supposed propensity for lawlessness in its support, it ignored the part played by the 'respectable' Bohras of the locality in instigating the violence, and was thus perceived as biased by the lower orders.

The decision to ban Doctor Street to the toils and the singing out of Rangari mohalla by the police aroused great resentment among the adjacent neighbourhoods. As an expression of solidarity with Rangari mohalla none of the toils went out on the Kali-ki-raft, which was an unprecedented occurrence. When the Police Commissioner summoned the principal toil licensees to ascertain the cause for their grievance, he was told that 'they had the right of way through Doctor Street for many years, that it was only recently that the Bohras had built their mosques therein and that there could be no objection to music being played in the street when the Bohras themselves allowed music in the mosques'. Even though the Commissioner of Police relented and permitted the toils the use of Doctor Street, he refused to restore the licence of the Rangari mohalla.

As a result the toils stayed as they were, reflecting the popular anger against the decision. The mood remained sullen on the final afternoon and resentment against the Bohras of Doctor Street exploded into a riot in which the community was targeted for attack. Enraged crowds, comprising the lower-class Sunni toils, repeatedly surged through Bohra-dominated neighbourhoods in symbolic acts of violation of their territorial space. Bohras were attacked on the streets and the police were stoned at various points. Fearing that the quarrel which began between the Sunnis and Bohras (Shias) would be taken up by the whole Shia population of Bombay and become one between the two great factions of the Mahomedan religion, the Police Commissioner immediately called for military aid. The move yielded immediate results and within hours the streets were cleared of the protesting crowds.

The ill feeling generated by the riot of 1904 continued to simmer in the following years. In 1906 the Bohras of Doctor Street petitioned the police not only to grant their locality special police or military protection but also to use their powers to prevent other Muslim communities from using the street between the fifth and final night of Muharram. 'It is well known to you', the petitioners declared, 'that the Bohras do not make or parade Tajias or indulge in Panjas or Fallas, nor do they take any part in the various kinds of unseemly and indecorous processions which throng the streets of Bombay between the 5th and 10th of the month of Moharrum'. On the contrary,
they pointed out, as ‘true’ Muslims they marked the festival with befitting solemnity. Their quiet and respectable religious observance, the Bohras argued, was being disturbed by the doings of ‘thousands of Mahomedan Badshahis belonging to other sects and gangs of lawless ruffians’, who spent the festival moving through Doctor Street,

in rowdy and irregular processions and gangs, making immense noise both vocally and with tom toots, principally right in front of their Musjids, at hours of prayer and otherwise, using most foul and indecent language, abusing Vohras generally by mentioning the names used or adopted by males and females of that community and of their head priests or mujajis, making most indecent gestures and signs and exposing their persons to males and females, sitting or standing in the windows or verandahs of their houses, creating nuisance of the most filthy character right near and in front of their houses and Musjids, and in short offering annoyance of every conceivable kind which all make the lives of the inhabitants of the said street most miserable and intolerable.  

Colonial officials responded favourably to the Bohra petition and stationed a large contingent of policemen in Doctor Street during the Muharram of 1907. The identification of this police action with the interests of the Bohras stoked the embers of popular resentment in the Sunni neighbourhoods and eventually led to an even bigger conflagration in 1908. The riots that occurred that year were sparked off by an affray involving a Julaah tabut procession and some Sunnis who were praying in their mosque on Falkland Road on the immersion day. The police arrested three of the Sunnis allegedly involved in the incident, the news of which spread rapidly through the city. As a mark of protest many of the tolis refused to proceed with their tabuts and, presumably convinced of the role of the Bohras in the affair, proceeded to attack them as well as the police. At Doctor Street, Dhabu Street and in Bhandy Bazaar, the police had to be deployed in large numbers to hold back crowds bent on wreaking violence on the homes and shops belonging to Bohras. Popular perceptions of the partiality of the police towards the Bohras also led to repeated assaults on the police and the troops at various places. The law-enforcement agencies resorted to firing to clear the streets, which resulted in 43 casualties.

In 1909, the Government of Bombay appointed a committee consisting of 36 members to aid the police in maintaining peace during Muharram. The members of the committee included traditional authority figures from the Muslim-dominated neighbourhoods as well as men of position in commerce and industry. Although the festival that year passed off without any violence, it became apparent that these elites had little control over those who participated

in the celebrations. The Muharram committee, it was noted, had allowed the tolis to ‘do exactly as they wished, to the utter discomfiture of the peaceful and law-abiding residents of the Hindu and Muslim quarters’. This bolstered the conviction of the higher police authorities that the best way to suppress threats to public order was through the overt display and use of force.

In the same year, S.M. Edwardes, who was to play a central role in the future course of events, took charge as Commissioner of Police. Edwardes was extremely critical of the government decision to appoint a committee that he felt had tied the hands of the police. The observance of Muharram in 1909 had brought ‘disgrace to the city’ on account of the ‘lawlessness’ of the tolis, he wrote,

and was rendered the more so in that the Police Commissioner was practically compelled by the presence of the committee to become an interested spectator and the committee was not in a position to exercise the smallest control over excesses which spread tension, discomfort and panic broadcast throughout B, C and E divisions for a week.\(^1\)

Perhaps owing to the fact that he had not made his way up the ranks, Edwardes was critical of the informal systems of control that had underpinned police authority in the city. The prime necessity in dealing with the lower orders of the city, he argued, was to demonstrate that the local executive authorities possessed the power to crush any sign of ‘lawlessness’. The Bombay executive authorities, in his view, ‘had failed to prove that they are the ultimate masters of the city’. As a result, the tolis had turned the festival into an orgy of license, obscenity and disturbance. The appointment of committees composed of the city’s elites only compounded matters by indicating the weakness of executive authority in the face of a threat from below. ‘It is obvious’, he contended, ‘that respectable persons, whose daily life is passed in the upper class areas of Bombay and in decent society, cannot on a sudden assume and exercise authority over persons whose daily life is passed in the more disreputable portions of the city and not infrequently in jail.’ Edwardes accordingly set about invoking the powers bestowed by the new Police Act to crush the street gangs.

At the same time, the new Commissioner of Police could not afford to bypass entirely the local networks of influence that prevailed within the neighbourhood. Edwardes utilized these with a view to bringing about a truce between the rival neighbourhoods. For instance, a banquet was organized by Sulaiman Cassim Mitha, to which organizers of all the Muharram processions were invited. The gathering, consisting of some three thousand applicants for licences, met in a spirit of bonhomie.

\(^{192}\) S.M. Edwardes, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 24 September 1914, GOI, Home (Police), December 1915, A 96–108, para. 5, OIOC.

\(^{193}\) Ibid.

\(^{194}\) Ibid.

\(^{195}\) S.M. Edwardes, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 23 August 1911, Bombay Confidential Proceedings, Judicial, October 1911, A 7, p. 480, OIOC.
Edwardes used the occasion to announce that although processions could go through Doctor Street, no music whatsoever would be permitted while they were there. As news of this announcement spread, there was a groundswell of protest in the leading mobillas, who refused to take out their tabouts in protest. The toli leaders of these mobillas also sent a petition to the government in which they directly attacked Edwardes for being partial to the Bohras in not allowing them to use Doctor Street as they had done customarily. The petition is interesting insofar as it provides evidence of the popular perception among the lower orders of the complicity of the police and the Bohras. At one point, the petitioners informed the Governor that Edwardes and his deputy Vincent,

have been bribed through a Mahomedan Police officer with three lakes of Rupees [sic] by the Bhoorees out of which two thousands were paid by the above officers to one Sulleeman C. Mehta who had delivered a dinner (Biryane) party where members of J.P. & Khansalibs were invited along with other Mahomedans at the instance of the officers to compound the dissatisfaction prevailed between two parties [sic].

The Police Commissioner's decision had the effect of exacerbating tensions between the various neighbourhoods. The Juthlas of Madanpur mobilla, one of four Shia groups who participated in the tabouts ritual, broke away from the Rangari mobilla-led combination and decided to take out their tabouts, as did other rival neighbourhoods such as the Kolsa mobilla and its associates, Chunha Bharti, Chias and Teli Gall mobillas. As a result of these tensions, both on the Kati-kirat as well as the final day, no processions went out and on Edwardes's orders, no tabouts were immersed. Although there was no overt violence, Edwardes's decision to regulate the movement of the tolis intensified the friction between the police and the

The antagonism produced by the actions of the executive authorities led to an open confrontation the very next year, one that was precipitated by the actions of the Commissioner of Police. As has been noted previously, under the Police Act of 1902, the Commissioner could prescribe the precise routes for processions. Invoking his powers, Edwardes issued a special order that detailed the routes by which the Muharram tolis could pass. Prior to this, the annual orders issued prior to the festival by the Commissioner of Police had merely laid down the dates and times at which the Muharram tabouts could be paraded. Now, however, Edwardes presented the tolis with a precise procession route map that precluded them from venturing into Doctor Street and the adjacent Bohra-dominated localities of Dhabu Street, Pahmodia Street, Chhima Butcher Street and Mutton Street. Moreover, those who intended to take part in the processions were directed to pay heed to the rule regarding the carrying of 'offensive weapons' in public which, apart from the swords, spears, bludgeons, guns', also prohibited 'lathis and heavy sticks'.

The Police Commissioner's decision provoked a great deal of popular resentment in the Sunni localities, and the mobillas refused to purchase for tabouts licences as a mark of protest. A week before the commencement of the festival, however, some of the leading mobillas such as Rangari, Kolsa and Chunha Bharti reversed their earlier stand and decided to apply for licences. The decision shattered the solidarity that had hitherto existed between the Rangari mobilla and its erstwhile allies such as Bengapura, Teli Gall, Bapu Hajam and Kasai mobillas in the E division as well as the mobillas of the E division who perceived this move on the part of the former group and its leader Latiff Chawalla, as an act of betrayal. Though they eventually applied for tabout licences, the other mobillas decided not only to boycott the Rangari mobilla but also to stick to their decision of not lifting the tabouts.

Sensing the popular mood and anxious to shore up his fragile base, Latiff who owned a tea-shop in Rangari mobilla, sought to mend fences with the Julahas of Madanpur and their leader Badlu. The latter, who already possessed a police record, had been a vocal advocate of the policy of

144 Masselos, 'Tower', p. 85.
145 S.M. Edwardes, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, J.D. Bombay, 24 October 1911, Bombay Confidential Proceedings, Judicial, November 1910, A 3, para. 3, OIC.
146 Petition from Syed Yacub Mahomed and others of Rangari Mobilla, Bapu Hajam Mobilla, Kasai Mobilla and Mazagon, GOB, Judicial, vol. 182, Compilation no. 571, 1910, p. 193, MSA. This view was also echoed in sections of the native press and the Muslim Herald, for instance, observed that the Police had stopped the music in Doctor Street only because the Bohra 'being wealthy apparently wield greater influence with Government'. Muslim Herald, 27 January, 1910, KNNBP, 5, 1910. Interestingly, a few weeks after the Muharram of 1910, there was an affray involving some Bohras of Doctor Street and a Sunni in which the latter was severely beaten. The incident threatened to assume the proportions of a riot before a body of armed Police was hurriedly despatched to the spot and twenty-two Bohras arrested. The Commissioner of Police attributed the 'unusual exhibition of valour' on the part of the Bohras 'to an excess of spurious self-confidence engendered by the complete protection which the Police afforded them at the last Muharram'. S.M. Edwardes, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Under Secretary, J.D. Bombay, 10 February 1910, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, September 1910, A 36, p. 1837, MSA.
147 Petition from Syed Yacub Mahomed, GOB, Judicial, 1910, vol. 182, Compilation no. 571, p. 193, MSA.
149 India Prakash, 25 January 1910, in KNNBP, 5, 1910.
150 It is likely that Rangari mobilla took this step in order to keep up its long-standing rivalry with Kolsa mobilla and its allies who had decided to take part in the festival.
151 S.M. Edwardes, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, J.D. Bombay, 20 January 1911, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, March 1911, A 17, para. 3, MSA.
applying for the tabut-licences. According to Edwards, Latiff, while applying for his tabut licence, asked me personally to grant the Julahas a pass for the procession. Anticipating the difficulties that the law enforcement agencies would encounter in the face of a joint procession involving the Rangaris and the Julahas, Edwards refused to accede to this request. He also exerted his personal influence with the Julahas to wreak the prospective alliance. He had dealt before with members of this community, having interceded on their behalf in the wake of a strike by getting them re-employed and ensuring that their employers paid their outstanding wages. Using his contacts, Edwards now summoned Badruddin and persuaded the latter to withdraw from his arrangement with Latiff by suggesting that the Julahas of Madapanna continue having their own toli and tabut and follow their usual route.

During the first few days of the festival, Edwards also called in the neighbourhood leaders of the Pathans, the Sidis and the Panjabi Muslims of the city and warned them against joining any of the tolis. His active intervention in the conduct of the festival gave further credence to the popular perception amongst the lower orders that he was a benefactor of the Bohras. As in the previous year, rumours circulated about the Bohras having bribed Edwards 'with a barrel of rupees' in return for closing Doctor Street. The Bohras themselves were quick to trump up their success in ensuring the closure of Doctor Street to the toli.

On the seventh night of the festival, a confrontation was averted when the Rangari moholla and the Halai Memon moholla tolis turned out in force late at night against police orders prohibiting them from being out on the streets and proceeded to enter the Koka Bazaar where many Bohras lived. Here the two tolis played music loudly before the Bohra Masjid and stirred up abuse at the community. 'In fact,' wrote Edwards, 'it passed the word round that though Doctor Street had been closed by the Police it had found a new Doctor Street and had checkmated the Commissioner.' The following night the Kasai moholla's procession on its way home followed the example set by these two tolis and after turning into Koka Bazaar, attacked some Bohras and looted shops belonging to them.

By now police officials, especially the Police Commissioner himself, were on edge. On the night of the second Koka Bazaar incident, when the Telgi Gali toli came out briefly and returned to its moholla, Edwards construed this as a signal to the other mollahas to wreck the festival and hurriedly deployed the recently created Criminal Investigation Department (CID) and Sheikh

Ebrahim to smooth away difficulties. The following night, the entire upper tols of the force were out at various locations, exerting their influence to keep the various mollahas in a good temper. While Deputy Commissioner Vincent went with some CID officers to the E division and moved about the various neighbourhoods there, Edwards visited the B division, talked with the tabutwallas, and endeavoured to allay the tension, which was obviously spreading through the Muslim quarter. His anxiety deepened when the Bara Imam Sanadai, which usually started out from Khoa Street on the ninth night, did not emerge. This, for the fertile Police Commissioner, represented the barometer of the Moharram in that 'its non-appearance in the streets usually indicates storm'. Edwards, who at this stage was as susceptible to rumours as the lower classes whose propensity for rumour mongering he was so disparaging a about, had no doubts whatever that the licensee had stayed put because 'the recalcitrant faction, including Bengalpura and Telgi Gali, sent a secret message that if he dared to leave Khoa Street he and his processions would be mobbed and hurt'.

On the final night, the Kadi-ka-raat, the Rangari moholla toli came out but then turned back because Latiff feared that his former allies, who had collectively agreed to dismantle tabuts in their respective neighbourhoods, would attack his procession. Edwards convinced that such action on the part of the Rangaris would lead to a riot, sent for Latiff and warned him with dire consequences if he did not lift his tabut. The helpless Latiff, squeezed as he was on both sides, was 'genuinely afraid' but had no choice but to comply with the Police Commissioner's demand. On the way Latiff 'implored police protection for his procession in view of the anger of Telgi Gali, Bengalpura and the Konkan Mohallah'. His fears proved well founded and the Rangari moholla procession was attacked by the tolistwallas of the other mollahas who sought to put it for nullifying the impact of their collective protest. The police party provided for Latiff's protection was also worked unaccountably all along the procession route.

Informed of these events, Edwards promptly called for the military and ordered a simultaneous baton charge on the crowd of protesting tolistwallas. While this succeeded in dispersing the crowd by the early hours of the morning, it also unleashed a great deal of popular anger. On the last afternoon, crowds gathered on the streets of the native town and commenced to stone the police. Repeated clashes occurred between the law enforcement agencies and the

113 Ibid., para. 9.
114 Ibid., para. 10.
115 Ibid., para. 11. Criticising Edwards's decision to force Latiff to lift his tabut at any cost, one report in the Guwahati pointed out that, 'When other Mohallahs were deterred to abandon the action of those who fell in with the suggestion of the Police was calculated to produce a feeling of resentment on the ground that the latter had selfishly abandoned them and broken away from what they must have regarded as an implied understanding to act in concert'. Guwahati, 15 January 1911, in RNNP, 2, 1911.
116 S.M. Edwards, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD Bombay, 20 January 1911, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, March 1911, A 17, para. 11, MSA.
crowds at Bhendi Bazaar and Paidhoni. The troops fired 72 rounds into the crowd in their bid to reassert control over the streets. According to the official estimate, 20 persons were killed in the firing while 27 were injured.\textsuperscript{162}

In the aftermath of the riot of 1911, Edwardses made out a case for redefining rather than merely regulating the nature of the Moharram festivities in the interests of public order. Specifically, he proposed doing away with the tolis, which he argued were 'merely an excuse for rascality to burst its usual barriers and allow over the city in a current of excessive turbulence'. I have studied the Mohorrum for ten years, further as a student of folk-customs and for the last two years as the chief representative of the City of Law and Order', Edwardses declared, 'and I am absolutely convinced of the necessity of prohibiting the procession.' There was no sanction for the tabuts-processions in the Koran, he argued, and suggested that the practices that marked the celebration of the tolis stemmed from the Hindu belief in spirit-belief. As such, in his view, there could be no justification for such practices in an Islamic state of mourning. The nightly Waza or religious discourses were the only 'unobjectionable' aspect of Moharram in Bombay, he contended, but unfortunately these are little patronized by those to whom they would do most good, namely, the bad characters in the tolis; for the latter are too sodden with intoxicants and the abominations of an Eastern City to listen to the voice of religion. I have listened to the preachers myself and I have heard them give excellent advice and teach a practical morality, but their efforts are lost upon the knaves who have made the Bombay Mohorrum hideous in the sight of all right-minded persons.\textsuperscript{163}

The following year, Edwards made a new set of regulations that prohibited all tolis throughout the festival; any toli that appeared on the public streets was deemed to be an 'unlawful assembly'. Panja and pethi processions were also allowed but their numbers were restricted to thirty. No licence for a panja was to be granted to any non-Muslims nor were any non-Muslims to be allowed to parade any panja. The hiring and circulation of tabuts on the Kadi-ki-raft was to be strictly confined to the limits of the respective mohollas in which each tabut was placed and the appearance of any tabut in defiance of this rule was to be considered 'an act of disobedience to orders'. On the day of immersion, all the tabuts were permitted to go out in procession, subject to the condition that each tabut should be lifted and carried to the most direct road to the main route of the procession.

As in the previous year, all the Banya localities were entirely closed off to all Moharram celebrants throughout the ten days of the festivities. Finally, a new refundable deposit fee of one hundred rupees for good behaviour was made mandatory for all those who wished to procure Moharram licences.\textsuperscript{164} The deposit was to be returned only if the licensee could show the police that he had complied with all the rules of the new order. To give effect to these regulations, on the eve of the festival Edwardses used his powers as a Presidency Magistrate to reinstate the estuadi custody 'all persons known to have been involved in the Muharram disturbances and to be likely to foment disorder'. Having done this, he then made the police presence as unobtrusive as possible, whilst at the same time keeping the military on ready standby.\textsuperscript{165}

An absence of the usual carnival atmosphere and the throngs of people on the streets marked the festival of 1912. Most of the mohollas decided against building any tabuts as a mark of collective protest as soon as the new regulations were issued.\textsuperscript{166} As a result, in comparison with the previous year when there were 105 licence applications for tabuts and 611 for panjas, in 1912 there was only one application (from the Leper Asylum) for a tabut licence and 34 for panjas.\textsuperscript{167} 'Taking it all in all', Edwardses wrote in a self-congratulatory vein, 'the badmash element felt itself outclassed and except in the case of Madanpura ... contented itself with lying low and hurling threats and angrigation at the Police Commissioner.' At the same time, he pointed out that the most noteworthy feature was 'the rise in the number of "Maliks" at which the Malvis discourse nightly on religious matters and the very great increase in the number of Mahomedans attending them'. 'Religion took the place this year of irreligion', Edwardses declared, 'order and tranquillity reigned in the place of riot.'\textsuperscript{168}

Policing the casual economies of the street

The 1902 act also rendered the police a more obtrusive presence in the quotidian functioning of the plebian secondary economy. The police enthusiastically utilized their enhanced powers to target those sections of the urban poor who made a precarious living on the streets of the city: beggars, barbers, carriage drivers, cartmen, cobblers, hawkers, prostitutes, vagrants and the like. Indeed, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, a majority of the 'cognizable' cases reported by the Police Commissioner in the annual police statistics were not under the Indian Penal Code but rather under a variety of local acts, and frequently involved offences such as 'street obstruction', 'public nuisances', gambling, 'loitering' in public thoroughfares and drunken and 'disorderly' behaviour.

Of course, the colonial appropriation of 'public space' in the interests of urban order was not a sudden development. As Anderson has pointed out, from the 1860s onwards, the colonial state in India deployed the 'twin devices of property law and criminal law' in order to 'sustain a massive intervention in the social use of the physical environment'. The colonial doctrine of 'public

\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., para. 14.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., para. 20.
\textsuperscript{164} S.M. Edwards, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 23 August 1911, GOB, Bombay Confidential Proceedings, Judicial, October 1911, A 2, para. 6, OIOC.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., para. 9.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., para. 3.
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., para. 7.
nuisances', in particular, allowed for 'a new ordering of public space'. First introduced by the Indian Penal Code of 1860, it was rapidly adopted in subsequent local and urban municipal legislation.\(^{110}\) For instance, the Bombay Municipal Act of 1888 introduced bye-laws that prohibited all usages that were deemed to be 'nuisances' upon 'public streets'.\(^{111}\)

Given the inherently 'fuzzy' and contested nature of the boundaries between 'public' and 'private' space, colonial authorities were constantly confronted by quotidian transgressions of the rules that they sought to enforce. In turn, the police in their capacity as enforcers of the law vigorously deployed local act legislation against those who contravened the regulations relating to the use of 'public space'.\(^{112}\) In 1899, for instance, the rise in local act cases was attributed by the city's Police Commissioner to the 'greater activity on the part of the Police in taking up street offences'.\(^{113}\) One Presidency Magistrate in Bombay even went so far as to suggest that the excessive concern with showing success in booking petty street offences had rendered the Police 'redundant to take up cognizable offences in which they are likely to fail'.\(^{114}\) This criticism was echoed by Indian newspapers which noted critically that the Police eschewed tackling 'real crime' and concentrated on 'apprehending beggars and hawkers, and hack Victoria and Rekla drivers, found loitering in the streets'.\(^{115}\)

Such petty cases increased dramatically after the Police Act of 1902 buttressed the provisions relating to 'street offences'. The Commissioner of Police commented with satisfaction that the police showed 'great activity' in working the new Act, 'especially with regard to the sections dealing with street nuisance, street obstruction, and squatter cases'.\(^{116}\) The offenders in the majority of instances were said to be 'men, women and children who endeavoured by hawking articles of very small value to make an honest, albeit a very meagre living'.\(^{117}\)

Police action against those who infringed local acts relating to the usage of 'public streets' and 'public spaces' was impelled by the structural weaknesses of the Bombay city police. For a numerically challenged, over-worked and poorly-equipped force, petty street offences involving the poor provided an attractive alternative to the more strenuous task of chasing up serious crimes against person and property. Moreover, they possessed the virtue of being easier to record and thereby helped to inflate the figures for cognizable crime. This was of little meaning given the premium that was placed on achieving uniformity in the annual police crime statistics. Indeed, as S.M. Edwards acknowledged:

> There appears to be an unwritten law among Police Officers that statistics from year to year must be uniform; and it has been the practice among Superintendents here, if they found their number of Local Act cases in their divisions falling below the average to immediately whip up their subordinates and swamp the Courts with petty cases before the end of the year with the sole object of bringing up the figures.\(^{118}\)

A preponderance of such petty cases over Indian Penal Code cases in the annual returns of crime was desirable since this could be cited as evidence of the greater vigilance and activity of the police rather than serving as an indicator of the increase in 'real' crime. As one Commissioner of Police explained:

> The chief concern of the police must always be with Indian Penal Code cases. If the figures are unduly high and remain high or show a tendency to increase the criminals are clearly more than a match for the police ... On the other hand an increase in Local Act cases does not mean an increase in crime; it merely means that the police are more active; a decrease in Local Act cases does not mean a decrease in crime; it means that the police are less active than they might be. In fact the best indication of the efficiency of the police is a substantial decrease in Indian Penal Code cases and a substantial increase in Local Act cases.\(^{119}\)

The high incidence of 'street offences' not only highlighted the 'efficiency' of the police, it also enabled them to demand more resources to carry out the law. Thus, the Commissioner of Police argued that in a large and populous city there is great scope for Police action in such cases, and added that 'the large number of such cases taken up by the Police is no criterion of what could be done if I had a larger force to deal with them'.\(^{120}\)

The pressure asserted by indigenous middle-class 'public opinion' was also responsible for police action against the casual economies of the street. Indian educated elites became vocal adherents of the colonial doctrine of 'public nuisances' and favoured strong police action against aspects of plebian street culture that were deemed antithetical to the code of 'respectability'. Indeed, local newspapers frequently brought pressure to bear on the police to suppress...
activities such as prostitution and gambling that were regarded as the innate vices of the lower orders. 160

The attempts of law enforcement agents to exert their authority over 'public space' turned the street into a site of struggle between the police and those sections of the poor who depended on casual occupations for their livelihood. Hawkers, for instance, engaged in a running battle with the police. In 1909, local authorities investigated the question of controlling hawking. It was reported that many hawkers 'squatted within a very short distance of any Municipal market'. The hawkers preferred to do this because 'it brings them in touch with the buyers going to the markets and enables them to get their custom by underselling the market stall-holders'. Colonial officials pointed out that this was 'a very constant and serious cause of complaint on the part of the market stall-holders and as far as practicable such hawkers are driven away'. However, they ruefully admitted that,

In spite, however, of all our efforts there are markets such as Erskine Road Market in Null Bazar, where at frequent intervals throughout the day the whole street is occupied by petty hawkers of the kind referred to... These men do not wish to go anywhere else and could not be induced to squat in special stands. 161

Confronted by the 'persistence of the hawkers in carrying on their trade in spite of the fines inflicted upon them by magistrates', some colonial officials argued that the trade was 'lucrative enough to enable them to pay a small licence fee'. They contended that a licensing system 'would tend to prevent unfair competition and at the same time provide an additional means of control'. 162 Accordingly, the government of Bombay decided to grant licences that permitted hawking in a few designated streets. Certain preconditions, however, were attached to this concession. No hawking was to be allowed within two hundred yards of a Municipal market. The authorities also sought to 'prevent any class of persons from obtaining prescriptive rights to the use of any part of the public thoroughfare'. The Commissioner of Police was therefore ordered 'to keep each of the streets included in his exempted list entirely free of hawkers on one day in each year'. 163

Despite this, however, the 'hawker problem' continued to dog urban authorities. Less than three years later, the Municipal Commissioner was once again complaining about the fact that 'the conditions under and limitations under which it was proposed that the practice should be tolerated were being entirely disregarded by hawkers' and that 'in many parts of the city, serious obstruction continues to be caused to public traffic'. 164 According to the Police Commissioner, these 'petty hawkers whose sole possession appears to be a small basket of fruit or vegetables' when presented before the Magistrate, 'produce the basket which is about a foot or a foot and a half in diameter and are consequently treated lightly by the Magistrate who punish them with fines ranging from two annas to a rupee'. 165 In some instances, hawkers arrested by the police 'produced evidence to show they were sitting just outside the market and they had paid certain sums to the Municipality for the privilege', leaving magistrates with no option but to acquit them. 166 The issue of how to deal with hawkers would continue to remain unresolved. Even as late as 1922, an exasperated Police Commissioner was complaining that the fines inflicted on hawkers did not prevent them from paying them and hastening 'back to their perch to repeat the offence the minute they get away from Court'. 'They know fully well', he added, 'that the Police cannot spare men to arrest them everyday and they look on fines as merely rent for the use of the road which can easily be paid out of the profits'. 167

'Beggars' proved to be equally elusive targets. As we have seen earlier, deportation came to be favoured as a means of ridding the city of vagrants and 'pauper' immigrants. However, in the long run, their experience of deporting beggars made police officers disillusioned about the efficacy of the measure. By 1921, police officials were ready to admit that,

There can be no doubt that the present machinery for dealing with beggars is quite inadequate. Their numbers are so enormous that the Police can give them only partial attention and the results of prosecutions in most cases hardly justify the time expended in arrest and putting up cases in Court. 168

Resistance to the police did not merely take the form of evasion. From time to time, the poor also vented their anger on the police by assaulting constables when they patrolled the street. For instance, on 13 January 1915, a constable was produced at the Police Courts under the charge of being 'drunk and disorderly' in which state he and his friends were said to have attacked Govind Madhu, a police sepoy while the latter was on duty. 169 In another such incident on the night of 17 May 1905, Mulloo Jivanji and three of his friends, all South Indian migrants, were accused of being drunk and assaulting a constable on a public thoroughfare. In convicting the accused, the magistrate noted that 'such

160 See, for instance, jam-e-jamshed, 2 January 1904, in RNINP, I, 1904; Indian Social Reformer, 11 June 1910, in RNINP, 24, 1910. In this context see also, Anderson, 'Public nuisance.'

161 W.D. Sheppard, Municipal Commissioner, Bombay, to Under Secretary, JD, Bombay, 16 November 1909, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, June 1910, A 22, para. 1, MSA.

162 A.H.S. Ashton, Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 18 July 1908, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, June 1910, A 22, para. 2, MSA.

163 Government of Bombay Circular, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, June 1910, A 22, MSA.

164 J. Gers, Municipal Commissioner, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 16 September 1913, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, July 1914, A 44, p. 1205, MSA.


166 A.H.S. Ashton, Chief Presidency Magistrate, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 19 February 1914, GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, July 1914, A 44, MSA.

167 ARPB, 1922, para. 1.

168 ARPB, 1921, para. 34.

169 BG, 13 January 1905.
assaults upon the police were becoming frequent. The police constable is always regarded as a fair quarry by the roughs of the city', noted Edwards in 1910, 'and only recently I have had occasion to order the constables in a certain portion of the E division to patrol in a party of 3 or 4 in order to avoid ill-treatment and rough usage in the performance of their duties.'

It is not intended to suggest, of course, that the relationship between the police and the urban poor came to be defined solely by conflict. As has been argued recently, the lower ranks of the police force were drawn from the same social base as the working classes of the city and both came to be mutually implicated in relations of reciprocity. Informal social networks based on reciprocity meant that, at the lower levels, processes of accommodation also marked relations between the police and the poor. Indeed, this was one of the reasons why police action against the so-called 'lawless gangs' often failed miserably. However, it is important to recognize that the 'reciprocity' that ostensibly informed the relationship between the police and the poor was ultimately based upon an asymmetric power equation. Indeed, it is for this reason that the ordinary constable was a much-reviled figure on the street and the city's police force lacked legitimacy among Bombay's lower orders. Furthermore, both processes of conflict as well as of accommodation between the police and the city's inhabitants were testimony to a decisive historical shift that saw the police acquire a new centrality within the social relations of the neighbourhood and the street in the aftermath of the crises of the 1890s. The police act of 1902, in particular, served to enmesh the police more closely within the quotidian economy and politics of the neighbourhood. By enhancing the scope of police powers, the act transformed the police into a key element in local politics and one that all players in the neighbourhood now had to contend with.

Conclusion

The turn of the twentieth century marked a crucial watershed in the history of public order policing in colonial India. Prior to the 1890s the colonial state had largely focused on the pacification of the Indian countryside. But as the nineteenth century drew to a close, it was in the towns of the Raj that the maintenance of 'public order' became an increasingly pressing issue. This was especially so in the old Presidency capitals of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay where the dynamics of industrial urbanization began to generate new problems of social control for the ruling authorities. In colonial Bombay, the outbreak of large-scale urban riots in the 1890s as well as the rapid growth of a plebian 'secondary economy' and culture centred on the street precipitated a shift in colonial policing strategies. The traditional colonial strategy of 'indirect' control began to give way to a more intrusive approach via-dire the urban neighbourhoods and the emergent plebian public sphere. In particular, this chapter has highlighted the salience of the 1902 Police Act, which vastly enhanced the discretionary powers of the police over a range of 'public' activities and urban spaces that had hitherto been unregulated. Their newly consolidated powers, in turn, increased the scale and dimensions of the conflict between the colonial police and the populace. Consequently, the relationship between the colonial administration and plebian society in Bombay grew markedly fractious in the years leading up to the end of the Great War.

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191 BG, 19 May 1905.
192 S. M. Edwards, Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Secretary, JD, Bombay, 22 February 1910, GOB, Jaddal, April 1910, A 9, p. 343, para. 5, OIOC.
193 Chandawarkar, Imperial Power, pp. 131, 227.
194 It seems probable, noted Edwards, regarding the persistence of gambling despite periodic police efforts to suppress it, that the subordinate police occasionally accept 'hush-money' to turn a blind eye on the gamblers' movements; but otherwise it is difficult to understand why men, who are known to have been running gambling establisments for years should have successfully evaded the law... S. M. Edwards, Crime in India (London, 1924), pp. 118-19.

Forging Civil Society

Introduction

In February 1889, N.G. Welinker, a teacher in the Free General Assembly’s Institution in Bombay, established a reading group to provide ‘regular moral instruction’ for his students. The class that he founded convened regularly every Sunday and soon came to be known as the ‘Students’ Brotherhood’. At these weekly meetings, Welinker took his pupils ‘through books of useful advice to students like Dr. Todd’s Students’ Manual and Blackie’s Self-Culture’. The Brotherhood sought to ‘encourage the habit of study’, to uphold the ideal of fellowship, and to engage in ‘social service as the path to the higher life’. In the pursuit of these aims, it aspired to bring together ‘persons of all communities desirous of raising the moral tone of the rising generation’.

As the work of the Bombay Students’ Brotherhood began to be publicized within the city, it attracted the intellectual and philanthropic support of many influential individuals. Its president in the early years of the twentieth century was Sir Narayanrao Chandavarkar, an acknowledged supporter of social reform, who voluntarily came forward to teach and direct the affairs of the society. A number of other university-educated men, drawn from different communities, also taught at its weekly Sunday classes. The Brotherhood received financial support from Ratan Tata, one of Bombay’s most influential business magnates and a noted philanthropist, who made a ‘generous annual donation’ that allowed it to acquire ‘comfortable and well-furnished rooms in Girgaon’. The new premises not only became the venue for the weekly Sunday classes, but also housed a library and reading room.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Bombay Students’ Brotherhood began to initiate similar societies in other towns of the Presidency. Its membership in Bombay also expanded considerably and consisted of two tiers. The ‘A class members’ were ‘citizens well-known in many different walks of life’; ‘B class members’ on the other hand, were drawn from students of the different local high schools and colleges. The Brotherhood’s activities in these years consisted of ‘systematic teaching’ through ‘weekly classes, public lectures and addresses’, ‘the circulation of a Quarterly Journal and of other educative literature’, the promotion of ‘healthy social intercourse’, and the provision of occasional aid to poor students. The overarching aim of these endeavours, it was noted, was ‘to purify, enlarge and in the best enrich the life of the student population, who are to be the citizens of the future’.1

The Students' Brotherhood was one of a growing number of voluntary associations and societies that proliferated in Bombay during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its activities are emblematic of a nascent urban 'civil society', construed here as an intermediary realm of 'more or less voluntary associations outside the state'. To a greater or lesser extent, the associations constitutive of this civil society were 'self-organizing' and 'self-reflexive' in that they were constituted for specific ends, which were generally embodied in their rules and regulations; they were characterized by 'modularity', in that individual members were free to join and leave, and they sought to achieve their objectives principally through 'dialogue, bargaining, and persuasion'.

This chapter focuses on the consolidation of a vibrant and plural associative culture in late Victorian and Edwardian Bombay. The first section sets the scene by tracing the emergence of urban civil society in the first half of the nineteenth century. The second section shows how associational life in the city acquired a new density and dynamism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The efflorescence of associative culture in this period is an important index of the manner in which Bombay's Indian residents responded to the aspirations and anxieties unleashed by urban modernity. In particular, it points to the ways in which the city offered new possibilities for imagining and fashioning collective selves defined by the competing identities of caste, class, religion and nation.

The emergence of civil society

The domain of urban civil society in colonial Bombay first began to crystallize in the early nineteenth century, its contours crucially defined by the logic and exercise of colonial power. At one level, the ideology of sovereignty that informed the actions of the colonial state was an important pre-condition for the emergence of the modern idea of civil society in the Indian context. In supplanting a pre-colonial order in which political authority was 'not gathered into a single centralized state', European colonialism opened up the conceptual possibility of 'a collective definition of all other groups defined against the state'. At the same time, colonial authorities also 'worked on an implicit understanding of the division between the true province of state control and a province of society which could be left unregulated'. In other words, 'colonial administrations themselves partly out of their own conceptual habits, partly out of convenience, allowed a substantial part of social life to be free of their direct control' and thereby facilitated the creation of an 'inchoate', embryonic 'civil society'.

In colonial Bombay, the policies of the English East India Company produced a 'limited urban civil society' in which particularistic private interests operated under the patres femina of a 'laissez-faire market economy'. Two features are salient in this context. First, the English East India Company granted various civil rights to the mercantile communities that had settled in Bombay, including the freedoms to trade, to own land and to build homes within the fort walls guaranteed by military protection, as well as the right to religious practice. Second, Bombay's colonial rulers 'encouraged the internal institutions which were the backbone of castes'. Caste councils known as 'panchayats' were recognized as legitimate sources of authority in adjudicating and settling the internal disputes of communities. As a consequence, caste-based groups in Bombay were able to exercise a freedom in their internal affairs 'that was not paralleled outside the city'. Significantly, colonial legal regulations frequently buttressed the supposedly primordial corporate identity and structures of leadership of castes and religious sects within the city, thereby rendering rigid what had hitherto been more negotiable entities.

Colonial governance shaped the domain of urban civil society at other levels. As a recent scholarly account has argued, colonial policies in western India not only 'altered the structures of identity and learning' through its educational policies, but also created new modes and spaces of 'ideological collaboration' with local elites. In particular, colonial power sought to reinforce the hegemonic character of its educational discourse 'through the creation of other arenas such as the press and voluntary associations'. Bombay's first newspapers were established towards the end of the eighteenth century; the Bombay Herald appeared in 1789, followed thereafter by the Bombay Courier (1790), the Bombay Gazette (1791), and the Bombay Times (1838). All these newspapers were established and run by Europeans, and the Bombay Courier was 'for many years known as the official organ of the government'. Likewise, principles of voluntary association first manifested themselves in the founding of educational, literary and scientific societies. For instance, a Bombay Literary Society was established in 1804 by Sir James Mackintosh, Recorder of Bombay, 'for the investigation and encouragement of Oriental Arts, Sciences and Literature'. The society was amalgamated with the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain in 1829 and came to be designated as its Bombay branch. From 1831 onwards, the Society occupied rooms in the Town Hall and its library became the repository of a vast collection of books.

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2 Bhargava and Reliefs (eds), Civil Society, Public Sphere and Citizenship, p. 14. As Bhargava has pointed out, civil society can be either narrowly conceived as an arena of private interests or more broadly construed as subsuming 'political society' and the 'public sphere'. (ibid., pp. 11-24).


8 Marcellus, Towards Nationalism, pp. 9-11.


11 Green, III, p. 140.
and manuscripts. In addition, the Society opened a museum 'for the collection and preservation of antiquities and of specimens of the natural history, arts and mythology of the East', and began to bring out a journal from 1841. The Bombay Native School Book and School Society, which came into existence in 1822 (renamed the Bombay Native Education Society in 1827) and was vested with the task of standardizing the content and methods of disseminating colonial education, functioned according to 'operational procedures based on principles of voluntary association'. Thus, in constituting an institutional space based on ideas of a non-particularized public realm, this society 'represented a crucial dialogic arena that inaugurated an abbreviated version of a quasi-civil society type of political order on the subcontinent'.

The second quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed the establishment of a number of such colonial associations and societies, most notably the Engineer Institution (1823); the Bombay Agri-Horticultural Society (1830); the Bombay Geographical Society (1831); the Bombay Medical and Physical Society (1835); and the Bombay Mechanics' Institute (1847). Colonial power may have defined the contours of the civil society that emerged in Bombay, but its substantive character was shaped from the very outset by indigenous initiatives. Indians in Bombay, especially the propertied and the English-educated, were quick to recognize and seize the possibilities afforded by the new modes of association and sociability within this domain. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the city's Indian business elites partook of a highly cosmopolitan commercial culture and participated in collective ventures that transcended the boundaries of caste, religion and race. As far back as the 1720s, 'Indian and European merchants had joined together to maintain a bank and hence avoid the exorbitant charges of local shroffs'. In 1836, they banded together with European merchants to establish the Bombay Chamber of Commerce. Comprising initially of fifteen European and ten Indian firms, one of the principal aims of this association was 'to encourage a friendly feeling and unanimity among commercial men on all subjects involving the common good'. Over the course of the following decades, the Bombay Chamber of Commerce pursued its objectives by submitting memorials and petitions on a variety of issues that affected the interests of its members. And even though the conduct of the association 'rested mainly in the hands of enthusiastic and experienced Englishmen', the Indian shetias quickly came to appreciate the value of this mode of sociability.

But it was members of the numerically miniscule, Anglophone Indian intelligentsia who were most active in fashioning the new realm of voluntary associations in mid-nineteenth century Bombay. Indeed, their participation in associational activities was integral to the social identity of the embryonic educated Indian middle class. Here, the role of the students of the Elphinstone Institution was especially significant. In 1848, under the leadership of two English professors of the college, they established a Students' Literary and Scientific Society, which brought together Parsis, Gujarasis and Maharashtrians. Possessing a common educational background, the members of the society were appealed by a belief both in the providential and beneficial character of British rule and liberal education. Their shared background and outlook quickly earned them the sobriquet of 'Young Bombay'.

The Students' Literary and Scientific Society expanded quickly and by 1852 it had 106 members. At the outset, the Society served as a meeting place for ex-graduates of the Elphinstone Institution, 'to which they came to hear papers read on scientific subjects, such as metallurgy, social questions such as education, and subjects of general interest such as the role of newspapers in society'. But the desire to engage in practical activities for the common good led the Society's members to undertake initiatives in female education. Thus, schools were established for girls of the Parsi, Gujarasi Hindu and Maharashtrian communities. The need to reach out to a wider audience also prompted the Society to establish branches that conducted their proceedings in the local languages. In September 1848, two vernacular societies were set up, one for the Marathi-speaking population and the other for the Parsi community. Three years later, a third society was formed, which targeted the Gujarati Hindus of Bombay. Each of these societies 'published its own journal' and also produced 'cheap pamphlets on scientific and other subjects in their respective languages'. All the three societies 'were reasonably active until the sixties with the Parsi body retaining momentum into the seventies'. Significantly, these intelligentsia-led initiatives were crucially dependent on members of the city's merchant aristocracy, both for money and 'moral support'.

Members of the English-educated intelligentsia also established reform associations within their own religious communities in response to what they perceived as the fundamental weaknesses of indigenous traditions and practices. Thus, in 1851 a few Parsi graduates established the Rukhsat Marzdatyasam Sebha (Religious Reform Association), whose principal objective was to restore the Zoroastrian religion to its 'pristine purity', by simplifying community rituals and countering waste and extravagance. To this end the members of the society published, presented, and discussed papers; they also awarded prizes 'for the best works published on religion'. The moving spirits behind this association - Naoroji Furdunji, Dadabhai Naoroji and Sorabji

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11. Ibid., pp. 330-34.
16. Maselos, Towards Nationalism, p. 16. As keen supporters of British rule, many shetias also contributed funds to European societies and in some instances also became members. For instance, business magnates like Sir Jamshedji Jeejeebhoy, Mankhoor Curwenji and Jagannath Shankerser were inducted into the Royal Asiatic Society. Gazetteer, III, p. 333.
18. Dubbin, Urban Leadership, p. 56.
publishing a journal called the Suhod Patrika, through which it publicized its 'reformist' ideas. 23

English-educated Indians also took the lead in founding the city's first political association. The catalyst for the establishment of the Bombay Association in August 1852 was the impending renewal of the East India Company's charter, with all the possibilities that this offered for political reform. The key figures here were men like Nararij Furdunji, Dababhai Narorji and Bhaau Daji, all alumni of the Elphinstone Institution who had played a prominent part in the Students' Literary and Scientific Society. 24 The Bombay Association set out three objectives for itself. First, it would draw up reports to the British Parliament concerning the imminent renewal of the Company's charter. Second, it would present memorials to the Government of Bombay with regard to existing policies that it considered ill-conceived. Finally, it would suggest general measures aimed at augmenting 'the welfare of Indians' in the Bombay Presidency. Once again, however, in order to have a realistic chance of securing a measure of political reform, the English-educated intelligentsia needed the support of the city's prominent shettias. As a consequence, shettias outnumbered the educated in the management committee of the new association. 25 Furthermore, its first President was Jagannath Shankersher, one of the city's leading business magnates, who 'was able to persuade a number of the more important and advanced shettias not only to join the new association, but to provide it with the necessary funds'. 26 Membership of the association was technically open to all, but given the high fee of twenty-five rupees per annum, it was restricted in practice to the more politically-minded elements amongst the propertied classes. Yet, notwithstanding its limited membership, the Bombay Association was a genuinely cross-communal body: the management committee in its inaugural year consisted of ten Parsis, seven Hindus, three Muslims, two Goans and one Jew.

The fortunes of the Bombay Association waxed and waned over the following two decades. 27 To begin with, it focused its energies in presenting a petition to the British Parliament, backed by three thousand signatures, which called for greater Indian representation in the councils of power. However, the Association ran out of steam once the immediate reason for its creation, the renewal of the Company's charter, no longer existed. While it was not entirely dormant thereafter and did mount some campaigns, most notably for greater 'efficiency' in government, its activities were rather subdued on the whole. It tended to focus on legal and administrative matters, and made no pretence of pursuing its objectives regarding the welfare of the masses with any degree of vigour. Moreover, after the upheavals of 1857, tensions between the English-educated elements and some of the more conservative shettias led to the former

21 Ibid., pp. 38-9.
22 Nair, 'Seed Period', p. 70.
23 Masseo, Towards Nationalism, p. 81.
24 However, the precise date of its demise has been the subject of speculation. See Rosalind O'Harrow, Caste, Conflict, and Ideology: Mahars in Nineteenth-Century Western India (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 101-102.
25 Interestingly, the timing of its establishment appears to have been influenced by the presence in Bombay at this time of Mary Carpenter, the English social reformer. Masseo, Towards Nationalism, p. 82.
26 O'Harrow, Caste, Conflict, and Ideology, p. 102.
27 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, pp. 231-3.
28 Ibid., p. 78.
29 Masseo, Towards Nationalism, p. 49.
30 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, p. 79.
31 For further details, see Masseo, Towards Nationalism, pp. 47-73; Dobbin, Urban Leadership, pp. 78-87.
gradually being ejected from the association. The Bombay Association lapsed into somnolence thereafter and it was not until the late 1880s that it showed signs of renewed life. In December 1967, the association was re-established, with a new generation of the English-educated intelligentsia playing a major part in its revival. In its new guise, the Bombay Association continued to follow the techniques that it had deployed previously; it presented memorials and petitions and sought to utilize the personal contacts of its members with the colonial administration. However, by the early 1870s, the association was once again torn apart by internal tensions between the English-educated members and some of the shetias, this time over the reform of the Bombay Municipal Corporation. On this occasion, it was the latter that succeeded and went on to found the rival Western India Association. As a result, the membership of the Bombay Association dropped to 87 by 1875. Notwithstanding intermittent efforts to revive it, the association drifted into oblivion by the end of the 1870s.

Meanwhile, a new political association appeared on the Bombay scene. This was the East India Association, which was founded in 1869 by Dadabhai Naoroji and had as its principal aim the political education of Indian society as a ‘necessary prerequisite to the grant of representative institutions and ultimately of a parliament in India’. Even though this association included well-known figures from the merchant aristocracy, its affairs were controlled fully by members of the English-educated intelligentsia. The membership of the East India Association was far greater than that of the Bombay Association. Nonetheless, like the Bombay Association, the East India Association alternated between bursts of feverish activity and prolonged hours of torpor. Despite showing brief sparks of life in the early 1880s, this association also became moribund by the end of the decade.

Educated Indians experienced greater success in sustaining a vibrant, if restricted, print culture, that ubiquitous adjunct of the voluntary association in the career of modern civil society. The Bombay Samachar, Bombay's first Gujarati paper, commenced publication in 1822, and was followed shortly thereafter by the Chaluk (1830) and the Jam-e Jamshed (1832). As in the case of the voluntary associations, the early Gujarati newspapers were dependent on the support of the merchant aristocracy. Many of these newspapers began life as commercial weeklies bankrolled by the shetias. But gradually, a more independent tone was struck, especially with the founding in 1851 of the combative Rast Gaftar, which was edited by the likes of K.N. Kabraji and Sorabji Shapoorji Bengalee, both of whom were well-known social reformers. By the end of the 1860s, the paper had come to command a circulation of twelve hundred copies, 'said to be the largest in India'. On the other hand, Marathi journalism was dominated by the intelligentsia from the very outset.

The Bombay Darpan, the city's first Marathi newspaper, was established in 1832. Its founder, Bal Gangadhar Shastri Jambhekar, was a product of the Elphinstone Institution and the newspaper (which also carried English columns) focused on issues pertaining to social reform. Jambhekar was also a 'pioneer' of Marathi journalism in other ways. In 1840, he established the Dig Darshan, a short-lived Marathi monthly magazine mostly devoted to scientific subjects. Jambhekar also helped one of his students, Bhau Mahajan, to establish the weekly Prabhakar in October 1841, which focused on economic, political and social issues and subsequently became 'the most powerful of all vernacular newspapers of Bombay prior to 1857'. Notwithstanding their precarious financial position and limited circulation Bombay's newspapers had established an enduring presence by the mid-nineteenth century. Indeed, in the words of the city's official historians, 'The neighbourhood of the old Bread Market in the Fort might have been described as the Fleet Street of Bombay in those days, so far as native publications were concerned.'

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a further increase in the number of Indian newspapers published in Bombay, most of which represented the viewpoint of the English-educated intelligentsia. By the early 1890s, no less than fifty-one Indian newspapers were published in Bombay alone, catering to the educated stratum within the city's diverse castes and communities. Increasingly, moreover, 'many newspapers adopted a bilingual strategy to address their different audiences – the local and central colonial states and the linguistically diverse Indian public'. Moreover, the rapid increase in the publication of novels, dramas, pamphlets, tracts and other forms of print-based communication both in Marathi and Gujarati during the late nineteenth century also underscored the fact that 'the Indian colonial intelligentsia of the nineteenth century chose Indian languages, and not English at their primary, indeed, overwhelmingly predominant media for imaginative expression'.

Thus, for instance, the earliest pioneers of modern Gujarati literature had all been exposed to Western learning but utilized their knowledge of the new forms of creative expression in fashioning a distinctive vernacular print culture. This was also true of the Marathi literary sphere, in which Western philosophical concepts and radical political doctrines were combined with...
pre-existing indigenous traditions of religious critique that derived from the
poor saints of Maharashtra. 42

The expansion of civil society

Associational life in colonial Bombay truly came into its own in the late
Vicorian and Edwardian eras. There was a rapid proliferation in the number
of voluntary associations, clubs and societies constitutive of the domain of
civil society. Like towns and cities in other parts of the world, the rapid pace
of urbanization, industrialization and immigration provided the broader context
for these developments. As urban life became more complex, competitive and
cosmopolitan, an ever increasing number of the city’s inhabitants appear to
have embraced the idea of banding together for mutual ends. However, the
causal link between these processes and the expanding universe of associational
activity was by no means straightforward. A variety of historically contingent
factors – the growth of networks that operated on a regional or national level
as well as particular events, individuals and movements – played a crucial role
in mediating between underlying structural forces and specific associational
ventures.

Two countervailing trends can be discerned in the spectacular expansion of
associational life in the city in this period. On the one hand, a vast proportion
of the educational trusts, welfare associations, recreational clubs, mutual aid
and self-help societies that were established in these years were organizational
‘hybrids’ which blended the opposite principles of universality of access and
a particularity of membership. On the other hand, there also continued to
develop forms of association that had a more ‘pure Gesellschaft character’ and
subscribed to the ‘principle of open access on the basis of economic
or intellectual interest’. The rest of this chapter considers each of these
developments in turn.

A caveat is in order, however, before we proceed further. The discussion
that follows highlights the density and diversity of urban associational activity
in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But it is salutary to bear
in mind the constraints and limitations that shaped the world of associational
activity. Many voluntary associations had an ephemeral existence. Some clubs
and societies disintegrated as quickly as they were formed; others were ‘one-
man shows’ whose fortunes fluctuated in tandem with those of the zealous
individuals who founded and ran them. A number of associations struggled to
stay afloat, constantly plagued by apathetic members and precarious finances.
Some strove scrupulously to keep a record of their activities, with many others
this was subject to the vagaries of fate. In short, the density of associational
activity was not always matched by its durability.

44 Thus, the secretary of the Elphinstone Cricket Club, one of the many clubs that were
established in the city in the late nineteenth century, upon being treated by a fellow member to

The normative ideal of civil society posits a realm of associations that
transcend primordial identities based on ‘natural’ ties of kinship, religion
and ethnicity. Associational ties based on such ‘ascribed’ identities have often
been considered to be incompatible with the idea of civil society on account
of their supposed denial of individual choice. However, as Susanne Rudolph
has pointed out, the conventional binary opposition between voluntary and
ascribed associations ‘precludes hybrid or constructed forms of association’.
Drawing on recent ‘constructivist’ interpretations of social identities, she
argues that there are many associations that cannot be adequately understood
in terms of the ‘ascriptive-voluntary dichotomy’. Instead, she has put forward
the concept of the ‘intentional association’, which combines ‘ascriptive and
voluntary features’. In other words, a seemingly primordial identity ‘can be
the result of intention as much as inherited, nor a biological attribute but a
cultural construction and a social and political choice’. For instance, caste
in colonial India was transformed from ‘a vehicle for the maintenance of a
hierarchical society’ into an instrument of collective mobilization that was
deployed by the lower rungs of the Hindu social order to challenge their ritual
subordination. The caste association was integral to this process of political
transformation. Rather than being specific associations in many cities
in the modern world, no person was born into such a body; ‘she had to
become active within it by an act of choice, including having to shape its social
and political goals’. 45

The concept of the ‘hybrid’ association is a useful one in seeking to
understand many of the collective activities and forms of solidarity that
emerged in Bombay in this period. A noteworthy feature of associational
life in the city in these years was the growth of societies and clubs that were
based on putatively ‘ascribed’ identities of caste and religious community, but
were in fact an outcome of conscious choices made by individuals within a
modernizing urban environment. 46

Caste-based associational activities in the form of self-help societies
and educational trusts were increasingly active among both Gujarati and
Maharashtrian communities in colonial Bombay from the late nineteenth

present the annual report, disarmingly declared: Brothers, I wrote the report on the wall of my
house for permanency, but unfortunately for the future, I whitewashed it in the report along with
it.” Quoted in Ramachandra Guha, A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Indian History of a British
45 Of course, the formation of caste associations during the late nineteenth and early
twentieth centuries was always a response to communal attempts by the British colonial administration
to describe, define, interpret, and categorize the social complexity that India presented to them.
Lucy Caroll, ‘Colonial Perceptions of Indian Society and the Emergence of Caste Associations’,
47 A problematic feature of some historical writings on caste and religious associations has
been their tendency to take for granted that such bodies were natural corporate entities that
manifested a latent ascribed identity. Hence, they have not been adequately cognizant of the
constructed and contingent nature of such associational activity.
century. One of the earliest associations of this kind was the Pathare Prabhu Reform Association, founded in 1863. Initially established to further the cause of widow remarriage, the association also sought to address the material and educational needs of the impoverished members of this schismatic class. After languishing for the better part of the following decade, the Association was revived in the early 1880s following a caste meeting that laid down a new set of rules and regulations for administering the community's assets. The following four decades saw Bombay's Pathare Prabhus establish a variety of benevolent, cultural and recreational clubs and societies. These included a Relief Fund (1887), Social Club (1888), Debating Society (1893), Fever Hospital (1896), Pie Fund (1896), Knowledge Improvement Society (1897), Students’ Union (1909), Charity Fund (1902), Literary Circle (1912), Ladies' Friendly Society (1912), Social Association (1907), Cricket Club (1912), Nursing Association (1915) and Medical Relief Association (1918).

As can be seen from this list, caste-based associational activities sought to fulfill in the urban context a range of needs – educational, economic, social and recreational – for their members. At the same time, individuals within a range of intermediate castes sought through such initiatives to lay claim to a higher place in the social hierarchy. In some instances, castes aspiring to raise their social status insisted on their Kshatriya origins. For instance, the Pathare Reform Association was careful to stress in all its published references to the community that the Pathare Prabhus were Kshatriyas, descended from a group of Raiputs. Similarly, members of the Panchkhalasi community, who served predominantly in clerical occupations in the city, began to ‘purify’ their social practices during the late nineteenth century and identified themselves as ‘Somavanshi Kshatriyas.’

In 1884, they founded the Kshatriya Union Club “for the promotion of education and the charitable relief of the aged, widowed and orphaned.”

Members of other intermediate castes sought to move up the social hierarchy by claiming the status of Brahmans. This was the case, for instance, with the Sonars, whose members were largely goldsmiths, some of whom began to insist on being regarded as Daivadnya Brahmins. Here again, the quest for upward mobility was accompanied by the establishment of modernizing associational activities. Accordingly, a Daivadnya Jatiya Association was formed to foster ‘the welfare of the Daivadnya community and the cultivation of social feelings among its members’. This body ‘was largely a social grouping for mutual improvement and conversation’. But it was also the recipient of bequests that allowed it to establish a charitable fund ‘to assist its poor and infirm, particularly with the expenses of their marriage, thread, and funeral ceremonies, and to pay for the education of their sons’. It also published its own newspaper, the Daivadnya Samachar.

At the top of the caste hierarchy, individuals within many Brahman communities in the city also sought to form associations, driven both by the competitive pressures of urban life as well as the imperative of fashioning a broader sense of communal identity in a context where the colonial state's attempts at census enumeration were making numbers count. Among the more notable of these associations in Bombay were those formed by the Kanara Saraswats, a quintessential Brahman ‘service community’, whose members were largely to be found employed in white-collar occupations in commercial establishments, legal firms and government offices. The members of this community had been migrating to the city from the North Kanara region since the late nineteenth century and by the early 1920s there were over two thousand Kanara Saraswats in the city. The earliest migrants to the city, mostly students pursuing higher education, established a club in 1874 for the purposes of boarding and lodging. Known as the ‘Kanara Club’ this institution was integral to the social life of the Saraswat students and office workers in Bombay in the late nineteenth century. As the number of Kanara Saraswats increased during the first two decades of the twentieth century, a variety of associational activities were undertaken to service its expanding needs in the city. In 1906, members of the community established the Saraswat Co-operative Society, and this was followed five years later by the establishment of the Kanara Saraswat Association. The association’s activities were at first largely limited to organizing social gatherings and setting up a reading room. But it soon began to expand its operations. In 1912, it conducted a census of the Saraswat community based in Bombay. The data generated by this exercise were subsequently deployed by one of its founders, S.S. Talmaki, to secure official approval for a co-operative housing society for the members of the Association. Registered in 1915 and completed a year later, the Saraswat co-operative housing society at Gamdevi was the first of its kind in the whole of Asia. In 1919, the Association also launched a new quarterly journal which subsequently became a monthly magazine.

Members of some 'historically related' Brahman sub-castes in Bombay also sought to submerge their differences and form larger corporate entities through the creation of voluntary associations. For instance, a Samyukta Gauda Saraswati Brahmana (SBP) Parishad was established in 1910 by Brahman men ‘experiencing the insecurities of urban middle-class life to

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19 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, pp. 224-5.
20 Vasant Dinkar Rao, 'The Pathare Prabhus of Bombay'. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Bombay, 1945). The official history of the city noted that ‘The Pathare Prabhu Society is a popular place of resort where men gather every evening after the end of the day's work, take tea and discuss the news, some play at cards, and some take part in music’. It added, ‘These people have also debating clubs where they discuss their social questions and devise means of helping the poor and needy of their community’. Gasetteer, I, pp. 246-7.
obtain the presumed benefits of caste for themselves and their families through integration with a single structurally unified caste. In order to attain their objectives, members of the newly created caste cluster followed a twin strategy. On the one hand, they tried to create institutions that would provide economic and educational assistance to all members of the GSB caste cluster. This, it was hoped, ‘would confer benefits to those already in the competitive urban arena and enable disadvantaged GSB families to gain access to education and employment’. To this end, a society to aid indigent students of the community was set up in 1914. On the other hand, the GSB association also sought to erase ritual and symbolic distinctions by actively encouraging inter-dining and inter-marriage amongst the various Brahman sub-castes. A Friends’ Society was formed in 1911 which aimed to ‘foster a spirit of union, friendship and self-help among the members of the different sub-castes of the Gaud Saraswat Brahmin community’. Even though the activities of the GSB association ran out of steam within less than a decade, ‘the associated service associations survived and prospered’ as did its corporate identity.

The formation of caste associations was not restricted to individuals drawn from the middle-ranking and elite communities within the social hierarchy. Members of the lower castes also took to forming associations in this period. The principal objective of these associations was the educational, material and social welfare of their respective communities. Thus, for instance, the Kitte Bhandari Akhya Vardhak Mandali (established in 1890), sought to ‘form unity among the whole Kitte Bhanda community, to make social reforms, and to promote moral and intellectual knowledge by delivering lectures, reading essays, and holding discussions on various subjects in Marathi’. The promoters of the Namdeo Samajik SanshodhakSamshodhakSahyadri Mandali aimed to carry out a similar set of activities within the city’s Shimbhi community. Likewise, a Twascha Kasar Union was formed in 1904 to foster ‘unity’ within this caste. Apart from providing scholarships to poor students in the community and organizing annual prize distribution ceremonies for those who had successfully completed their education, the members of this caste association also started a cricket club.

A crucial catalyst in the development of associational activities amongst Bombay’s lower castes was the rise of a vigorous non-Brahman movement in Maharashtra in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Though this movement was made up of diverse strands, its principal ideologues nonetheless ‘united in agreement on the extreme inequality of Maharashtrian society’. They argued that while those who tilled the land and laboured in the urban factories made the biggest contribution to the government’s revenues, it was a small minority, employed in scribal and service occupations, that had derived the most substantive material benefits under British rule. The leaders of the non-Brahman movement therefore saw it as their duty to awaken the political and social consciousness of the ‘backward’ communities of Maharashtra. In particular, they laid great emphasis on the need for education among the lower castes and initiated associational activities in pursuit of this objective. The publicists of the movement also sought to draw the attention of the British government to the pressing problems confronting the lower castes. Last, but by no means least, non-Brahman leaders strove to reinterprter Maharashtrian history and social identity. They argued that the cultivating and labouring classes ought to be considered ‘the true inheritors of Maharashtrian traditions and culture, her natural social leaders, and the most important recipients of government support’. As part of this ideological struggle, many of these non-Brahman leaders laid claim to the title of ‘Maratha’, while some even sought actively to assert their Kshatriya status.

The most radical element within this emergent non-Brahman movement was represented by the Satyashodhak Samaj, founded in 1873 by Jotirao Phule (1827–90), whose family belonged to the lowly Phul Mali caste (its members were mostly gardeners, cultivating flowers, fruits and vegetables). Phule and his associates argued that the principal division within Maharashtrian society was between the Brahmans on the one hand, and the ‘backward’ shudhishudhas on the other. Furthermore, they contended that the Brahmans were deploying their traditional religious authority and their newly acquired powers as officials under British rule to reinforce this fundamental divide. The ideologists of the movement therefore sought ‘a thorough-going elimination of all kinds of Brahman power as the prerequisite for the liberation of the low caste castes’.

The activities of the Satyashodhak movement had an impact on many of the lower caste communities of Bombay. In 1874, Phule opened a branch of the Satyashodhak Samaj in Kamati pura, one of the city’s poorest districts. This gesture was in response to a request from the leaders of the Kamati, a Telugu-speaking sub-section of the Phul Mali caste whose members were largely employed as artisans and labourers on construction sites. In the years that followed, members of the Kamati community engaged actively in the project of ‘self-improvement’. They not only established a boys’ school, a reading room and an educational society within the community, but also allowed their girls to take up learning. Similar self-help initiatives were also undertaken by the Marathi-speaking Phul Mali communities of the city.

Phule’s associates in Bombay also played a key role in the spread of Satyashodhak ideas amongst the low-caste communities in the city. The most

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18 Times of India Directory of Bombay (City and Presidency), 1930 (Bombay, 1930). p. 258.
20 Times of India Calendar and Directory for 1908 (Bombay, 1908), p. 624.
21 Times of India Directory, 1930, p. 231.
22 D.S. Saverker (ed.), Directory of Social Work in the City and Island of Bombay (Bombay, 1928).
25 Ibid., p. 273.
26 Dobbin, Urban Leadership, p. 227.
significant Satyashodhak activist in Bombay during the 1880s and 1890s was undoubtedly Narayan Meghaji Lokhande (1848–97), the son of a poor Mal from Thana district, who undertook extensive organizational work on behalf of the non-Brahman movement in the city.\(^{66}\) From 1880 onwards, Lokhande took over as editor and publisher of the \textit{Din Bandhu}, the first Indian newspaper explicitly dedicated to the cause of the rural and urban labouring classes. In 1884 this paper sold 1,650 copies a week, which made it the largest selling Marathi or Anglo-Marathi paper in the Bombay Presidency; only the \textit{Kesari}, published by the Pune-based Brahmin trio of V.K. Chipulkar, G.G. Agarkar and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, sold more copies at this time.\(^{18}\)

The \textit{Din Bandhu} ‘championed causes from the whole spectrum of non-Brahman concerns’. But Lokhande’s own personal activism centred on three distinct areas. First, he was the first non-Brahman publicist to address seriously the problems of Bombay’s industrial workers, especially the mill-hands in the cotton mills. He campaigned ceaselessly in the columns of the \textit{Din Bandhu} and in other public forums for an improvement in the working conditions and wages of the working classes. Second, Lokhande worked for ‘the introduction of some measure of positive discrimination in favour of non-Brahman castes in the education policies of the Bombay government’. Finally, Lokhande also appropriate the symbolically powerful term of ‘Maratha’ for ‘the whole community of non-Brahman castes’. As Rosalind O’Hanlon has shown, he did this by denouncing the attempts of Brahmins to act as representatives of Maharashtrian social identity, by criticizing those high status Maratha groups who sought to restrict the use of the term to a small and established minority of elite families; and by directing his rhetoric at the Bombay government in order to ensure that it was not swayed by Brahman claims to public leadership.

However, it is Lokhande’s associational initiatives that are most salient to our present discussion. Concerned, in particular, about the emergence of ‘moderate’ societies like the Deccan Maratha Education Association (established in January 1883), which included in its ranks a range of ‘respectable’ Marathas who were keen to encourage the spread of education among a minority of relatively higher status non-Brahman communities, Lokhande sought to establish a rival organization that would work for the welfare of a much larger swathe of the lower castes. In 1887, he took over the \textit{Maratha Aikyaechchu Sabha} (Society for Maratha Unity) in Bombay, which endeavoured through its fund-raising campaigns and other public projects to promote the cause of education and ‘self-improvement’ amongst a range of subordinate non-Brahman castes.\(^{19}\) Lokhande headed the Society until 1895, when he withdrew following a disputed election for the post of president.\(^{20}\) However, the \textit{Maratha Aikyaechchu Sabha} continued to endure and flourish even after Lokhande’s departure.\(^{21}\) By 1910, this association was reported to have around a hundred members, most of whom paid a monthly subscription of four annas.\(^{22}\) Lokhande’s final initiative on behalf of the non-Brahman cause was the establishment in 1896 of a Maratha Hospital to provide medical assistance and care to plaque victims amongst Bombay’s working classes. It was while he was working amongst the afflicted that the 48-year-old Lokhande himself contracted the disease and died on 9 February 1897.\(^{23}\)

There were also other important publicists of the wider non-Brahman movement who were active in Bombay. Madhavrao Raghoji Rokade (1839–96), whose family belonged to the ‘Maratha-Kunbi’ caste cluster, was one such figure. Rokade had completed his secondary education in a Scotish missionary school in Bombay and subsequently worked as a clerk for a mercantile firm in the city. Following an illness which crippled him in both legs, Rokade ‘resolved to make his living as a teacher and opened a small school in Bombay to which the local Maratha community sent their children’. Rokade was a regular contributor to \textit{Din Bandhu}, but differed from Phule and Lokhande in that he ‘combined interest in Maratha and Kshatriya status with a belief that the best interests of the lower castes were not served by the most virulent of the Satyashodhak polemics’.\(^{24}\)

Equally prominent in the non-Brahman movement in the city were Tukaram Haraji Patil Salunkhe and Bhanaji Bapujirao Angane, who established the ‘Society of the Maratha Caste for putting forward the dharma of Kshatriyas, and for raising of funds for that dharma’ in August 1882. By 1886, this society claimed to possess almost a thousand contributors to its funds.\(^{25}\) One of its principal aims was ‘to define the qualities of the social group which might call itself Maratha Kshatriya, and to publicise its proper position in society’. Like other non-Brahman associations in Bombay, this society also played an active


\(^{19}\) Ibid. According to a confidential police report, the Sabha was started by one Shinde, the year 1886 at Duggri and then subsequently passed under the leadership of Lokhande. Bombay City Police, Confidential Proceedings, 161/97/13/1910, File No. 3665/F/1935, Special Branch, CID, Office of the Commissioner of Police, Bombay. This probably refers to Ramchandra Rao Shinde, an associate of Lokhande.


\(^{21}\) The favour at its meetings can be discerned from an account in the local press in November 1905. A newspaper report in the \textit{Bombay Gazette} described a ‘social gathering of the Marathi-speaking backward classes of Bombay’, held at the Kinte Bhandari Hall to celebrate the Dwaar festival, which included ‘leaders of the Maratha, Bhanderi, Vani, Mali, Agri, Telugu, Koli, Shapri, Barat castes and head clerks and head johlers of about fifty textile mills in Bombay and mahajans of deck labourers’. In his opening remarks, the secretary of the Sabha ‘said that such gatherings were arranged in England and other civilized countries’. The principal leaders of the society (of whom one was a mill worker) then addressed the audience ‘amidst occasional cheers’ and ‘explained the objects of such gatherings and the friendly feelings and free intercourse they promote amongst leaders of the masses’. \textit{BG Weekly Budget}, 4 November 1905.

\(^{22}\) Bombay City Police, Confidential Proceedings, 161/97/13/1910, File No. 3665/F/1935, Special Branch, CID, Office of the Commissioner of Police, Bombay. The business of the Sabha was ‘conducted by a Managing Committee consisting of 12 members’. Ibid.


\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 227.
part in the ‘reformist’ enterprise, focusing especially on promoting the spread of education within the ‘backward’ sections of the ‘Maratha’ community. In some cases, this entailed ‘social purity’ drives aimed at purging their communities of ‘immoral’ practices. Thus, non-Brahman publicists like S.K. Bole, R.Y. Shee and others formed an association in 1892, which was based in Nagpada, ‘to put a stop to the bad customs’ during the Hol festival and to encourage the working classes to give up alcohol in favour of ‘tea or coffee’.

The organizational initiatives and discursive interventions of Bombay’s non-Brahman publicists during the late nineteenth century thus paved the way for the emergence of a growing number of ‘Maratha’ and ‘Kshatriya’ caste associations amongst the city’s ‘backward’ communities. Thus, there were associations such as the Maratha Provident Fund, set up in 1895 by Govind Krishna Rao Daivi ‘to encourage thrift, insurance and education’ among the lower castes; the Maratha Aikya Vardhak Samaj, founded in 1907 ‘to promote education, religious instruction, friendly feelings, co-operation ... among the backward classes in the Hindu community’; the Kshatriya Bhandari Jati Samaj, formed in 1906 by Anant Raghasa Hindalkar and Sakharam Keer ‘to promote unity among the caste and education of the poor among them’; and the Maratha Kshatriya Samajottadak Samsth, established in 1911 to encourage ‘education and social reform among the Maratha community’.

Another type of ‘hybrid’ association that proliferated in Bombay in this period was the religious society. It has long been recognized that the late nineteenth century witnessed an intensification in the levels of religious mobilization in the Indian subcontinent. The encounter with Christian missionary societies, the outpouring of printed tracts, pamphlets and books that focused on issues pertaining to religious identity, as well as growing anxieties about the degeneration and disintegration of ‘community’ and ‘race’, all combined to produce a new ferment within the major Indian religions. As a consequence, the sanctity of traditional scriptural authority was questioned, long-neglected texts reassessed in the light of contemporary needs, and novel modes of activism devised in order to deal with the challenges posed by rival religions, especially Christianity.

Associational activity was integral to the construction of new forms of religious community and identity. As one historian has remarked, ‘South Asians constructed religious societies fully equipped with elected officials, weekly meetings, annual published reports, bank accounts, sophisticated systems of fundraising, annual meetings, executive committees, subcommittees, by-laws, and constitutions’. Many of these associations clearly derived their inspiration from the activities of Christian missionary societies, especially the concepts and forms of weekly congregational meetings held by structured societies with

formal membership and sets of written rules’. But colonial laws, which granted statutory recognition and legal property rights to registered associations, also encouraged their formation.

Religious societies founded ran schools, orphanages, hospices, and other benevolent institutions; conducted charitable relief work, and invested in printing presses that enabled them to churn out a steady stream of proselitizing literature. Furthermore, they deployed innovative fund-raising techniques and financial mechanisms to augment their resources, often on an all-India scale. Money, for instance, was collected through vigorous fund-collection drives during religious fairs, conferences and other festive occasions. The resources thus raised were often invested in secure government bonds and utilized for charitable and propaganda work.

Bombay was home to a number of religious associations and movements. Among the Parsis, for instance, religious reform had emerged as an issue of serious concern and debate as early as the mid-nineteenth century. We have already noted the formation of the Karbala Mazhayasan Sabha (Religious Reform Society), which was established in 1851 in order to bring about the moral and spiritual regeneration of the Zoroastrian religion. Such concerns continued to animate associational initiatives within the community in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, the Zoroastrian Brotherhood (established in 1892) had as one of its principal objectives the organization of public gatherings of the Parsi community in order ‘to promote religious feelings ... related to the Zoroastrian religion, rites, literature and social subjects; the performance of religious ceremonies; and the discussion in a friendly spirit of important religious and social questions’. In 1903, some Parsi graduates founded the Gatha Sabha (named after the sacred hymns of Zarathushtra), in order to awaken within the community an ‘interest in all social, philosophically, learned and useful subjects, primarily related with Zoroastrianism and all Zoroastrian communities, ancient and modern’. An annual Zoroastrian conference was also inaugurated in Bombay in 1909, on the initiative of Dr. Bhaha, a Parsi priest who had studied at Columbia. The main aim of the conference was to purify Zoroastrianism and restore it to its original, pristine state. To this end, delegates sought to debate a variety of morali, religious and social issues pertaining to the regeneration of the community. However, there were serious differences of opinion within the

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78 Ibid., p. 298–300.
79 Savarkar, Directory.
80 Ibid.

83 Times of India Calendar and Directory, 1908, p. 644.
kinds of demands for protection of shared values and modes of behaviour and speech as did the nationalist movement."

The movement also registered its presence in Bombay. A Gau-Rakshak Sabha (Cow-Protection Society) was established in the city in July 1887 and consisted of fifteen hundred members, including over a hundred life members. Its founders claimed that it was 'a constitutional body composed of some of the most eminent and respectable citizens of Bombay'. They also declared that the principal aim of the Bombay Cow-Protection Society was 'the improvement of the agricultural resources of the country.' A majority of the members on the governing body of the association were Bhatia merchants-princes, men such as Tribhuvandas Varjivandas Madhavdas (Vice-President), Dayanand Saraswati (Honorary Secretary) and Manoharadas Dayaldas (Honorary Assistant Secretary). The society publicized its cause by distributing pictures and pamphlets extolling the virtues of the cow. It also used the services of itinerant preachers and publicists, who exhorted all 'Hindus' to do their utmost to prevent cow-slaughter.

Following an extensive publicity campaign, the Gau-Rakshak Sabha's fifth anniversary in April 1893 was attended by an enormous number of Hindus from Bombay and other parts of India and great enthusiasm was displayed in all Hindu localities as well as in Madhav Bagh. An enormous procession was organized on 15 April 1893 which paraded through the Hindu-dominated localities of the Indian Town. At the head of the procession were two hundred milk cows, 'gaily decorated' as prize animals, which had been collected from various parts of the town. The following day, a regular meeting was organized at Madhav Bagh, bastion of the city's Gujarati Hindu mercantile classes, which was attended by some 20 delegates and about 15,000 persons. During the course of this meeting, addresses were delivered and prizes bestowed on

18 Memorial from Sir Dinshaw Munshiji Petit, President of the Bombay Go-Rakshak Mandali, Bombay, GOB, Judicial, 1894, vol. 203, Compilation no. 1331, pp. 5-11, NSA.
19 In drawing its support predominantly from the reading classes, the Bombay-Cow-Protection Society was representative of a larger trend in the subcontinent. According to one intelligence report submitted to the Government of India, 'the main supporters of the movement are the great Hindu reading and banking classes'. GOB, Home (Public), January 1894, B Proceedings, no. 329, para. 16, RSA. But interestingly, the first president of the Bombay Cow-Rakshak Sabha was Sir Dinshaw Munshi, a leading Parsi business magnate and industrialist.
20 There were six horse-cow preachers, while three preachers were paid for their services. The activities of these preachers were not restricted only to Bombay City but were carried on in the Presidency as large. BPSAI, VI: 46, 1893, para. 2070. The Arya Samaj in the city also held meetings on the subject of cow-protection. At one such event, Anna Marand Joshi, an employee of the Government Central Press and a preacher of the society delivered a sermon 'to the effect that the protection of the cow was in reality the protection of the country and its inhabitants'. Printed copies of a pamphlet entitled 'An Appeal of Aryans and a cry of the cow' were distributed on the occasion. BPSAI, VI: 13, 1892, para. 356.
21 R.H. Vincent, Acting Commissioner of Police, Bombay, to Under Secretary, GOB, JD, 26 June 1874, GOB, Judicial, vol. 203, Compilation no. 1332, 1894, NSA.
"the owners of the best-fed cows", but medals were also given "to the lecturers who had worked zealously in the cause".

The founding, in June 1893, of a rival Cow-Protection Society in the city by the Bhatia industrialist Lakhmidas Khimji, led to an escalation in the public propaganda of the movement. The two societies in the city were soon reported to be "at loggerheads" and competed fiercely with each other for subscriptions. Both organized regular meetings at which large amounts of money were reported to have been raised. A good deal of preaching on behalf of the cow is practised all over the town", police reports added, "and occasionally the preachers venture into Musalmans quarters." The two societies also actively distributed handbills, pamphlets and pictures depicting cows being slaughtered by Muslim butchers. The new society's publicity campaign, in particular, was said to be "of a very loud order." It made efforts "to send agents up-country to buy up all horned cattle intended for the Bombay market and keep them at Lonollen." Its meetings were more virulent in their tirades against cow-slaughter and it was reported that "violent speeches and war-like songs were read and sung" on such occasions. The leaders of the new society also paraded cows in procession through the Shikh Memon Street where the Jama Masjid, the city's premier mosque, was situated.

Competition between the two cow-protection societies intensified further in the aftermath of a sectarian riot between Hindus and Muslims over the conduct of Muharram at Prabhav Patan, a small town located in the princely state of Junagadh in western India. The two societies were at the forefront of the movement that developed to secure justice for the Hindu victims of these riots and the Lohans, Banias, and Bhattis of Bombay lost no time in holding meetings, fiercely denouncing the conduct of the Musalmans, and demanding justice, not to say, vengeance. Funds were collected at these meetings "in aid of the sufferers at Veraval Patan." 103

103. BPPSAI, VI: 17, 1893, para. 721.

104. "It is supposed that the cow is scarcely the principal object of the promoters of this society," noted the police intelligence report on the activities of the new organization and added that it had been "called into existence chiefly for the glorification of the President and in opposition to the older society." BPPSAI, VI: 28, 1893, para. 1262.

105. BPPSAI, VI: 29, 1893, para. 1298. Both societies also published journals "from time to time in which the proceedings of the Committee are reported and the views of the Societies disseminated." Home Special, File No. 1092, 1893, MSA.

106. BPPSAI, VI: 32, 1893, para. 1424.

107. Such pictures had also been reported earlier. In January 1891, for instance, several hundred lithographs illustrating a cow 'supporting the protection' were said to be "on sale at a pic a piece in Bombay." BPPSAI, V: 5, 1891, para. 162.

108. R.H. Vincent, Acting Commissioner of Police Bombay, to Under Secretary, GOB, JD, 26 June 1894, GOB, Judicial, vol. 203, Compilation no. 1312, 1894, para. 10, MSA.


110. R.H. Vincent, Acting Commissioner of Police Bombay, to Under Secretary, GOB, JD, 26 June 1894, GOB, Judicial, vol. 203, Compilation no. 1312, 1894, para. 24, MSA.

111. Report of the Police Commissioner (hereafter P.C.), Bombay, to Secretary, GOB, JD, 9 September 1893, to GOB, Judicial, Abstract of Proceedings, January 1894, para. 32, MSA.

112. BPPSAI, VI: 32, 1893, para. 1434.

The outbreak shortly thereafter of Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay and the strident criticism in many quarters that their activities had fuelled the conflagration caused the cow-protection societies to disappear from public view in the years that followed. Subsequent attempts by some of the city's upper-caste Gujaratis to sponsor pujau-Hindu religious associations, such as the Arya Mitra Mandal, the Sanatan Bharat Maha Parishad and the Hindu Zahir Sabha, were also noticeably low-key affairs. The same cannot be said for the associational activities popularized in these years by Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the indomitable Pune-based Chitpavan Brahman, who sought to mobilize the 'Hindu community' by organizing public festivals throughout Maharashtra. In the immediate aftermath of the Bombay riots of 1893, Tilak, briefing at what he regarded as official bias in favour of the Muslim community, declared that the ancient Ganapati festival would be celebrated henceforth in a novel way in order to forge Hindu unity. The new sarvajapin (public) character of the festival that he publicized in 1894 entailed several innovations in what had hitherto been a largely private, family ritual. On the eve of the festival, large public images of the elephant-headed deity were placed in mandaps (decorated pavilions), and each street or neighbourhood collected subscriptions for the conduct of the celebrations. Keen to wean away the Hindu lower castes from participating in Muharram, the organizers of the Ganapati festival also sought to replicate some of its principal features. Taking the cue from the Muharram tahut processions, Tilak introduced the idea of a public pageant in which all the neighbourhoods would come together on the tenth and final day before proceeding to immerse the Ganapati idol. He also encouraged the formation of melas (collective singing parties), which were attached to the public Ganapati and were loosely fashioned after the Muharram tazia. Comprising predominantly of youths dressed in lavish costumes, armed with bamboo sticks decorated with coloured paper and other...
organized largely by Bhatias and Banias. A police report that year noted that no Marathas had "joined the Brahman so far in their Ganpati movements." Moreover, non-Brahman publicists in the city were highly critical of the festival. For instance, in 1899 Dhondiba Namdev Kumbhar, a member of the Sarswotshodhak Samaj, warned the Marathas to be on their guard against the Brahman, who besides the Ganpati melas, had started the cow-protection movement, the music question and the Shivaji cult with the intention of effecting a breach between Hindus and Muhammadans. But non-Brahman participation in the festival began to grow in the first decade of the twentieth century. By 1909 there were at least eleven 'Maratha' melas as well as a few others that belonged to unspecified non-Brahman castes.

Significantly, the dominant ideological thrust of the Ganpati festival changed over the course of the 1900s. Bombay's Police Commissioner noted that, 'The movement which began an opposition show to the local Musulman festival began to assume the character of an annual anti-Government eruption.' Increasingly, the songs that were sung during the festival began to criticize the British colonial authorities for a variety of ills, from plague to famine, which had befallen the country. The songs also advocated temperance, championed the use of home-made cloth and other Indian goods instead of foreign imports, and extolled leaders like Tilak who had dared to take on the colonial authorities.

Inevitably, the anti-colonial sentiments expressed during the festival invited official repression. In 1910, convinced that the Ganpati festivities had become 'an engine for the dissemination and nourishment of vicious extremist propaganda', colonial authorities successfully deployed a number of stringent rules and regulations that sought to purge them of their political content. In Bombay, the Police Commissioners, S.M. Edwardees, issued a notification that made it mandatory for all those who sought melas licences to submit applications in person fourteen days before they were required in order to allow the Criminal Investigation Department to make enquiries about their antecedents and membership. Applicants were required to produce all the songs that would be sung by their group; those that were regarded as 'objectionable' were summarily rejected. In some cases, passes were altogether refused on the grounds that the groups concerned had engaged in 'seditious' activities. Moreover, Edwardees also entirely bypassed the Ganesh Mandals, which had until then served as the central co-ordinating committee for the conduct of the festival in the city. Finally, in a move that was similar to his policy vis-à-vis the Muslim toolls, Edwardees sought to deploy his powers as Police Commissioner to crack down on the members of various working-

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111 BPPSAI, XII: 37, 1899, para. 1373.
112 BPPSAI, XII: 36, 1899, para. 1344. Details of more such speeches, pamphlets and handbills by non-Brahman publicists in Bombay are reported in the police intelligence abstracts. See BPPSAI, 1895–1910, passim.
113 BPPSAI, XII: 40, 1909, para. 1907.

paraphernalia, these melas sang verses in praise of Ganpati, and also exhibited dancing, fencing and drill skills of a martial character.

Unlike the raucous Muharram celebrations, the Ganpati festival in Bombay was a markedly 'respectable' affair to begin with. The Subodh Patrika noted in 1895 that the festival was organized by 'men of light and learning' from the ranks of graduates who had earned the highest honours from the University, honourable gentlemen who criticize and advise the Government in Legislative Councils, municipal administrators of the first city in the empire, and a crowd of inferior gentry holding minor qualifications. By the late 1890s, there had also emerged a central co-ordinating committee which oversaw the conduct of the festival in the city. As in Pune, the members of this committee mediated between the colonial authorities and the various urban neighbourhoods in matters pertaining to the issue of licences, the arrangement of procession routes, the public conduct of the melas, the scrutiny of 'objectionable' or 'controversial' songs, verses, or dramatic performances, and the general supervision of the collective immersion ceremony on the final evening of the festival. But this committee generally carried out its task with a tight touch and disavowed any control over the conduct of individual performers or melas.

Colonial authorities were not entirely comfortable with the loosely regulated structure of the festival, but do not appear to have hindered its organization in the early years. Indeed, some officials were impressed by the decorousness of the proceedings they witnessed. After paying a visit to the various neighbourhoods during the festival of 1895, the city's Police Commissioner reported to his superiors that the melas consisted of 'well-trained young men and boys of respectability, dressed in garments of uniform hue and patterns, singing songs' that could not 'possibly annoy or hurt the feelings of the most susceptible Muhammadan.'

He had evidently missed a trick. There is no mistaking the anti-Muslim tenor of the festival in its early years. Many of the songs that were sung (though evidently not in the presence of visiting dignitaries from the police force) exulted Hindus to show greater loyalty to their own gods and goddesses and eschew participation in 'alien' festivals such as Muharram. They publicized the cause of cow-protection, which was enshrined as the sacred duty of all Hindus. The melas punctuated their proceedings with resounding war cries that invoked Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha state who had defied the Moghal juggernaut in the Deccan in the second half of the seventeenth century.

However, the non-Brahmans, whom Tilak sought to draw into the Hindu nationalist fold, initially acceded a rather lukewarm reception to the Ganpati festival. For instance, of the forty-four melas that were organized in 1899, twenty-one were said to belong to the Brahman while the remainder were
class gymnasium whose participation in the Ganpati festival had begun to vest it with a more pietistic character by the end of the 1900s. So successful was this policy of repression that by 1914 the police were able to report "the entire absence of any mela". Instead, each individual tenement or neighbourhood now applied for its own music or procession pass for the duration of the festival.

One important consequence of these changes was that the Ganpati festival in Bombay became primarily an occasion for the display of local pride amongst the various Maharashtrian neighbourhoods of the city. Localities dominated by the Marathi-speaking population displayed great favour in organizing their own festivities, motivated not so much by lofty ideals of religious unity as by a keen desire to put on a cultural show that would dwarf that of their rivals. Tenements like Keshavji Naik Chawl, Jitkumar Wadi, Jagannath Chawl, Shri Krishna Lodge, Santaram Chawl, Goregaonkar Chawl and Khadki Building, as well as neighbourhoods like Hira Bagh, Madhav Bagh, Gangaram Khati, Wadi and Lal Bagh came to be renowned for the splendour and scale of their Ganpati celebrations. Neighbourhood committees collected funds from their residents and drew up the programme of events, which included lectures on religious, social and philosophical themes by invited speakers; public debates addressing contemporary issues; musical and theatrical performances; religious discourses and 'social gatherings'. Indeed, entire neighbourhoods were transformed into temporary cultural centres for the duration of the festival as residents and visitors crowded together every evening to see and hear the most renowned contemporary public figures, scholars, and artists. At the same time, neighbourhood residents actively participated in many of the cultural productions that were staged during the festival.

A growing number of Hindu clubs and societies devoted their energies principally to secular ends. They organized 'social gatherings' that breached the boundaries of 'caste and creed'; promoted recreational activities; and established educational trusts, libraries, and reading rooms. For instance, the Aryan Social Union was established in 1892 by Seth Damodhar Sulchandwalla, a prominent philanthropist, to foster 'social intercourse and brotherly relations between the members and sympathisers of the Theistic Societies without caste and creed distinctions'. Likewise, an Aryan Education Society was founded in 1897 by a group of young graduates to impart education at a moderate cost to poor students of the community. The society was said to be sustained 'by fees received from students, and by grants, subscriptions, donations and contributions, received from time to time from Municipal or other kindred bodies and from members of the public generally'. Another association, the Aryan Excellor League ran a Charity Bureau, a debating club, a library, moral classes for boys, and girls, Mahila Mandal, a lecture series and a publications department.

The Aryan Brotherhood was by far the most significant of such Hindu societies in Bombay. Founded in the first decade of the twentieth century by a prominent solicitor named K.R. Daffty, the Brotherhood sought to promote 'free social contact amongst the several castes'. It organized 'dinners, social gatherings and parties, intended to bring the Hindus together and to remove communal differences by frequent social contact'. In December 1909, the activists of the Brotherhood convened an Inter-Club Social Gathering, 'at which function most of the clubs which carried on similar activities in and out of Bombay met for the purpose of exchanging ideas and taking common action'. This eventually culminated in the organization of a social conference in April 1912, attended by delegates both from within and outside Bombay. The activities of the Brotherhood proved to be highly contentious and a subject of heated public debate. In some instances, individuals participating in public acts of collective inter-dining were punished by the orthodox leaders of the castes to which they belonged. Moreover, while the aims and objectives of the Brotherhood were undoubtedly 'modern', the practice of congregational inter-dining with its emphasis on ceremonial food-sharing nonetheless drew upon indigenous 'bio-moral' theories of identity.

Some associations were formed with the aim of fostering modern traits of sociability amongst the women of the Hindu community. Thus, a Hindu Ladies' Social Club was formed 'to promote mutual sympathy amongst the Lady Members and to improve literary knowledge by ordinary gatherings held weekly for delivering lectures and weekly essays'. Likewise, the Gujarati Hindu Ladies' Social Club, founded in 1903, aimed to 'encourage friendly relations among the Gujarati Hindu women, to educate them and to make them useful citizens'. This club organized 'Garba parties, Kirtans, lectures, social gatherings, and home classes'. Interestingly, while the membership of these ladies' societies largely consisted of middle-class women, their founders and principal organizers appear in many instances to have been men. This is

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115 S.M. Edwards, Commissioner of Police, to Secretary, Judicial, Bombay, GOB, Judicial, Abstracts of Proceedings, February 1911, pp. 671-2, MSA.
116 BPPSAI, XXVII: 36, 1914, para. 1482. Neither the mela nor the Ganesh Mandala appeared after 1914.
117 Between 1914 and 1920, the number of successful applications tended to be well in excess of three hundred and fifty each year. BPPSAI, 1914-1920, passim.
118 The information in this paragraph is based on the essays in Suvratnak Shanacharit: Shatruka Vachaspati (The Ganpati Public Festival: Traversing the Past Century) (Bombay, 1992). This volume was put together by the organizing committee of the Ganpati festival in Keshavji Naik Chawl, Bombay, as part of their centenary celebrations in 1992-93.
119 Times of India Calendar and Directory, 1908, p. 624.
120 Savardekar, Directory.
123 Times of India Calendar and Directory, 1908, p. 631. The club's annual report for 1902 noted that there had been 'in all 40 meetings with an attendance of 40 to 50 members at each' and added that they were becoming less different about 'freely expressing opinions on subjects under discussion'. BGOS, 31 January 1903.
124 Savardekar, Directory.
suggestive perhaps of the pervasive paternalist ethos that characterized many of these associational ventures.

Several Parsi associations had predominantly secular aims and objectives. For instance, a Parsi Writers' Association was founded in 1898 'to promote unity amongst public writers and to discuss questions of public interest in the Parsi community and also questions of Gujarati literature'. By 1930, the society had 247 members, including 25 women. Similarly, the Zoroastrian Association, which was established in 1903, carried out a variety of educational and social welfare activities. It set up a building society to provide cheap houses to poor and middle-class Parsis; conducted 'communion classes' to allow indigent members of the community to pursue vocational training; offered scholarships to encourage students 'who took up an industrial branch of studies'; and managed a library and a reading room. Another such society was the Young Men's Parsi Association, formed in 1919, which organized 'debates, literary and music circles, social gatherings and public meetings, election competitions, excursions, and charity concerts'.

Similar clubs and societies were also to be found amongst Bombay's Muslim communities. Thus, the city gazetteer noted that a feature of Bombay Muhammadan life is the musical club, where a company of friends will meet together to pass the time in playing and singing, varying the amusement with games of cards, shatranj (draughts); dama and chausar'. It added, 'Occasionally the members of these clubs collect a subscription among themselves and arrange a gala-night to which friends from outside are invited, a nauch-girl being usually engaged on such occasions to give her repertoire of songs. Yet other clubs were composed of young men who claim to be poets [shair] and who meet together to read and recite verses of their own composition'. But there were also more formal associations like the Muslim Students' Union, founded in 1915, which aimed to bring about great social intercourse between the different sects within the community by organizing literary events and debates.

But it is the realm of sport that furnishes the most prominent example of associational activity organized on the basis of 'religious identity' for secular ends. Cricket, a game that has always been integral to Bombay's public culture, was largely organized along 'communal' lines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Parsis of Bombay were the first Indians to take to the game and had founded a cricket club as early as 1848. Parsi cricket clubs proliferated rapidly in the late nineteenth century, not least because of the generous financial and public support they received from leading figures within the community. Parsi magnates and educated elites swiftly embraced cricket and identified with the values of masculinity and chivalry that it was seen to embody. They saw the game both as a means of cementing closer ties with the imperial rulers, and of nurturing and renewing the physical vitality of their 'race'. In 1877, the Parsis became the first Indians to be allowed to play a game of cricket against the racially exclusive Bombay Gymkhana on the latter's home turf. Eight years later, a group of Parsi business magnates and professional men set about establishing their own gymkhana. The institution's prospectus highlighted the need for a club 'where gentlemen of respectable position in society can obtain some sort of healthy outdoor recreation'. Some of the most prominent Parsis of the day were associated with this project: Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, Dinshaw Naoroji Petit, Sorabji Shapurji Bengalee, Dossahboy Framjee, Sorabji Fransji Patel and Pherozeeshah Mehta. An influential committee was also appointed to frame the necessary rules, apply to the Government of Bombay for a suitable site and to collect subscriptions for the erection of a pavilion'. It was also agreed that the new gymkhana was to have an unlimited number of members, the admission being restricted to Parsees only'. The entrance fee was five rupees, while the cost of subscription was two rupees. Anyone wishing to become a life member had to pay a sum of 250 rupees. Munificent donations from Jamsetji Tata and others allowed the gymkhana to erect a pavilion on the site that it had been allotted on the newly reclaimed Kennedy Sea Face by the Government of Bombay. In 1888, even as the new gymkhana took shape, a team of Parsis became the first Indians to travel to England to play cricket, a feat they repeated two years later.

Meanwhile, other communities also organized their own cricket clubs. The first clubs established by Hindus had been organized along caste or regional lines. Thus a Prabhu named Ramchandra Vishnu Navlekar had helped found the Bombay Union Cricket Club in 1866, whose membership was restricted to those belonging to his caste. Caste-based teams continued to thrive in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, as early as 1877, some Marathi students of the Elphinstone High School came together to form the Hindu Cricket Club, its members paying a subscription charge of two annas each. The subsequent entry into the club of a number of Gujarati Hindus not

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123 Times of India Directory, 1930, pp. 277-78.
124 Gazetteer, i, p. 188.
125 Sagardevan, Directory.
126 On the history of Parsi cricket in the nineteenth century, see J. Framjee Patel, Stray Thoughts on Indian Cricket (Bombay, 1903); and M.E. Parsi, Parsi Cricket (Bombay, 1901). Parsi sporting zeal was not restricted to cricket. They took up a number of other European sports, including football, tennis, roller skating, boating, fencing, horse-racing and swimming. See H.D. Darukhanawala, Parsis and Sports and Ranged Subjects (Bombay, 1939).
128 Varun Ravi, India's Hambledon Men (Bombay, 1996), pp. 81-81. For an illuminating account of the tangled politics of sport and space in late-nineteenth century Bombay, see Guha, Corner of a Foreign Field, Chapter 2.
129 Thus, there were teams such as the Daivakanya Cricket Club Gowd Sarawat Cricket Club, Katarayya Cricket Club, Gujarati Union Cricket Club, Maratha Cricket Club and Telugu Young Cricketers. Contemporary newspapers, especially the Bombay Gazette and the Times of India, are the principal source of information about these clubs. See also Guha, Corner of a Foreign Field, p. 92.
only expanded its membership but also secured its financial health. In 1886, one of its supporters printed a booklet called the *Rules and Regulations of the Hindu Cricket Club*, which divided members into five categories defined by the extent of their monetary contribution.

Crickets were slower to take off amongst the city’s Muslim communities. But as in the case of the Parsis and the Hindus, cash-rich businessmen began to take an interest in the sport; and were instrumental in establishing clubs from the 1880s onwards. Most notably, the Tyabjis, a family of merchants and intellectuals known for their liberal leanings, took the initiative in setting up the first Muslim cricket club in the city in 1883. The Muslims even trumped the Hindus by designating this club a ‘gymkhana’ and so secured in September 1892, a plot of land from the Bombay Government on a site adjacent to the one given over to the Parsi Gymkhana. As in the case of the Parsis, a generous flow of donations enabled the club to house itself in a newly constructed pavilion that overlooked the ground.

The Bombay Government’s decision to grant the Islam Gymkhana a plot on the coveted Kennedy Sea Front sent the Hindu Cricket Club into action. After a hastily convened meeting, it dispatched a letter to the Secretary of the Public Works Department requesting a strip of land adjacent to the Parsi Gymkhana ‘at least equal in extent to that allotted to that Institution if not a quarter more owing to our numerical superiority, on the same conditions and terms on which similar plots have been granted to the Parsee and Islam Gymkhanas in that neighbourhood’. The request was duly granted, and at a grand ceremony in May 1894 the new premises of the Hindu Gymkhana were formally inaugurated by Lord Harris, the Governor of Bombay. Generous donations from Goverdhandas Parmanand Jivandas, a Gujarati merchant, and two of his kinmen, as well as the free services offered by Babaji Gopal, a ‘well-known Hindu engineer’ facilitated the construction of a pavilion that matched those of its rivals.

Competition between the gymkhanas also extended to the field of play. The first two decades of the twentieth century marked the peak of the Bombay Quadrangular, a cricket tournament that was organized along explicitly ‘communal’ lines. The origins of this tournament lay in the ‘Presidency matches’, fixtures that were played annually from 1892 to 1906 between a team representing the Europeans of the Bombay Presidency and the Parsi Gymkhana. In 1906, the Europeans agreed to play the Hindu Gymkhana; a year later, the Parsis set aside their long-standing hostility to the idea and did likewise. Thus, a unique annual triangular contest emerged between these teams from 1907. Five years later, the Muslims were admitted into the tournament, thereby turning it into a Quadrangular. Held every September, the tournament quickly came to be dubbed the ‘Bombay Cricket Carnival’.

The event attracted huge crowds, which vociferously supported their teams, and the proceedings both on and off the field of play were covered extensively in the local press.

The foregoing account highlights the distinctively ‘Indian’ features of civil society in Bombay. Yet there also emerged urban associations that were organized along lines other than those of caste and community. These associations were formed for a variety of reasons and were of different types. But their membership was defined by the principle of open access and based on the criterion of shared economic, intellectual or political interest.

Bombay’s status as a premier centre of trade and industry, the competitive pressures confronting the city’s Indian merchants and manufacturers, and the growing perception that ‘native’ interests were not adequately represented by European-dominated bodies, contributed to the emergence in this period of a number of Indian commercial associations. As previously noted, the premier mercantile organization in the mid-nineteenth century was the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, which was largely the preserve of Europeans. However, in the late nineteenth century new associations were established, many of which were dominated by Indian businessmen. The most prominent of these was the Bombay Millowners’ Association (BMOA), founded in February 1875, at a time when the cotton industry found itself under increasing pressure both on account of the campaign being waged by Lancashire industrialists for the repeal of excise duties on cotton textiles imported into India, as well as the growing clamour for the introduction of legislation regulating the working of its factories. Two leading Indian millowners, Sir Dinshaw Manockji Peti and Morarji Goculdas, were the moving spirits behind the founding of the new organization. Its principal aims were ‘the promotion and protection of trade, commerce, and manufacture of India in general, and of the cotton trade in particular’. In its inaugural year, the association had 29 members; at its peak, forty years later, the membership had risen to 110. Individual members of the BMOA represented their respective companies, either in their capacity as owners or because they were empowered to act and vote on behalf of

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134 Guha, *Corner of a Foreign Field*.
135 *Letters in vol. 72, Compilation no. 866, FWD, 1899-1897, MSA. Quoted in Guha, *Corner of a Foreign Field*, p. 62.
136 Guha, *Corner of a Foreign Field*, p. 69. By 1902, the Parmanand Jivandas Hindu Gymkhana (as it came to be known in memory of its principal benefactor) had 369 members. But its office-bearers were not best pleased with the attendance which consisted largely of ‘the officers of the Gymkhana and student members mostly school boys, more elderly well to do, and leading members not condescending to pay a visit to the Gymkhana’ ‘Thus, they noted, ‘as a circumstance which the Committee deeply regret for it is to the interest of the Institution that the best of Hindu Society should not only belong to it, but honour it by their presence frequently if not daily.’ BCOS, 18 April 1903.

137 From 1918 onwards the tournament was held during the months of November and December in order to avoid stoppages caused by late monsoon showers. Guha, *Corner of a Foreign Field*, p. 136.
138 Bombay Chronicle, 3 November 1913.
139 Of course, while some associations may have been based in theory on criteria of open access, they tended nonetheless to be dominated by particular castes or communities.
any member of the Association’. The BMOA also counted among its ranks individuals from all the principal religious denominations in the city: Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and Europeans.

Unlike the Bombay Chamber of Commerce, in which they were eternal junior partners, Indian industrial magnates were key players in the BMOA. And the Association came to occupy an important place in the city’s public life. It submitted representations and memorials to the government on a variety of issues that affected the cotton industry; it was represented on key governmental bodies (such as the Bombay Improvement Trust); it deployed to good effect its informal connections with colonial officials, especially during moments of industrial strife; and its annual meetings were widely publicized in the local press.

The Indian Merchants’ Chamber (IMC) was another important commercial association in the city. Formed in 1907, the IMC sought to ‘look after and voice the interests of the various trades and industries which were worked and financed by Indian merchants and traders’. One summary of its activities noted that the IMC had safeguarded ‘the rights and privileges of Indian merchants’ and supplied relevant information in the form of facts and figures to ‘Government departments, the Railways and other public bodies’. The Chamber was also able to secure representative seats for its members on the Legislative Assembly, the Bombay Legislative Council, the Port Trust, the Municipal Corporation, the Royal Institute of Science, the Development Department and other public bodies in the city. Like the BMOA, individual members of the IMC were drawn from different Indian communities.

Other notable commercial associations were the Native Share and Stock Brokers’ Association, the Bombay Native Piece-Goods Merchants’ Association and the Grain Merchants’ Association. The Share and Stock Brokers’ Association emerged on the back of informal association among Bombay’s brokers that had existed since the heady days of the Share Mania in the early 1860s. However, it was only in 1887 that the Association appears to have been formally constituted. The principal aim of this ‘voluntary association’, one contemporary noted, was ‘the protection of the interests of the members and the provision of a market-place wherein the members of the Association and through them, the public, may buy and sell stocks and like securities’. In the 1920s the Association was said to possess around two hundred members, of whom a majority were Gujarati Hindus and Parsees. The admission fee was originally Rs. 51, but was later raised to Rs. 1000, and cards were sold by the Association in 1909 for Rs. 2500 and in 1917 for Rs. 7000. The management of the Association was vested in a committee ‘as also its income and property, the power of appointing its officers and servants, and of framing such by-laws and rules as may from time to time be necessary for the guidance of members’. This Association was led by a succession of powerful figures such as Premchand Roychand (who was the leading player on the stock market at the time of the Share Mania), Seth Chunilal Morjial, and subsequently Sir Shapoorji Boraacha, a Parsi millowner.

The Native Piece-Goods Merchants’ Association was established in 1882 and had its headquarters in the Mulji Jetha market. This Association consisted ‘mainly of wholesalers and contained within its ranks both importers of foreign cloth and the dealers in Indian piece-goods’. Its main objectives were to promote the piece-goods trade in Bombay by encouraging ‘friendly feelings and unity’ amongst its members; to address ‘trade difficulties of the piece-goods business’, to collect statistics and ‘correspond with public bodies in matters affecting trade’; and ‘to hear and decide disputes that may be referred to for arbitration’. The principal figure in this Association was Sir Mannohandass Ramji, the Bhatia millowner and piece-goods merchant, who had also played a key role in the establishment of the IMC. The Grain Merchants’ Association, founded in 1889, undertook a similar range of activities for its members, who were involved in the ‘grain and seeds trade of Bombay’.

A number of professional associations also emerged in these decades. These were largely initiated by members of the English-educated professional middle class. For instance, the Bombay Medical Union, which was formed in 1883, sought to encourage ‘friendly intercourse and exchange of views and experience’ amongst the members of the medical profession in Bombay. The Union was ‘open to all qualified members of the medical profession in Bombay and elsewhere’.

The manner of the Association’s proceedings were said to be ‘kept in the Gujarati language’. Moreover, none ‘but natives of India’ were admitted as members. Ranagaur, Bombay Industries, p. 543.

Hamida, p. 543.

Gordon, Businessmen and Politics, p. 79.

Gordon, Businessmen and Politics, p. 76.

Ranagaur, Bombay Industries, p. 543.

Ranagaur, Bombay Industries, p. 543.

Times of India Calendar and Directory, 1903, p. 671.

Times of India Directory, 1930, p. 239.
Members paid an entree of ten rupees and a quarterly subscription of six rupees. Likewise, a Bombay Vakils' Association was established in 1906, whose aims were 'to raise and maintain the professional status' of lawyers practising in the city and to offer 'suggestions and representations concerning the law, practice, procedure and constitution of the Courts legislation and other matters affecting the public in general and the legal profession in particular'. Its affairs were managed by a twelve-member council that was elected annually by the association's members, of whom there were around 160 in 1930.132

Towards the end of the Great War, as inflation soared and real wages declined precipitously, sections of the city's lower middle classes, most notably white-collar workers, began to form associations in order to place their grievances before employers and the state. Thus, a Bombay Clerks' Union was founded in January 1918 to advance the interests of the city's clerical community. The first annual report of the Union stated that it had 463 registered members on its rolls belonging to 'no less than a hundred offices of this city'. During the second year of its existence, the union began to expand its activities. It organized courses in ' shorthand, book-keeping, accountancy, banking and economics to properly equip the junior clerks of the city'. Medical relief schemes were formulated to afford free treatment to 'the victims of illness ... who are unable to meet the heavy medical charges attendant on their own illness or on that of their families'. An unemployment benefit fund was also set up 'to help those members thrown out of employment through no fault of their own'.133

One can also discern some signs of associational activity amongst the city's industrial workers. Of course, the great age of trade unions in Bombay did not commence until the early 1920s. The 'working-class' associations that existed prior to this were largely initiated and sustained by non-Brahman publicists. Narayan Lokhande, as previously noted, was keenly involved in campaigns to publicize the plight of workers toiling in the city's factories and began to conduct welfare work amongst the cotton mill workers of Bombay during the 1880s.134 Following the appointment in 1884 of a Factory Commission to examine the working conditions in the city's factories, Lokhande established the Bombay Mill Hands' Association to represent the interests of the city's cotton mill workers. A number of head-jobbers in the cotton mills joined this association. On 23 September 1884, the new association organized a large public meeting, attended by over four thousand workers, in the working-class neighbourhood at Suparibaug in Parel. The audience at this meeting unanimously assented to a petition read out by Lokhande, which demanded a weekly rest day for mill workers, a mandatory half-hour recess during the workday, a uniform opening hour of 6.30 am in all cotton factories, regular payment of monthly wages, and the appointment of two workers' representatives to the Factory Commission. Three days later, the Association organized a second public meeting at Byculla, once again attended by a large working-class audience. It subsequently submitted its petition to the Factory Commission.135

Lokhande's successors within the non-Brahman movement continued his work. Thus, in 1905 the Maratha Aikyaaychhu Sabha organized a public meeting, attended by eight or ten thousand workers, at which speakers called for legislation limiting the work-day to twelve-hours.136 In 1908, a new Marathi newspaper for the working classes was started in order to pursue a programme of reforms 'on the lines of the latest developments of the labour question in Europe'. The Kamgar Samasahar (Workers' Journal) was said to be 'devoted to the interest of this class in general and the mill operative in particular'.138 The following year, three non-Brahman activists - H.A. Talcherkar, S.K. Bole and Bhivaji Nare - founded the Kamgar Hitawardhak Sabha (Workers' Welfare Association). This society sought to promote the cause of education amongst the working classes 'by means of night classes and instructive lectures', to train them from 'harmful customs', and to provide 'medical and legal help whenever necessary'. In its pursuit of the first of these aims, the Association actively championed the cause of 'mass education'. Bhivaji Ramji Nare, its first president who had been employed as a weaving master in the cotton industry, was 'an ardent advocate of primary education' and had conducted a free school for the children of the Bombay mill workers for over three decades. The Association was also said to have been actively engaged in 'encouraging sanitation and temperance amongst the working classes'. The organizers of the Sabha also sought to act as mediators in disputes between mill workers and their employers. They took a 'keen interest' in factory legislation and campaigned ceaselessly for improvements in the working conditions of mill workers. H.A. Talcherkar, one of the founding members of the society, even travelled to England in order to 'ventilate the grievances of Indian mill operatives'.140 In 1919, the Association was reported to have around two hundred members 'composed of leading jobbers, muckadams and railway workmen', whose names it was reluctant to disclose in order to save them from persecution at the hands of their employers and mill officials'. As far its finances were

132 Times of India Calendar and Directory, 1908, p. 627.
133 Times of India Diary, 1930, p. 252.
134 TOI, 5 March 1919; TOI, 10 July 1920.
136 Ibid., pp. 79-82. However, according to one colonial official, the Bombay Millhands' Association was a highly personalized affair and there was 'no body of members united by the payment of a regular subscription or by any fellowship in considering questions of importance to mill-hands'. 'Beyond coming to Mr. Lokhande for advice', he added, 'I believe there has hitherto been no common bond of union or association'. J.M.C. Campbell, Collector of Land Revenue, Customs and Opium, to Under Secretary, GOB, GD, 1 November 1892, in Royal Commission on Labour, Foreign Report, vol. II, The Colonies and the Indian Empire with an Appendix on the Migration of Labour, pp. 1892, XXXVI, p. 169.
137 TOI, 25 September 1905. Cited in Cashman, Myth, p. 153. Another newspaper estimated the size of the audience at this meeting to be around seven thousand. See BGOS, 30 September 1905.
138 BGOS and Weekly Budget, 26 December 1908.
139 Both Bole and Nare had been associated with Lokhande's Maratha Aikyaaychhu Sabha. 117, XXII/257 (February 1912); 171.
140 A Brief Sketch of the work of the Kamgar Hitawardhak Sabha, Bombay, 1908-1919 (Bombay, no date).
concerned, the society sustained itself through the ‘subscriptions of members and donations from friends and sympathisers’.

The period under review was also notable for the establishment of a number of literary, scientific and educational societies. These constituted yet another category of associational activity that was based on principles of open access and secular criteria of membership. The most significant of these were the Bombay Natural History Society (1883), the Anthropological Society of Bombay (1886), the Bombay Art Society (1888), the Bombay Astronomical Society (1892) and the Bombay Photographic Society (1903).

Also noteworthy in this context was the establishment of the Bombay Textile and Engineering Association. Founded in 1900 by Cowasji D. Panday, ‘the doyen of mill managers in the textile industry in Bombay’, the Association sought to provide ‘technical information and literature’, especially about ‘new inventions, improvements, and processes’, to the large number of mill managers, engineers and other overseers and assistants employed in the local cotton industry. The Association sought to assist its members ‘by giving them information regarding vacancies in the cotton mills and engineering factories’, by reading and discussing papers ‘on different questions connected with the textile and allied trades and industries and on technical subjects’, and by circulating amongst its members ‘the leading technical periodicals’, which were ‘kept along with useful reference books in the library of the Association’. In the early 1920s it boasted over a hundred and fifty members on its rolls.

Turn-of-the-century Bombay also witnessed the growth of associational activities devoted to recreational or leisure pursuits that brought together individuals from different communities. For instance, cricket clubs in the city were not organized solely on the basis of caste, community or race. On the contrary, a number of clubs were based on professional ties and run by local commercial firms, banks, railway companies and government agencies. Thus, there were cricket teams sponsored by Thomas Cook, Gaveas Cotton, Forbes, Forbes and Campbell, Jacob Sassoon, Raili Brothers, the Bombay Gas Company, the B.B. & C.I. Railway, the Customs Department, Navy Defence Squadron, the Army and Navy Stores, the Telegraph Department, the Bombay Municipality and the Bombay Improvement Trust. These clubs were heterogeneous in their membership, with employees of various Hindu castes playing on the same side as Muslims and Christians, under the leadership of a senior manager, almost always an Englishman.

Two other notable social and recreational associations whose membership transcended the boundaries of caste, community and race, were the Orient Club and the Motor Union of Western India. The former owed its origin to a desire to provide a club managed on European lines to which both European and Native gentlemen might be admitted, and was opened in May 1900. After a period spent in a rented bungalow, the club ‘moved into a building of its own, designed by Messrs. C.F. Stevens & Co., and erected upon one of the Improvement Trust plots at Chaupati’. By 1930 the club was well-established and its management committee comprised European officials as well as Parsi, Muslim and Hindu magnates and professional men. The Motor Union of Western India was established in 1904 with the aim of ‘encouraging and developing motoring in the Bombay Presidency’. Its members came from all communities and included colonial officials, the city’s aristocracy of wealth, and well-to-do Indian professional middle-class men.

Interestingly, some clubs that were ostensibly associated with a specific community nevertheless had members who belonged to other communities. Thus, the Elphinstone Cricket Club, which was established in 1873 by some Parsi youths, was by 1900 ‘not exclusively a Parsi club. Even though a majority of its members were Parsis, it included a fair number of Mahomedans and Hindus and at one time even had some European members’. Likewise, newspaper accounts describing the annual gatherings of the Hindu Ladies’ Social Club often reported that these were attended not only by women of that community, but also Parsi, Muslim and European ‘ladies’.

Given the widely entrenched assumption that the associational practices intrinsic to the normative ideal of ‘civil society’ were alien to the ethos of the urban poor, it is worth noting that Bombay’s working classes also formed recreational associations that were based on principles of open access and secular criteria of membership. Gymnasia, known as taimikharas or akharas, became an integral feature of working-class culture in the early twentieth century. A confidential police document compiled in 1928 listed a hundred and fifty gymnasia in the city, several of which had been formed prior to the

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146 For details, see Gazeettier, III, Chapter XIII. For a recent discussion of the Bombay Art Society, see Yashodhara Dalmia, ‘From Jamsetjeejee Jeebhoy to the Progressive Painters’, in Paul and Thorne (eds), Bombay Mosaic of Modern Culture, pp. 192-93. For an account of the activities of the Bombay Natural History Society, see The Bombay Natural History Society 1883-1933. Printed in Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Society (Bombay, 1933).

147 In enduring for a quarter of a century, the Bombay Textile and Engineering Association ousted several rivals. ‘It should be noted’, one summary of its activities noted, ‘that from three to four Institutions and Associations were formed during the last 15 years among the different sections of engineers and mill assistants in Bombay but the attendance and subscriptions were not sufficient to warrant their continuance.’ On the other hand, the enthusiasm of Cowasji Panday, whose own donation would aggregate close upon Rs. 10,000, as well as the generosity of other members, enabled this particular association to flourish. Rutnagur, Bombay Industries, p. 669.

148 This information has been culled from contemporary newspaper accounts.

149 Gorka, Corner of a Foreign Field, p. 92.

150 Gazeettier, III, p. 317.

151 Times of India Directory, 1930, p. 129.

152 This club had 201 members in 1908. For a report of one of its gatherings that also lists the names of attendees, see BGOS, 3 February 1909.

153 BGOS, 2 June 1909.

154 See, for instance, BGOS, 31 January 1903; and BGOS, 20 January 1906.

155 On gymnasia as sites of working-class leisure, see Chandavarkar, Origins of Industrial Capitalism, pp. 168-238.
end of the First World War. These gymnasias were predominantly plebeian in their social profile, largely comprising mill workers, dock workers, general labourers and those employed in the city’s ‘informal’ economy. Their size varied; some barely mustered ten members, others had well over three hundred. Members usually paid a monthly subscription ranging from four annas to a rupee to use the facilities on offer. Significantly, their membership appears in many cases to have transcended the boundaries of caste and community. The most notable instance is that of the Maharashtra Vyaarnavahala, established around 1903, which had in its ranks Banias, ‘Bhaiyas’ (migrants from North India), Marathas and Muslims.

Nationalist political associations in the city also sought to transcend the identities of caste and creed. As the political capital of the Presidency, Bombay emerged as one of the principal bastions of nationalist politics in this period. By the 1880s, the public associations that had been formed in the mid-nineteenth century were more or less defunct. Their place was taken by the Bombay Presidency Association, founded in January 1885 by Pherozeshah Mehta, K.T. Telang and Badruddin Tyabji. The principal aim of this association was to promote the public interest of the country by all legitimate and constitutional methods. Notwithstanding its representative claims as a ‘public’ body, however, the Bombay Presidency Association essentially articulated the common concerns of the interconnected, cross-communal interest groups that constituted its membership. The Association comprised a significant proportion of the city’s intellectual elite as well as members of the aristocracy of wealth. By this time, the old tensions between the city’s merchant princes and the leading lights of the intelligentsia had faded away. Indeed, a variety of factors – the growing affluence of the successful members of the Indian professional classes, a growing receptivity to English education within the elite stratum of the business world, a shared concern about the threat posed to Indian manufacturing interests both by British competition as well as an increasingly assertive labour force, and the rise of a new brand of ‘extremist’ nationalism – blurred the dividing lines between Indian magnates and liberal-minded, professional middle-class men.

122 Bombay City Police, Confidential Report, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Special Branch (Bombay), to Personal Assistant to the D.I.G. of Police, C.I.D. Poona, 16 November 1928, Records of the Commissioner of Police, Office of the Commissioner of Police, Bombay.

123 Interestingly, almost all these gymnasia had ‘instructors’. Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 On political associations in nineteenth-century colonial India, see Seal, Emergence of Indian Nationalism, Chapter 5.


128 Dobson, Urban Leadership, pp. 263-6; Cashman, Myth, pp. 157-9. Indeed, many members of the educated and business elite straddled the spheres of money-making and intellectual activity. Thus, Dinsha Wacha combined the roles of mill agent, journalist and politician.

129 Mansukh Chawla, ‘was a lawyer, a landowner, and a spokesman of the toddy interest’; K.R. Kama ‘was a millowner, a religious reformer, and director of a newspaper’; and Badruddin Tyabji and Pherozeshah Mehta, both sons of mercantile families who had taken up the legal profession, continued to maintain close professional and personal ties with the business world.


132 Ibid., pp. 172-91. Of course, Tilak was no stranger to Bombay. Indeed, in September 1901 he had presided over Ganpati celebrations in the city.

133 BPPS/I, XIV: 38, 1901, para. 905.
India to use articles of Indian manufacture only’. Inaugurating the new society in the presence of a seven hundred strong audience assembled at the Dattatreya temple in the city’s Thakurwadi section, Tilak and his associates expressed their solidarity with the people of Bengal. The meeting unanimously passed a resolution that called for the boycott of ‘any article not of Indian manufacture’ and for the formation of a committee ‘of leading gentlemen in Bombay for the purpose of giving wide circulation to this scheme and obtaining signatures of assenting persons who will be bound on oath not to use further than possible any article of European manufacture’.132

In its first year, the society held several public meetings in which the core objectives of the Swadeshi movement were constantly reiterated.133 These meetings, publicized through handbills and leaflets, were attended by large audiences, ranging in number from a thousand to eight thousand.134 Activists also organized a number of ‘swadeshi bazaars’ at which ‘country-made goods, such as cutlery, sweetmeats, cloth, books, etc., were exposed for sale’.135 In the latter half of 1907, there also appeared a new Swadeshi association called the Bombay National Union. This society was said to have 61 members, ‘including one Parsi, twenty Kathiawadi, Sindhi and Bengali students, and forty traders, shop-keepers, brokers ... all Bhatis’. Members were charged an admission fee of one rupee and were also required to pay a monthly subscription of eight annas. According to one police report, the objective of this association ‘was to fight for self-government on the lines of the extremists’.136

The Swadeshi movement in Bombay ran out of steam by mid-1908. Its achievements were rather ambiguous on the whole. The movement had rather limited success in achieving its immediate objectives of achieving national regeneration through indigenous entrepreneurship. Many of the 44 factories and joint-stock companies that were established in Maharashtra during the first year of the movement were short-lived affairs. Moreover, Bombay’s millowners did not extend their whole-hearted support to the movement. The only tangible support that Tilak and his followers received from the city’s industrialists came when four influential industrialists – Ratan Tata, Governdhan Khatau, Manmohandas Ramji and Dwarkadas Dharani – became directors on the board of the Bombay Swadeshi Co-operative Stores, which was formed in December 1903. By and large, however, the Bombay millowners eschewed politics and focused on their profits, which soared to record levels in these years.137

The political tenor and overtly Hindu religious rhetoric of the Swadeshi movement also antagonized the Muslims of Bombay. Ever since the early 1890s when he had sought to deploy the Ganpati and Shivaji festivals as instruments of Hindu mobilization, Tilak had been viewed with suspicion by the city’s Muslims and the symbols he relied upon to rally popular support for the swadeshi movement only served to alienate them. The discourse and practices of the swadeshi movement, as one scholar has noted, ‘fused together a universalistic conception of national economic development with a particularistic, organicist, and idealist vision of national space as specifically Hindu’.138 Characteristically, nationalist meetings were often held in Hindu temples in the city and frequently invoked symbols such as the Sacred Cow in conveying the message of political nationalism. Indeed, at a meeting organized by the Bombay National Union in the Halai Bhatta Mahajan Wadi, which was attended by an audience of four thousand ‘students, Gujaratis and Deccanis’, Tilak declared that ‘the term Swadeshi being wide, included Gorakhshana (cow-protection) and that “those who took up Swadeshi could not give up Gorakhshana”’.

On the other hand, the Swadeshi movement was more successful in popularizing the nationalist message amongst urban groups that hitherto had been ignored by the panjiandums of the Bombay Presidency Association. Most notably, the movement received an enthusiastic response from the city’s Marathi- and Gujarati-speaking lower middle classes, especially small merchants, shopkeepers, clerks, teachers and journalists. It was largely these classes who attended the meetings organized by the Swadeshi Vastu Pracharini Sabha as well as the Bombay National Union.139 Towards the end of 1907, with the Swadeshi movement in Bombay showing signs of flagging, Tilak sought to draw the city’s working classes into its ambit. A number of meetings were organized by the Swadeshi Vastu Pracharini Sabha in the city’s working-class districts. At one such meeting held in Chinchpokli in December in 1907 Tilak declared that the aim in holding meetings in this working-class neighbourhood ‘was to educate the millhands ... on the truths and benefits of swadeshism’.

132 BPPSI, XVIII: 36, 1905, para. 890.
133 Cashman, Myth, p. 175. It also managed to register six thousand adherents to the Swadeshi cause. See, Home Special (Confidential), File No. 297-A, 1910, MSA.
134 BPPSI, 1905–1907, passim; see also Cashman, Myth, p. 175. Interestingly, not all meetings were organized under the auspices of the Swadeshi Vastu Pracharini Sabha. A number of caste associations in the city’s Gujarati-speaking neighbourhoods also held Swadeshi meetings. For instance, on 8 October 1904, a public meeting was organized in the LOHAN RANAH WADI at Mandvi by the Kutchi LOHAN MANDAL, ‘in which a lecture was given by oneAli Muhammad Bhai in Gujarati on the swadeshi movement’. The audience at this meeting reportedly ‘consisted mostly of the Gujarati-merchant numbering about 500’. BPPSI, XVIII: 41, 1905, para. 971.
135 BPPSI, IX: 16, 1906, para. 265.
136 BPPSI, XX: 43, 1907, para. 1157.
138 Manu Goswami, Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space (Chicago, 2004), p. 11.
139 BPPSI, XX: 45, 1907, para. 1157.
140 Tilak’s links with the Gujarati Bhanias and Bharamas of Bombay dated back to the early 1890s. He had staunchly defended the Cow-Protection movement against the criticism that its activities were responsible for the Bombay riot of 1893. In turn, when Tilak was arrested by the colonial government in 1897, the Bharamas of Bombay provided surety for his bail plea. It is also worth noting that meetings of the Swadeshi Vastu Pracharini Sabha and the Bombay National Union were often held in the Halai Bhatta Mahajan Wadi and Madhav Bagh, both strongholds of Gujarati Hindu merchants. BPPSI, 1890–1908, passim.
141 BPPSI, XX: 50, 1907, para. 1289.
Tilak’s activities in these years turned him into a hero of the ‘masses’. As Bombay’s Police Commissioner noted, ‘even where he was not personally known his fame spread, specially amongst the working classes, partly through the efforts of the vernacular press, and partly owing to the many agents who were sent abroad to preach him and his works’. ‘With many he is revered’, he added, ‘and in countless houses pictures of him are hung on the wall.’ The extent of his mass appeal became clear in July 1908, when Tilak was sentenced by the Bombay High Court to six years’ rigorous imprisonment for fomenting sedition through his writings in the Kesari.195 Following his conviction on 22 July 1908, the main markets in the Indian town downed their shutters and popular anger exploded on the streets of Bombay.196

After a prolonged lull, nationalist associational activity in the city revived once again during the First World War. Several factors acted in concert to produce a conjuncture in which many new sections of Indian society became rapidly politicized: the economic hardship and social dislocation caused by the war, the imminent prospect of constitutional reforms, the emergence of Gandhi in national politics, the new discourse of ‘national self-determination’ that emerged in these years, and last but not least, the Bolshevik Revolution. These developments imparted a new momentum to nationalist activity in Bombay. The war years witnessed the formation of a number of political associations that claimed to represent the ‘public good’ and sought reforms within the colonial power structure.

Nationalist sentiments and ideas were especially manifest in the growing calls for the democratization of municipal governance and the conduct of civic affairs.197 A Municipal Reform Association was formed which aimed to reframe the municipal constitution in order to extend the franchise to hitherto disenfranchised sections. Women’s associations in the city also began to demand voting rights for women in both the municipality and the provincial legislative council. Significantly, these women argued that the right to vote was a political one, which had ‘nothing to do with religious and social prescriptions’ and was unrelated to the ‘laws of Manu or the Koran’.198

The growing ferment in civic affairs was most clearly reflected in the columns of the Bombay Chronicle, a newspaper which sought to articulate the aspirations of the ‘nationalist’ public in the city. In 1912, Phirozeshah Mehta along with some of the other leading lights of the Bombay Presidency Association had floated the Indian Newspaper Company in order to publish a newspaper that would act as the mouthpiece of the city’s liberal nationalists. The Bombay Chronicle, which began publication from March 1913, was intended to reflect a broad-minded and measured nationalism that would distance itself both from the blinkered pro-colonial stance of the Times of India and the fiery populist rhetoric of the Maharashtra and Kesari, which represented the Tilak brand of anti-colonial politics. However, after the death of Mehta in 1915, the Bombay Chronicle, under its editor B.G. Horniman, abandoned the ‘liberal creed of its founder’ and adopted a more strident posture vis-à-vis the colonial state.199

The new political tone of the Chronicle was increasingly apparent in its criticism of the colonial model of municipal governance. Following Patrick Geddes’s visit to Bombay in 1913, the Chronicle began to take a keen interest in the problems that dogged Bombay’s civic infrastructure. It published a steady stream of reportage, editorials and letters which focused on the difficulties faced by the urban citizenry on account of the lack of basic civic amenities. The Chronicle attributed the city’s woes to the ‘unrepresentative’ character of urban governance and began vociferously to demand the reform of the Bombay Municipality in order to transform it into a genuinely ‘democratic’ body that represented the ‘public interest’. As one scholar has recognized, the Chronicle sought ‘not only to awaken civil society into a more critical disposition vis-à-vis colonial authority, but to engage directly with the Bombay government itself’.200

The Chronicle also became a vocal supporter of the Home Rule movement that emerged in the city during the final years of the Great War. This all-India movement had commenced in 1916 with the founding of two Home Rule Leagues by Bal Gangadhar Tilak (who had been released after completing a six-year prison sentence at Mandalay) and Annie Besant (the noted Madras-based British Theosophist) respectively. These societies, whose core doctrine centred on the somewhat abstract and intellectual concept of ‘Home Rule’, organized public lectures, debates, and discussion groups, and produced and distributed pamphlets and other publicity material pertaining to their cause.201 Both Home Rule Leagues established local branches in Bombay and deployed similar techniques of propaganda. Of the two, Tilak’s League had a stronger presence in the city and its leaders were not very significant in Bombay politics. The Besant branch of the League, on the other hand, not only enjoyed a much larger following, but also had leaders who were influential figures in their own right. The most prominent of these was Mohammad Ali Jinnah, a young upcoming politician who became the president of this society after its founder Annie Besant was interred by the colonial government in 1917. Jinnah was able to attract to this branch a number of his colleagues from the legal profession, many of whom later distinguished themselves in national politics. More importantly, the Jinnah-led League received strong support from B.G. Horniman, who threw the weight of the Chronicle behind it. Consequently,

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195 H.G. Gell, Commissioner of Police, Bombay to Secretary, GOR, Judicial, 26 September 1908, Bombay Judicial Proceedings, no. A-38, September 1908, para. 66, MSA.
196 BPPSAI, XXI: 26, 1908, para. 607.
197 H.G. Gell, Commissioner of Police, Bombay to Secretary, GOR, Judicial Department, 26 September 1908, Bombay Judicial Proceedings, no. A-38, September 1908, MSA.
Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a critical period in the fashioning of urban civil society in colonial Bombay. These decades were characterized by the growing density and diversity of associational activity in the city, as Bombay's inhabitants displayed a vigorous propensity to join together in pursuit of common ends. From cow-protection societies to cricket clubs, the urban landscape witnessed the flowering of a variety of associational ventures.

The efflorescence of associational life had a profound impact on the evolving public culture of the city. Clubs and societies undoubtedly generated in their members a capacity for mutual solicitude, sociability and solidarity; in other words, what contemporary political theorists have termed 'social capital'. At the same time, associational activities also engendered in their participants a concern for the 'common good'. Furthermore, as in other cities in the modern world, voluntary associations in Bombay performed an 'integrative' role within urban society in a context of rapid and far-reaching social change. They did so in a variety of ways. Some societies brought together people on the basis of shared tastes or interests. Others brought together individuals in the pursuit of common economic, cultural, social or political goals.

At the same time, as some of the examples in the foregoing account suggest, urban associational activity was scarcely devoid of its internal tensions. Indeed, there were a number of instances in which rivalries between members led to the swift disintegration of associations. Equally, the normative egalitarianism that underpinned the associational idea did not preclude traditional forms of hierarchy and patronage from reproducing themselves in new guises. Furthermore, as we have seen, competition between associations could lead to conflicts that fractured urban society. In many instances, tensions were stoked by the activities of hybrid associations organized on caste or religious lines. But collective activities based on 'ideal-typical' criteria of voluntary association could also deepen social fissures.

Finally, the simultaneous co-existence of 'hybrid' and purely voluntary associations goes some way towards explaining why the public sphere in colonial India was not a 'homogenous, consensual, unitary space'. The rich diversity of associational activity within Indian civil society rendered its public sphere a 'segmented' domain in which the fashioning of the 'autonomous, reason-bearing individual' was offset by a countervailing process 'through which community identities were reworked and reaffirmed'. It also invested urban public culture in colonial India with an intrinsic plurality and polyphony that has continued to inflect its post-colonial career.

\[\text{References:}\]

- Masselos, 'Bombay City Politics', pp. 154-5.
- At one such meeting, a newspaper reported, the Home Rulers 'addressed the meeting in Marathi and said that the millowners were prepared sympathetically to consider their demands and strongly urged them to return to work at once'. However, their advice 'did not appeal to a majority of those present'. TOI, 14 January 1919.

\[\text{Notes:}\]

- See the discussion in Rudolph, 'Civil Society', pp. 1762-3.
- See Moir, 'Cities and Civil Society', pp. 49-72.
- In this context, see also Rudolph, 'Civil Society', p. 1764.
CHAPTER SEVEN

‘Social Service’, Civic Activism and the Urban Poor

Introduction

‘Bombay’, a contemporary observer complained to the Bombay Gazette in October 1905, ‘appears to be specially [sic] endowed with supreme ideas of tenderness and mercy for the poor; houses for the poor, low rents for the poor, enjoyment for the poor, sanitation for the poor, low interests for the poor, special legal protection for the poor cultivators ...’ The letter writer’s comments were in response to the controversy that had erupted over the long hours of work in the city’s cotton mills. However, his remarks are interesting in that they point to a new development in public debates over the ‘social question’, namely, the prominent role that were accorded in this period to issues concerning the moral and material ‘uplift’ of the ‘masses’.

This chapter focuses on a variety of initiatives undertaken in the early twentieth century by sections of Bombay’s intelligentsia to ‘improve’, ‘uplift’ and ‘reclaim’ the economically deprived and socially underprivileged classes. This was a significant departure in the history of civil society in Bombay. For the better part of the late nineteenth century, members of the city’s English-educated intelligentsia had concentrated their energies on ‘social reform’, a term that denoted a desired transformation amongst high-status castes and communities of cultural practices that were perceived as being both irrational and the root cause of India’s decline as a civilization. The attention of social reformers had focused on ‘traditional’ customs such as prohibitions on female education, child marriage, polygyny, female infanticide, sati, purdah and the pitiful state of widows and dvmadasis, all of which were characterized as ‘perverted, twisted, distorted practices born of ignorance and fear and followed without recourse to common sense’. Social reformers were particularly concerned with the oppressed condition of women and viewed their emancipation ‘as the first step towards progress’. Such concerns were accompanied by the deployment of pedagogical strategies that educated women in the middle-class ideal of ‘respectable domesticity’. However, from the late 1890s onwards,

1 RGOS, 21 October 1905.
2 McDonald, ‘English Education and Social Reform’, pp. 453–70. On the importance of social reform among Parsi and Muslim communities such as the Khojas, see also Shodhan, A Question of Community, pp. 122–5; and Dobbin, Urban Leadership.
4 Ibid. p. 15.
reform-minded elements within the Indian intelligentsia widened the debates on the 'social question' to include the condition of the lower orders of society. Thus, alongside the rhetoric and practice of 'social reform', there gradually emerged a new discourse of 'social service'. In the 'Social organism', wrote one contemporary, 'life and vitality must run from where they are abundant or superfluous to those weaker members who need them. Channels must be kept free for this beneficent flow of energy. This is the problem of Social Service.'

Those who took 'social service' sought to 'civilize' the urban poor by eradicating 'vices' such as drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, and inculcating in them 'enlightened' values regarding sanitation and hygiene. Proponents of the new ethic of 'social service' believed that the welfare of the masses was essential for the progress of society as a whole. All the work has only one aspect, so far as society is concerned, they declared, the weak, the needy, the helpless are assisted, and the vitality of the community is increased. Social service work, it was argued, ought not only awaken the conscience of the community to their responsibility for existing evils but also quicken social sympathy between classes, the well-provided and the destitute, the strong and healthy and the weak, defective and the invalids, the literate and cultured and the ignorant toiling masses of humanity.6

It is not intended to suggest, of course, that the boundaries between 'social reform' and 'social service' were clearly demarcated and sustained in practice. Organizations like the Arya Samaj, the Theosophical Society and the Ramakrishna Mission were engaged in both 'reform' and 'service' activities. Equally, prominent 'social reformers' frequently took the lead in organizing 'social service' activities. The distinction is nonetheless a useful one in that it highlights, at a conceptual level, the differences in the objectives and orientations of these two modes of 'social improvement' in colonial India. In other words, whereas the thrust of nineteenth-century discourse of 'social reform' had been directed at countering what were perceived to be outmoded internal practices within a number of castes and communities (Hindi, Muslim and Parsi alike), the discourse and practice of 'social service' emanated from members of the high-status Anglophone intelligentsia and primarily targeted the lower orders.

Bombay was in many ways a natural locus for the new ethic of social service. As a premier imperial city in the Indian Ocean region it was a key junction in the global flows of information, ideas and ideologies. As one of the largest and most important administrative, commercial and industrial cities in colonial India it was also home to a sizeable 'liberal' intelligentsia which was animated by ideals of 'social improvement' and 'nation-building'. The rich associative traditions that had developed within the city during the late nineteenth century, the emergence of a vigorous urban public sphere, the presence of philanthropic-minded men of wealth with the resources and the desire to fund service-oriented institutions, were equally salient to the rise of new forms of social activism directed at the poor.*

Caste 'uplift' and the 'depressed classes'

In colonial Bombay, the new concern with the 'improvement' and 'uplift' of the urban poor stemmed from a variety of impulses amongst the city's English-educated intelligentsia, and produced an equally diverse range of civic initiatives and institutions. One catalyst for change in this context was an emerging consensus amongst 'reformist' Hindu publicists and politicians about the urgent need to address the many 'evils' of the caste system. During the late nineteenth century, many 'liberal' Hindus had begun to view the caste system as a pernicious and irrational mode of social organization that was an impediment to the progress of the 'Hindu nation'. Drawing on European eugenic, ethnological and evolutionary theories, as well as reformulated Brahmanical notions of ideal spiritual and moral conduct, reform-oriented intellectuals sought to argue that the institution of caste had devalued the 'natural vitality' of the 'Hindu race' and weakened its capacity for rational individual thought and action.7 Adapting European 'organic' social theories to the Indian context they asserted that the well-being of the Hindu community as a holistic entity was determined by the health of its individual, interdependent parts.8 Moreover, they also pointed out that by nurturing social divisions caste-based prejudices were inimical to the goals of 'higher national efficiency'.9 As part of their critique of caste, 'reformist' Hindu publicists, especially those who were actively involved in the National Social Conference (founded in 1887 by Mahadev Ranade, one of the most prominent liberal social reformers in late-nineteenth-century western India), increasingly began to focus on the 'problem' of 'untouchability' and the need to 'uplift' the so-called 'depressed

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* Of course, Bombay was by no means unique in witnessing the emergence of novel forms of social activism. Recent research has drawn attention to the ways in which the first two decades of the twentieth century marked the growth in colonial India of a vigorous associational culture based on the ideal of 'social service'. In North India, for instance, there emerged a number of voluntary associations that sought to strengthen bonds of 'community', 'race', and 'nation', through their involvement in such activities as the building of schools, universities and hospitals; the establishment of reading rooms and libraries; the setting up of co-operative credit societies; the provision of philanthropic aid to the 'weaker sections' of society; and the conduct of relief work during calamities such as floods, famine or epidemics. The societies that were most prominent in these endeavours drew upon both Western ideas of service and associational philanthropy as well as long-standing Indian 'living traditions' of sewa (service) and dana (charity) in propagating ideals and practices of active citizenship, patriotic endeavour, and 'constructive nationalism'.

7 Bayly, Caste, Society and Politics in India, pp. 144-86.
classes' through 'progressive' policies of social improvement. Their attacks acquired a new urgency from the late 1890s onwards in an intellectual and political context marked by growing anxieties about the fate of the 'Hindu race'. The social 'uplift' of the depressed classes, as Bayly has noted, 'first began to be widely advocated in the reformist press at a time when the Census was reporting an alarming decline in population growth among Hindus'. During the first decade of the twentieth century, the National Social Conference responded to such reports by passing resolutions that exhorted its members to 'reclaim' those sections of the 'depressed classes' who had chosen to convert to Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. Nor was the fear of racial decline restricted to 'liberal' Hindu reformers; across the ideological spectrum Hindu publicists and politicians voiced fears that rival communities were growing 'stronger and more vigorous in evolutionary terms'.

In an ideological context dominated by eugenic theories, as well as a widely entrenched social Darwinism that held that communities, races, and nations were engaged in ceaseless competition, ideologues of all hues 'were oriented to strengthening and improving the Hindu community materially, physically and intellectually so that it could reverse a perceived sense of decline'. Reclaiming the 'depressed classes' became central to the mission of 'national regeneration'. As we have already noted, one of the first social organizations to take an aggressive stance in this matter was the Arya Samaj whose adherents 'were enjoined to arrest the supposed decline of the Hindu nation by taking part in campaigns of shuddhi or reversion so as to reclaim untouchable "converts" who had been "lost" to the Hindu nation through the missionary endeavours of these rival faiths'.

In Bombay, however, it was the 'liberal' reformists of the Prarthana Samaj who took the lead in undertaking the 'noble work' of the 'uplift' of the 'depressed classes'. This was in keeping with their efforts during the last quarter of the nineteenth century to spread education amongst the city's working classes. As noted earlier, the Theistic Association had opened some schools for the city's 'labouring and artisan classes' during the 1870s and 1880s. But it had made relatively fewable attempts to reach out to the 'untouchable' communities. This was to change during the early twentieth century. In October 1906, Vithal Ramji Shinde (1873–1944), a member of the Prarthana Samaj, established the Depressed Classes Mission in the city.

Shinde, who belonged to a 'respectable' Maratha family, had completed his college education at Poona, where he had encountered 'reformist' ideas drawn from a variety of intellectual sources: the writings of John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, Unitarian theological doctrines and the lectures of Max Mueller on comparative religion. During the late 1890s, he began to attend the meetings of Prarthana Samaj and was attracted by its tenets and activities. In 1898, he ceased to be a mere visitor and was formally inducted into the society. Three years later, Shinde sailed to England on a scholarship to attend a two-year course in the comparative study of religion at Manchester College, Oxford. During his time at Oxford, he not only had the opportunity to consider religious ideas in the abstract, but also received training in the disseminating of religious thought and organization of prayer sessions for proselytizing activities. On his return to India in October 1903, Shinde was appointed a 'missionary' of the Prarthana Samaj. In this capacity he carried out both organizational and proselytizing activities for the society.

It was as a 'missionary' for the Society that Shinde first became involved with the 'uplift' of the 'depressed classes'. As a 'prudent' Hindu, he was deeply affected by the lack of empathy and concern amongst upper-caste groups for the plight of the 'untouchables'. As a 'missionary' of the liberal faith of the Prarthana Samaj, he believed it was his duty to 'protect' and 'uplift' the 'depressed classes'. At the same time, he also sought to get Hindus to see the moral, religious as well as political necessity of recognizing the untouchables to be a part of the Hindu body politic.

Shinde saw the Depressed Classes Mission as a 'messianic' organization that would work in a spirit of selfless service. His social work 'moved far beyond the prayers, sermons and modest mobilizations' that had hitherto been undertaken by the Prarthana Samaj. Under his direction, and backed by eminent 'public men' such as Sir Narayanrao Chandavarkar, Dwarkadas Govardhan Sukhadia and Krishanji Pandurang Bholekar, the Mission aimed to reach out to the 'untouchable' communities and work towards their social betterment. Indeed, in many ways Vithal Ramji Shinde's initiatives in these years anticipated by more than two decades Mahatma Gandhi's campaigns for the 'uplift' of the Harijans.

The Depressed Classes Mission sought to provide formal and informal education to children of the 'untouchable communities', as well as to extend aid to the indigent families amongst them. Accordingly, vernacular schools for the children of the 'depressed classes' were set up in working-class districts of the city, a Sunday school was commenced at Kamathipura and a philanthropic society was formed to serve destitute women belonging to the lowest castes. The Mission based its headquarters in a working-class tenement near the Globe Mill at Parel in order to enable the 'missionaries' to live in close proximity to the communities that they were seeking to serve. Members of the Mission undertook home visits to establish community contacts and to understand the problems of individual families.

12 Ibid., pp. 182-3.
14 Bayly, Caste, Society and Politics in India, p. 183.
15 Dobbie, Urban Leadership, p. 251.
16 M. S. Gore, Vithal Ramji Shinde: An Assessment of his Contribution (Bombay, 1990), pp. 1-49; G. M. Pawar, Vithal Ramji Shinde (Delhi, 2000), pp. 3-11.
The activities of the Mission continued to expand during the 1910s. By the end of the first decade of its existence, it ran eight schools (one of which imparted technical training), two devotional societies, a debating society, a students’ hostel and a reading room. The Mission’s headquarters in Parel continued to be ‘the centre of all these institutions’. Interestingly, some of the Mission’s schools also had a sprinkling of upper-caste pupils and an attempt was made to break down the social barriers by making all pupils share the same classroom. The emphasis within the school curriculum and pedagogic practice was on the ‘formation of habits of self-control and self-help’. ‘Self-government’ amongst the pupils was encouraged ‘through the agency of monitors, prefects, and sanitary inspectors appointed by a majority of votes in a biennial general election’. Students also formed mutual help societies which sought to foster ‘fellow-feeling’ and ‘exemplary conduct’. Moreover, ‘strict attention was paid in these schools’ to cleanliness and tidiness amongst the students. Boys and girls, it was said, were helped in their efforts to form clean habits by a supply of combs, brushes, towels, soap, and mirrors in the school premises’.21

Gopal Krishna Gokhale’s Servants of India Society, founded in Poona in June 1905, also took a keen interest in the problems of the ‘depressed classes’. Gokhale (1866–1915), widely acknowledged as one of the great Indian ‘liberal’ reformers, was deeply concerned about the plight of the ‘depressed classes’ and was one of the many nationalists who portrayed the success of Muslims, Sikhs and Christian proselytisers in attracting low-caste and ‘untouchable’ converts as a sign of Hindu weakness and racial decline. The Servants of India Society sought to achieve national regeneration and spiritual awakening through ‘constructive social work’.22 Indeed, ‘the 1905 constitution of the Society specifically mentioned an intention to help educate and elevate the “backward” or “depressed classes”. To this end, the Bombay branch of the Society set up night schools for the city’s factory workers and also arranged lectures and magic lantern shows on a variety of wholesome topics.23

The principal figure in the Society’s activities in Bombay was Gopal Krishna Devadhar (1878–1935). Born into a Chitpavan Brahmin family of modest means, Devadhar completed his education at Poona and worked for a while as a Marathi teacher for two Christian missionaries before joining Gokhale’s Servants of India Society. His work as an activist for the Society took him to the United Provinces, where he helped Arya Samaj volunteers in conducting relief work in the wake of the severe famine that struck the region in 1907–1908. Devadhar subsequently moved to Bombay in 1911 in connection with his work for the Dnyan Prakash newspaper. In Bombay, he soon became closely involved in conducting social work both amongst the ‘depressed classes’ and the working-class population more generally. In particular, he played an important part in the spread of the co-operative movement amongst various ‘untouchable’ communities of the city. For instance, he was instrumental in starting a number of co-operative societies for the redemption of the debts of the Harijans and other backward sections of the working classes in Bombay’. Devadhar also took a keen interest in the issue of ‘mass education’ and initiated measures to widen access to learning amongst women and the working classes. In 1913, he organized a ‘Home Classes Committee’ which sought to educate ‘adult women and girls who could not attend regular schools’. In order to achieve his aims, he solicited the help of ‘prominent ladies in the city, many of whom took active interest in the conduct of the classes and lent financial support to them’. A hundred adult girls and women were said to have enrolled in the classes, where they were taught Marathi, English, sewing, cutting, embroidery and music. In 1918, Devadhar helped to set up a new primary school for the ‘backward’ Shimpì community and was said to have been largely responsible for ‘putting this institution on a sound financial basis’.24

Another prominent volunteer of the Servants of India Society in Bombay was Amritlal Thakkar (known popularly in later years as Thakkar Bapa), who hailed from a well-established middle-class Gujarati family based in the Gujarati city of Bharwad. The Thakkars were a mercantile community that had taken with great enthusiasm to Western education. After graduating as a civil engineer, Thakkar travelled to Africa to work on the construction of the Uganda Railway. On his return to India, he joined the Bombay Municipal Corporation in 1904 as inspector of the light railway that carried the refuse of the city out to the suburbs. It was in this context that Thakkar came into close contact with the Dheds, Chamars and Bhangis who were employed as sweepers and menial workers by the Bombay municipality and were universally regarded by the upper-castes as ‘untouchables’ on account of their ‘polluted’ occupation. Inspired by the activities of Vishal Ramji Shinde (with whom he had briefly come into contact) and the Depressed Classes Mission, Thakkar set out to ameliorate the wretched conditions of the municipal conservancy workers by setting up a school for them. He resigned from his job in the Bombay municipality in January 1914 and was admitted into the Servants of India Society shortly thereafter. He subsequently worked with Devadhar amongst the ‘untouchable’ communities employed in the Bombay municipality.25

There are two noteworthy points about the ‘social service’ initiatives of these ‘liberal’ Hindu activists. First, it is clear from their writings and pronouncements that the ethic of ‘selfless service’ adopted by these social workers was greatly inspired by the activities of Christian missionaries. For instance, Shinde’s conception of ‘messianic’ social work was clearly influenced by contemporary Christian missionary activism.26 Likewise, Devadhar was influenced by the ‘persistent methods of work and the humanitarian spirit’ of Christian missionaries and ‘was never weary of saying that public workers in

22 Bajpe, Case, Society and Politics in India, p. 182.
24 The details in this paragraph are culled from H.N. Karmarkar (ed.), Gopal Krishna Devadhar (Poona, 1959); I am grateful to Carey Watt for bringing this source to my notice.
26 In this context see also Deshpande, 'The World and Ideas', p. 113.
India must develop the missionary spirit if they wanted to achieve maximum success in their undertakings. Thus, Christian doctrinal influence and activities 'helped transform the Hindu ideal of seva, or service, into an energizing public doctrine'.

Second, notwithstanding their invocation of liberal theories of 'individual rights and capabilities', modern Hindu nationalists who campaigned for the 'uplift' of the 'depressed classes' tended to work with idealized dichotomies of purity and impurity as well as 'propriety and impropriety'. Thus, an ostensibly 'imperialist rhetoric of nationality and public obligation' was suffused with Brahmanical notions of caste hierarchy, spiritual purity and moral piety. As a consequence, in attempting to 'reclaim the depressed classes', Hindu 'nation-builders' sought to purge these communities of all those practices they regarded as 'unclean' and anathetical to the tenets of a 'universalizing puritanical Hinduism'. At the same time, however, they also sought to invest their social activism with modern 'scientific' legitimacy by invoking the ideas of contemporary eugenacists, ethnologists and racial theorists, who were keen to draw 'clear distinctions between healthy and unhealthy manifestations of appetite and psychic energy'.

Middle-class 'respectability' and the plebeian public sphere

At another level, however, civil society initiatives to 'discipline' and 'civilize' the poor can be seen as an integral part of the strategies of 'empowerment' that served to define an emergent Indian middle class. Recent scholarship has shown how the making of the middle class in colonial India was a 'cultural project' fashioned through decisive interventions in the public sphere from the late nineteenth century. Braiding together Brahmanical and high Islamic notions of spiritual purity and moral piety with Victorian discourses of improvement and self-discipline, a range of intermediate and high-ranking Hindu scion and trading communities as well as ashray Muslim service gentry and commercial classes came to construe themselves as new 'arbiters' of appropriate social conduct by redefining notions of 'respectability'.

23 Basly, Caste, Society and Politics in India, pp. 183–5.
24 Sanjay Joshi, Fractured Modernity: Making of a Middle Class in Colonial North India (Delhi, 2001).

27 Sudipta Kaviraj, 'Filih and the Public Sphere: Concepts and Practices and Space in Calcutta', Public Culture, 10/1 (1997): 84–93. For a general treatment of the role of the ideology of 'improvement' and its indigenous analogue, dharme, in structuring relations of elite domination and subaltern subordination in the context of colonial India, see Ranjit Guha, Dominance without Hegemony: History and Power in Colonial India (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997). However, Guha views these ideologies as a manifestation of a structural logic inherent in the state and the dominant protestant classes in Indian society. Consequently, his account tends to gloss over the particularities of historical context.
28 In this context, see also Googoo, Politics of the Urban Poor.
31 India, 11 October 1910, in RNNB, 47, 1910.
city's labouring poor. The first association for this purpose had been founded as early as 1897, when an Indian Temperance Association (affiliated to the Anglo-Indian Temperance Association) set to work among the city’s mill workers. But it was during the first decade of the twentieth century that the movement really gathered momentum in the city.77 The associations involved in the propagation of temperance included the Bombay Temperance Council, the Khatiaiya Temperance Association, the Arya Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Arya Social Union, the Kamgar Hitawadhaik Sabha and the Social Service League.

Members of bombay’s intelligentsia also sought the suppression of popular modes of observing Muharram, which were regarded as incompatible with the norms of ‘public decency’. In particular, the Muharram toils, which drew heavily on traditions of popular folk entertainment, became the target of sustained criticism.44 For those who claimed to represent the ‘respectable’ classes, the raucous observance of Muharram came to epitomize the ‘degeneracy’ of the plebeian culture of the street. For instance, the Din Bandhu directed the attention of the Police Commissioner to the ‘disgustingly indecent gestures which are made by those who accompany the tabus in the presence of crowds of people both sexes who assemble to witness the tamasha’.45 In no other city that we know of, is so much license allowed as in Bombay’, it added whilst pleading with the Police Commissioner ‘in the name of public morals and decency to put a stop to the filthy exhibitions’.46

Significantly, educated opinion among Muslims and Hindus alike (including non-Brahmin newspapers such as the Din Bandhu which in other contexts had been virulently opposed to Brahmanic initiatives aimed at constructing a monolithic Hindu community), was vociferous in its condemnation of the ‘excesses’ of the lower orders during the festival. Sections of educated Muslim opinion, for instance, argued that the festival was meant to be a sombre ritual of mourning and the practices of the lower orders were ‘un-Islamic’. According to the Akhbar-e-Islam, the educated classes have no connection with the tabus which, really speaking, are against the tenets of Moslem religion. ‘We ourselves’, the paper added, ‘have never regarded the tabus celebration as

religious or holy.47 They found support for such views among their educated counterparts in other communities. ‘Educated and sensible Musalmans’, agreed the Rast Goftar, ‘have no sympathy for the unseemly and fanatic demonstrations which are made by the riff-raff portion of the community. They rightly consider them as irreverent and would fail to do away with these processions which give Bombay and its Police a most anxious fortnight every year.48 The problem, sections of educated Hindu opinion argued, was that though the festival was a purely Islamic event, the lower orders of Hindu society insisted on participating in it. In the words of the Din Bandhu it was ‘not so much the Musalmans who are to blame in this respect as the non-Musalmans, who run riotous on these occasions and who can easily be stopped if an example be made of some of them or if the manager of a tabus or a panja be held responsible for the good behaviour of his following.’49 It was, therefore, not uncommon for educated Hindus to demand that the government prohibit the participation of the Hindu poor in the festival by refusing to grant them licences to make tabus.45 Educated Hindu opinion often cited the support of the Muslim elites for such police action by arguing, as the Dryanodaya did, that the ‘better class of Mahomedans would by no means be displeased if the police cleared the streets of all the low exhibitions of painted men and boys, a large proportion of whom are probably not Mahomedans at all, but Hindus of the lower classes, who use the occasion for profit’.45

Likewise, reform-minded middle-class Hindu publicists and politicians found repugnant the popular mode of celebrating the Holi festival, and the ‘unseemly excesses’ that characterized it. While the celebration of the festival amongst the upper classes was said to be ‘a tame affair’, for the mill workers of the city, Holi was believed to be ‘one continuous round of hilarity by day and night’. During the festival it was the practice among the working classes to organize tamashas in which young boys dressed up in female attire and moved about the town collecting subscriptions for a final entertainment. A diversion of a riotous and noisy character, it was noted, ‘is provided by those who besmirch their bodies with soot and oil or with glowing colours, and rig themselves up in fantastic nondescript dresses as jesters, tigers and bears, and play comic antics with a trail of street arabs following.’ As in the case of the Muharram toils, these were said to ‘levy blackmail on shopkeepers, specially the Marwads, or money-lenders, and threaten well-dressed people with a

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77 Thus, for instance, during 1902-1903, the agent of the Indian Temperance Association was said to have ‘addressed seven open air meetings held in different parts of the town inhabited by mill hands and others’ and the annual meeting of the association noted that even the city’s Commissioner of Police had acknowledged that these activities had materially helped to check drinking and might surely share in the diminished drunkenness of the people’. RCO, 5 December 1903.

44 The most prominent of these traditions was that of the tamasha, a theatrical form whose combination of coarse humour and bawdy sexual innuendoes was extremely popular amongst the city’s labouring poor. Arguably, the tamasha enabled the urban poor to oppose their subordinate status in everyday life through humour and wit directed at those who exercised domination over them. It was generally the practice of such performances to stigmatize figures such as the banas and the Maradirs, who were the creditors of the poor. See, for instance, Din Bandhu, 7 September 1890, in RNNBP, 37, 1890.

45 Akhbar-e-Islam, 18 January 1911, in RNNBP, 3, 1911.

46 Rast Goftar, 27 February 1908, in RNNBP, 9, 1908.

47 Din Bandhu, 6 September 1890, in RNNBP, 36, 1890.

48 See Din Bandhu, 8 July 1893, in RNNBP, 27, 1893. See also Subodh Patrika, 17 June 1894, in RNNBP, 25, 1894.

49 Dryanodaya, 5 September 1889, in RNNBP, 35, 1889.

50 Din Bandhu, 6 September 1890, in RNNBP, 36, 1890.

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rub-down with their greasy or sooty bodies'. Concerns about the 'excesses' associated with the popular mode of celebration prompted the founding of a *Holika Sammelan* in 1911 by some of the city's prominent reform-minded, 'liberal' Hindus: men like Sir Narayanrao Chandavarkar, Gopal Krishna Devadhar, N.M. Joshi and others. The aims of the committee that convened this 'social purity' movement were 'to create a strong public opinion against the excesses of Shimga'; 'to keep off young boys and persons belonging to the labouring and depressed classes from unhealthy influences and practices'; and 'to impress on the minds of the unthinking masses the fact that these unhealthy practices had absolutely nothing to do with religion'. In order to attain these objectives, the *Sammelan* sought 'to divert the attention of these people from the usual filthy practices to healthy amusements and to organize for this purpose counter-attractions'. Thus, it organized sports events, *kirtans* and *bhajans* and other forms of 'social' entertainment to educate workers in the place of their more raucous activities during the festival.

Prostitution in the city was another issue that attracted the attention of 'social purity' campaigners. The representations of prostitution in the press, especially its perceived undermining of the ideology of 'respectable domesticity', served to strengthen the widely held belief that it was a grave social threat. Complaining about the presence of prostitutes on Falkland Road, for instance, *Jam-e-Jamshed* professed outrage at the negligence of the Bombay Police and other authorities responsible for 'public morals and public decency' whose inaction was seen to be a 'diservice' to the people. 'Indeed' asked the paper, 'who is responsible for the consequences that must certainly ensue by permitting so many houses of ill-fame, and so many gambling dens to exist in a street which leads the mass of the working community from the northern parts of the town to the places of business, and their children and families to the schools, the markets, the theatres and other places of innocent pleasure and enjoyment?' Police action against prostitutes was thus generally prompted by complaints from those who claimed to represent 'public opinion'. When the police acted on such complaints the vocal sections of middle-class society were generally quick to support their action. Following action against prostitutes in 1911, the *Indu Prakash* was highly appreciative of 'the measures taken by the Police in removing the houses of ill-fame from respectable localities in Girgaum' as a result of which 'respectable people are to be seen occupying dwellings which they had to formerly avoid in consequence of their disorderliness'. It went on to express the hope that 'this system of removing prostitutes from respectable localities will be enforced in other parts of the city as well'. 'Public' pressure of this kind, as well as the activities of bodies such as the Bombay Vigilance Association, resulted in the segregation of prostitutes in specific sections of the Indian town.

At the same time, the middle-class project of civic modernity had a powerful pedagogic dimension. As putative leaders of Indian society, members of the middle class saw it as their duty to 'educate' the poor and inculcate in them 'modern' norms of civic life. The plague epidemic had sharpened perceptions amongst the city's educated middle class that the poor needed to be 'enlightened' about modern principles of sanitation and personal hygiene. Western epidemiological theories that attributed plague to filth and poverty were enormously influential in informing the attitudes of the Indian educated middle class towards the city's poor. Echoing the views of many colonial medical practitioners, Behramji Malabaribrewrote in 1897 that the plague epidemic in Bombay, 'was a disease of the poor', caused by 'chronic poverty, habitual underfeeding, insalubrious surroundings, and want of physical stamina'. Many middle-class observers also held that the 'unhygienic' habits and squalid living conditions of the poor were a menace to 'public health'. Such beliefs increasingly prompted Indian educated elites to participate in campaigns to spread 'sanitary awareness' amongst the city's labouring classes.

An important institutional initiative in this context was the establishment of the Bombay Sanitary Association. Founded in 1903, the stated aims of the Association were 'to create an educated public opinion with regard to sanitary matters in general', 'to diffuse knowledge of sanitation and hygiene' and 'to promote sanitary science'. At its outset, the Association declared its intention 'to employ male and female visitors of every caste and creed to visit the houses of the poor, to give popular illustrated lectures, to issue verbal and written instructions' on a range of subjects such as the value of water, fresh air, sunlight, the 'evils of overcrowding', the care of children, pregnant women, the importance of personal cleanliness and hygiene, the health hazards of keeping animals in the house, the objectionable habit of using any spot for natural purposes', and the danger posed by accumulation of filth.

Even though the Bombay Sanitary Association was the brainchild of Dr. Turner, the city's Health Officer, it was educated professional Indian middle-class men and women who came to dominate its activities. The tone of the new association was set at its inaugural meeting which was attended by a large number of Indian professionals, mostly lawyers and doctors, who were actively involved in civic politics. Once the Association was established, educated Indians played a crucial role in propelling its expansion. For instance, in May 1904 a meeting was called by one Dr Bathiwalla, 'to consider the advisability

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47 Kunzru (ed.), *Gopal Krishna Devadhar*, p. 103.
48 Ibid., p. 104.
51 *Indu Prakash*, 7 November 1911 in *NNBNP*, 45, 1911.
53 In this context, see also Veena Naregal, *Figuring the Political*, p. 18.
55 On middle-class representations of the poor in this context, see also Arnold, *Touching the Body*.
56 *BGOS*, 29 August 1903.
57 *BGOS*, 16 January 1904.
58 *BGOS*, 29 August 1903.
of forming a sub-committee for the F and G wards for the successful working of the objects of the Sanitary Association'. Addressing the meeting the doctor declared that there was 'a great necessity for an Association of this kind and especially in F and G wards where the majority of the population are mill hands who are mostly ignorant of the elementary principles of personal hygiene and sanitation'. He went on to add that the Bombay Sanitary Association offered a vast field for all true citizens who wished to work for the good of their fellow countrymen'.

The sub-committees of the Sanitary Association that were subsequently formed for various wards, largely comprising professional Indian men, toured the different sections of the city 'with a view to bringing to the notice of the people the value of personal and domestic hygiene'. The Association also engaged the services of two paid 'health visitors' who 'regularly visited the house of the poor morning and evening and explained to the people how to improve the condition of their rooms by ventilation, whitewashing, disposal of refuse and advise them on the prevention of disease - smallpox, plague, phthisis, consumption and diseases of infants and the value of vaccination'. In turn, the health visitors submitted weekly reports to an honorary secretary (a role discharged by the Health Officer).

The Bombay Sanitary Association arranged for lectures to be delivered by Indian doctors in the vernacular on topics such as vaccination, personal hygiene, treatment of infants, precautionary measures against plague and other infectious diseases. In March 1905, Dr K.N. Gokhale delivered a lecture in Marathi 'to an audience consisting chiefly of mill and coolie women' at the Victoria Bandar in Colaba. On this occasion, there were said to have been 'about 500 to 600 women from the locality and the neighbouring mills'.

During the course of his lecture the doctor impressed upon his audience the necessity of cultivating clean habits in order to ward off disease. After similar speeches by other speakers, the meeting concluded with a local school mistress exhorting the audience that 'the prosperity of the city depends on the health condition of the poorer classes and it is for this reason that the Municipality gives so much attention to the care of the poor and as such it is the duty of the poor to take advantage of the facilities offered to them'.

The pedagogic thrust of a 'modernist' civic consciousness can also be discerned in the debates that arose over the need for 'mass' primary education. In the late nineteenth century, the demand that the poor should receive the benefits of education had been largely articulated by a minority of non-Brahmin publicists. However, during the first decade of the new century, there was a growing chorus of opinion amongst Bombay's educated elites in favour of the diffusion of education. Education was seen to be the key to alleviating the problems caused by the 'ignorance' and poverty of 'the masses'. One of the first proposals in this direction emanated in June 1905 from the business magnate Ibrahim Rahimtoola, who moved a resolution in the Bombay Municipal Corporation in favour of 'free and compulsory primary education' in the city. 'It had frequently occurred to him', he stated in support of his proposal, 'that with all the measures that they were adopting for improvement of public health and the general sanitary condition of the public, there was one thing which prevented the benefits resulting from those measures ... and that was ignorance'. While Rahimtoola's proposal received a distinctly lukewarm reception from the propertyed ratepayers who were averse to paying for this benefit to the poor, it was backed enthusiastically by a number of the corporation's educated professional men. Thus according to Dr N.N. Katarkar, the proposal had merit because 'knowledge was power, whereas ignorance was terror'.

As it transpired however, the proposal in favour of free and compulsory primary education was put on hold. One objection, as already stated, was the additional cost that a scheme of this nature would impose upon ratepayers. Other opponents of the scheme advanced a version of the 'culture of poverty' thesis, arguing that the customs and practices of the poor made it unlikely that it would succeed. The debate on the proposal in the Bombay Municipal Corporation ended with a resolution that 'the question of introducing free and compulsory primary education in the city of Bombay should be investigated'. In 1908, the committee appointed by the Government of Bombay to explore the question came to the conclusion that the time was not ripe for compulsory education nor for free education since rates of fees were 'exceedingly moderate' and hence within the reach of the bulk of the population. It was only after the end of the Great War that the question was reopened.

Nonetheless, the question of educating the masses acquired a growing prominence in public debate during these years. Indeed, both supporters and opponents of the scheme were in agreement that the issue of educating the masses was an important one. Even though the proposal for 'compulsory education' was defeated, professional men in the Corporation used their numerical preponderance in the Joint Schools Committee (later the Municipal Schools Committee) to push for an expansion in the network of primary schools in the city. The pace of the expansion was particularly rapid after 1908 when the Corporation was vested with the sole charge of primary education in the city. Following this, the number of municipal primary schools in the city shot up from 102 in 1908 to 233 a decade later. Of course, not all of this expansion was aimed at drawing the children of the working classes to school. Yet the achievements on this score were not entirely negligible. Thus, by 1919 there were seventeen schools for the so-called 'depressed classes', two

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33 BGOS, 7 May 1904.
34 BGOS, 4 February 1904.
35 Ibid.
36 BGOS, 30 February 1906. In 1905–1906, the 'health visitors' were said to have made 4,519 visits to different houses and 'advised the people in sanitation and hygiene'. Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 BGOS, 4 March 1905.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
41 See, for instance, Indian Spectator, 8 July 1905.
mill-hand schools and six ordinary night schools in the city. Not only was education in all three types of schools entirely free of cost, slate and writing materials were also supplied gratis to the students.

Social service in global perspective

At yet another level, some institutional outcomes of the emergent ethic of 'social service' in Bombay's public life might profitably be viewed as the Indian incarnation of a global phenomenon. 

In the period spanning the 1880s to the 1920s, there developed a new public concern in a number of countries, both metropolitan and colonial, about the costs and consequences of industrial urbanization. The rapid influx of a vast indigent proletarian population, the impact of rising numbers on the civic infrastructure, and the 'discovery' of poverty, all served to provoke intense debates amongst governing elites and the middle classes in cities across the globe about the pressing challenges that confronted the urban social order.

One notable consequence of these developments was the emergence of a new ethos of social work in many industrializing societies. In England, for instance, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed the efflorescence of a popular and voluntaristic social-scientific culture, which was reflected in the activities of numerous local Charity Organization Societies, socialist organizations such as the Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party; the metropolitan and provincial 'ethical societies', the 'University extension and settlement movements'; and a range of new civic associations devoted to the advance of social research and the modernization of social policy.

Significantly, the philosophy of social service that informed the activities challenged the predominant view that 'the poor were morally culpable in their condition and that philanthropy could stem destitution'. Social activists increasingly recognized during the last two decades of the nineteenth century that 'the poor needed advocates willing to call on new and wider resources'. The shift in attitudes was best exemplified by Canon Samuel Barnett, a member of the Charity Organisation Society, who argued in 1883 'that the condition of the poor was clearly beyond the best charitable efforts at alleviation'. The following year, Barnett founded Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel and thereby inaugurated the 'settlement house' movement. The idea of the 'settlement house' was 'to bring closer the classes through their residential contact, and thereby to inculcate the spirit of self-improvement in the working poor and social awareness in the rich'.

A key feature of these civic initiatives was the cultural hegemony of 'idealism' thought. Thus, social thinkers and activists in the Edwardian era were 'increasingly inclined to view society neither as a machine nor as a physical organism, but as a "spiritual personality" with a "moral will". The influence of idealism meant that social policy rather than being 'viewed as an end in itself', came to be seen as an instrument in "attaining perfect justice and creating the ideal state". In particular, Platonic ideas about the 'organic spiritual community' and the 'ethical nature of citizenship' were enormously influential in informing the writing and practices of those who were active in the field of social work. Indeed, for many contemporary British intellectuals, Platonic thought offered "a series of clues, principles and practical nostrums with which to approach the problems of mass, urban, class-based, industrial and imperial civilization".

At the same time, however, the 'shocking revelations' about the physical condition of British working-class army recruits during the Boer War also generated new anxieties about the national and racial consequences of poverty. The Edwardian era, as E.P. Hancox has observed, inaugurated an important shift in the perceptions of poverty. Thus, 'the challenge of poverty was now to the nation, and the problem became one of national efficiency and of national resources'. Such concerns prompted amongst philanthropic-minded activists a new interest in continental models of philanthropic activity, most notably the Elberfeld system in the Ruhr Valley. One consequence of this was the rise in many English towns and cities of Guilds of Help, which were 'civic visiting societies' that 'advocated the involvement of those more fortunate to relieve the distress of the poor'. Though the organizers of the Guilds were drawn largely from the middle classes, they nonetheless managed to reach out into the ranks of the working class to make more attractive the idea of philanthropic service as an obligation to the community.

Similar social initiatives also characterized civic life in the United States of America during what came to be known as the 'Progressive Era'. The 'settlement house' movement, for instance, spread to a number of cities in the United States and by 1911 there were over four hundred in that country. Indeed, notwithstanding important differences of emphasis, 'reformers on both sides of the Atlantic shared many common anxieties about the concentration of social problems in large cities'. Underpinning the Progressive movement in the United States was the notion that the modern city, far from constituting

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22 Harris, 'Political Thought and the Welfare State', pp. 224-7.
'the most extreme form of the social disintegration of the traditional world', could be made to yield a 'more hopeful' future through active citizenship and public intervention.74 Recent research suggests that civic initiatives in cities as far-flung as Toronto and Tokyo were driven by similar ideas and impulses in this period. Toronto, for instance, had grown rapidly from the late nineteenth century onwards and experienced social problems similar to other cities in the industrializing societies of the West. Concerned about the growing civic problems and the widening ' rift between rich and poor', Canadian middle-class social activists embraced Canon Barnett's ideas and by 1914 there were six settlement houses in the city. The organizers of the settlement houses were impelled by a variety of desires and needs: the urge to create 'islands of enlightenment' in working-class districts; to use these 'as sanctuaries from which to launch social investigations and to test innovative schemes aimed at promoting the welfare of the poor on a very pragmatic level'; to break down class barriers in order 'to recreate a sense of community' within cities; and last but not least, to counter the 'very real threat' posed by immigrant cultures to the hegemony of 'middle-class Anglo-Celtic culture'.75 Likewise, in Tokyo during the late Meiji era, rapid economic and social changes were a 'major stimulus to attempts to understand new phenomena such as urbanization and the emergence of an industrial working class'. Publicists and activists belonging to an emergent middle class defined as 'social problems' specific issues ranging from working-class living conditions to prostitution and took the initiative in finding solutions to them.76

The middle-class 'discovery of poverty' was also a feature of late imperial Russian cities such as St Petersburg and Moscow. As Lindenmeyer has shown, fundamental socio-economic transformations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries evoked increasing concern amongst educated Russians living in urban centres and prompted them to engage in new forms of voluntary action that sought to aid, discipline and reform the poor.77 In particular, a number of private charitable organizations were established in response to the rapid growth of many towns, and to the devastating impact such growth had on existing urban housing, health, and public safety. The founding of 'voluntary associations of various kinds was one of the means chosen to transform a threatening migrant mass into a sober, educated, industrious and urbanized population'.78

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The global responses to the social consequences of industrial urbanization also registered their effects in colonial Bombay. Confronted and concerned by the far-reaching economic and social changes of their times – the rapid pace of industrial urbanization, the emergence of a vast proletarian population, and the growing class differentiation within the city – members of Bombay's intelligentsia adapted to their own ends the ideas and institutional forms deployed by their counterparts in other global contexts. This is not surprising given that many educated Indians in the city were highly aware of the intellectual debates and voluntary civic initiatives pertaining to the poor that animated the public sphere in the metropolitan West. During the early twentieth century, 'dramatic increases in telegraphic and postal facilities served to accelerate the flow of information into the subcontinent'.79 A growing number of middle-class Indians also travelled abroad and came into contact with ideas circulating in the imperial public sphere. Indian publicists and activists were thus 'plugged into transnational processes and flows regarding organised philanthropy, social service and citizenship'.80

One of the first organizations in colonial Bombay that devoted itself to 'professional' social work was the Seva Sadan Society, which was founded in July 1908 by the Parsi social reformer Behramji Malabari. A report in the Indian Spectator, which described the aims and activities of the Society, stressed the need for 'wholesome students of the poor and the distressed, students of their compensations, students of the law of rewards and punishments, students of the Science of Prevention and of the Art of Consolation and Cure'. The report also contended that prior to the Society's establishment, 'there was no indigenous, non-proselytising, non-sectarian organisation for lovingly serving all the three races, independently of caste and creed'. The Society, whose trustees included men like Sir Narayanrao Chandavarkar, Sir Bhau Chandra Bhatawadekar, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey and Gokuldas Parekh, primarily devoted its energies to improving the lot of destitute women. Its activities were divided 'into four broad departments – healing the sick, protecting the helpless, instructing the ignorant, and teaching some industry which enables poor women to earn their livelihood'.81 According to the Sadan's charter of aims, one of its principal objectives was 'to utilise the waste human material'. For this purpose, it initially established 'a Home for the Homeless', and an 'Industrial Home'.82 Over time, the Sadan expanded its infrastructure and established an Industrial Department for poor women that imparted skills such as sewing, cookery and embroidery. At the same time, it provided training to women social workers who were to 'exercise their vocation among the poor'. This included amongst other things 'the visiting of hospitals and the distribution of fruits, flowers, clothes, and sweets to indigent patients, the visiting of the quarters of the poor...
and the administering of relief to women, and the visiting of jails and prisons for affording relief to women prisoners'.

But by far the most prominent of such initiatives was the Social Service League, which was established in March 1911 by some of the most prominent professional middle-class men in Bombay's public life.\(^7\) The League was explicitly founded on a non-sectarian and broad basis, and its membership was thrown open to all persons without distinction of race or creed.\(^8\) Organizers of the League declared that their principal 'motive power' was 'a sense of the common brotherhood of man and the innate feelings of the universal love for mankind, pity for the sufferings of the miserable, and justice for all'. They also differentiated its work ethic from social service that was driven by a solely 'religious motive'. The League's work, they explained, 'may be commonly regarded as secular'. Indeed, if at all there was a religious basis to its work, it was the broad and liberal 'religion of humanity'. Furthermore, the method by which it aspired to achieve its aims was to make human beings 'capable of self-help in the improvement of their social condition by providing them with opportunities and placing them in favourable surroundings'.\(^9\)

The League was especially concerned about the problems of the city, which were conceived in explicitly 'organic' terms. In the words of one activist, 'a city does not grow merely by more roads and houses, even better roads and higher-rent houses; but with the growth of the health, comfort, and progressive well-being of its citizens, in all matters and in all aspects in which men live together as social beings'. The 'well-being of the whole', he added, 'depends on the well-being and growth of the constituent parts.' Looking around them, local activists perceived a number of pressing problems in Bombay's teeming working-class neighbourhoods that prevented such a state of well-being from being attained: overcrowding, dirt, disease, drunkenness and other social vices such as 'gambling, incest, illegitimacy, or prostitution' with their attendant 'lowering of the general moral tone of the people'. In order to render the city 'a really healthy organism', they argued, it was necessary not only to eradicate these evils, but also to nurture 'various positive forms of social life and social work' that would help 'to raise the comfort and well-being of the people'. Furthermore, as 'the care-taker of the society in which he lives', it was the duty of the individual citizen to take an active part in social work. Thus,

We want, in a word, an army of charitable social workers, men and women who will give personal labour; who will develop the sympathetic spirit as servants of the people; men and women keenly alive to the duties and responsibilities of citizenship; men and women who will go to rescue and reform, to prevent and uplift. The initiative must come from the comfortable, the leisureed, and the educated classes. It is they who must see with a new angle of vision, see these not seen before, nor cared ... It is they who must see first the distant vision of a healthy, happy, truly beautiful city.'\(^10\)

The League set itself a number of objectives in its founding charter. First of all, it aimed to collect and study 'social facts' and to discuss 'social theories and social problems with a view to forming public opinion on questions of social service'. Second, it was dedicated to the 'pursuit of social service generally and specially with a view to ameliorate the physical, moral, mental and economic condition of the people'. A third objective was the 'training of social workers'. Finally, the League's constitution also proclaimed its intention to undertake measures for the 'organization of charities and social work'.\(^11\)

In the years that followed, the League laid great emphasis on the practical side of its work. It campaigned for mass education, sanitary awareness and social purity; tried to raise public awareness about the importance and value of social service; conducted relief work amongst the urban poor during times of distress; and last but not least, also inaugurated a new era of 'welfare work' centred on 'settlements' and 'workmen's institutes'.

As part of its 'mass education' drive, the Social Service League undertook a variety of schemes in its early years. Night schools were established 'to teach reading and writing in the vernaculars' to the working classes as well as to provide English classes to those who had some elementary education but wanted to learn the language 'in order to better their prospects'. By the early 1920s, the League supervised 17 night schools, a majority of which catered to the needs of the working classes. Lantern lectures were organized on scientific topics such as 'natural phenomena', the 'human body', astronomy and geography, as well as on Hindu epics such as the Ramayana, which were informed by moral and ethical themes. The League also started 'free travelling libraries' in order 'to create a taste for reading among the masses and then to satisfy the same by placing at their disposal, from time to time, useful wholesome literature'.\(^12\)

Here, the organizers of the League drew their inspiration from 'Europe, America and other civilized parts of the world' where, they noted, 'a Free Library is regarded as one of the most important means of promoting Mass Education'.\(^13\)

\(^7\) SSQ, III (1918): 218.
\(^8\) Kannik, Joshi, pp. 36–49.
\(^9\) Ganesh L. Chandavarkar A Whirling Soul: Story of the Life of Sir Narayan Chandavarkar (Bombay, 1933), p. 163. The League had 50 classes of members based on the extent of monetary contribution. These ranged from life members who had made donations of over five hundred rupees to those in the lowest class who generally paid anything between one rupee and four rupees per annum.
\(^11\) 'Social Service, Civic Activism and the Urban Poor', 223
\(^12\) The Social Service League's charter of aims was usually published at the end of all its reports and publications.
\(^13\) Twelfth Annual Report of the Social Service League (Bombay, 1924), p. 4.
\(^14\) Second Annual Report of the Social Service League (Bombay, 1913), pp. 2–3. The interest in establishing libraries was part of a more general trend in colonial India at this time. As was noted, 'whether in schools or in towns for more public use' libraries were seen as institutions of public utility which could impart useful knowledge and contribute to a more enlightened populace.' Watt, 'Education for National Efficiency', p. 361. For an interesting discussion about the role of the library movement in the unfolding of liberal governmentalism in nineteenth-century Britain, see Joyce, Rule of Freedom, pp. 128–37.
\(^15\) First Annual Report of the Social Service League (Bombay, 1912), pp. 2–3.
Within two years of its founding, the League possessed 85 libraries with a total of almost five thousand books. Furthermore, since its libraries were located in working-class districts where the vast majority of the population was illiterate, the librarians were requested to arrange to read out books for their benefit once in a week or a fortnight. The League’s annual report for 1913 noted that 131 readings were given and the total attendance at these was over 2,550 with an average of 20 persons present at each reading. In addition to these activities, the League undertook schemes such as the provision of cheap textbooks to poor students and special University Extension classes, which sought to provide access to learning for those who had been forced to forego higher education on account of unfavourable circumstances.

A second sphere of activity to which the League initially directed its attention was the spread of ‘sanitary awareness’ amongst Bombay’s poor. The League’s organizers declared that the city’s vast and ‘illiterate’ working-class population had inherited ‘uncleanly habits and possessed no knowledge of the elementary laws of sanitation and hygiene’. Leavening ‘modern’ ideas about health with traditional Brahmanical tenets regarding purity and pollution, they set about literally cleansing the ‘great unwashed’. ‘It has been brought to our notice by our friends among the depressed class people’, the League’s first annual report remarked, ‘that a large number among them especially children, do not wash their bodies for days together and their clothes do not get a wash even once a month. In order to counter the perceived lack of personal hygiene amongst the poor, volunteers of the League made weekly visits to a chawl occupied by these people and make the boys and girls take a bath’. A ‘hot-water boiler’ was purchased for the purpose and soap was provided ‘to wash their bodies and also clothes’. In addition to this, a number of other activities were undertaken: lectures and classes on the ‘laws of sanitation and hygiene’ that were organized and delivered in the local languages; free aid classes; the publication of vernacular tracts and leaflets on topics pertaining to health and hygiene, which were distributed for free in the city’s working-class districts by the librarians of the travelling libraries and by the volunteers of the League; and visits by volunteers to ‘uncleanly quarters with a view to improving their sanitation’. Furthermore, prompted by the belief that their ‘wretched, dull, dreary life in the slums, unrelieved by any aesthetic pleasures’ had deleterious consequences for the urban poor, ‘most of whom always wear pale looks’, the League also organized ‘fresh air excursions’ and ‘open air sports’ for poor children, initiatives that were clearly inspired by European and American examples.

From the outset, the League also laid great emphasis on the need for ‘social purity’ through its temperance campaigns and its drives to purge popular festivals of what were deemed ‘improper’ practices. Its first report declared,

Our Indian Society, especially in a city like Bombay offers a very vast field of work in connection with the Social Purity Movement. The League was closely associated with the work of the Holika Sammelan and it was noted that ‘a large part of the workers in the former movement are members of the League’. Significantly, its ‘social purity’ measures were informed by puritanical Hindu ideas and idioms to a far greater extent than any other area of its work. Thus, the League organized devotional gatherings marked by Hindu religious discourses and lectures on moral themes delivered by spiritual leaders as a means of countering the supposedly ‘filthy’ excesses of the lower orders during festivals such as Holi and Janmashtami. A Temperance Club was established in 1917 ‘with a view to promote and spread the principles of temperance among the masses especially the labouring classes’. The League also held a number of public meetings ‘to cultivate public opinion against gambling’. The campaign was spearheaded by two committees, one for men and the other for women, which sought to provide ‘cooher-attractions in the form of discussions, lectures, musical entertainments and magic lantern shows’.

The Social Service League saw it as an essential duty to ‘educate public opinion’ about its activities. Its first annual report observed: ‘The idea of Social Service in its modern aspect is quite new to us and a special effort must be made to spread its gospel of humanity, universal brotherhood and service, among young men.’ The League therefore set up a ‘small library of books on sociology, social service and other kindred subjects’ and also organized lectures by ‘well-known persons’ with experience in the field of ‘social work’. From 1913, the League not only started a new journal, the Social Service Quarterly (a Marathi edition, the Samaj Sevak, began to be published from August 1920), but also began to maintain an information bureau and a register containing details of all the philanthropic and social service institutions in Bombay. In addition, pamphlets published in English, Marathi, Gujarati and Urdu on different facets of social service were freely distributed amongst the working classes.

The Social Service League also played a prominent part in the organization of relief work during times of distress. For instance, when famine conditions arose in Gujarat, Kathiawar and Cutch in 1912, a thousand volunteers of the League collected subscriptions for the Bombay Central Famine Relief Fund. But its most impressive achievement in this regard was during the influenza pandemic of 1918. As mortality rates within the city soared, a special meeting of the League was held at which an Influenza Epidemic Relief Committee was

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113 Second Annual Report of the Social Service League (Bombay, 1913), pp. 6-8.
115 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
constituted. A vigorous fund-raising drive was organized and a sum of over fifty thousand rupees was raised in a matter of weeks. A number of relief centres were established in working-class neighbourhoods for the distribution of medicines, food and milk. Each relief centre was placed under the charge of one or more doctors and senior medical students. Ambulances were arranged for transporting seriously ill cases to hospitals and homeless patients were provided with temporary lodgings after they were discharged.107 Led by N.M. Joshi, one of its secretaries, the League recruited over two hundred volunteers who 'went around the chawls and houses in the different localities and persuaded the people to take advantage of the medical relief centres'.108 Furthermore, Joshi and his volunteers had to perform the difficult task of cremating dead bodies. Many who died had no relatives in Bombay and the death rate was so high that the special help of volunteers was necessary if dead bodies were to be quickly disposed of. In all this work Joshi received ample assistance from his colleagues in the Social Service League.109

But perhaps the most significant feature of the League's activities was its adherence to a new ethic of 'social work' that was subsequently to prove very influential in Bombay's public life. In particular, inspired by the model of Toynbee Hall and the 'settlement houses' that were established in northeastern American cities during the Progressive era, the leaders of the League aspired to initiate similar experiments in Bombay. For instance, its fourth annual report noted that, 'In England, America and other countries educated persons, inspired with the idea of improving the social condition of the poor classes, live in their localities and start various educational and social activities for raising their standard of living'.110 Whilst admiring at the outset that the prevailing conditions in India made it 'difficult, if not impossible' for the League to establish such settlements, not least because of 'the great paucity of trained social workers', its organizers nonetheless made 'an humble beginning by establishing social work centres in Tardeo, Chikhaliwadi and Pareli, three localities inhabited by a large number of Labouring classes'. Here, the League commenced its activities by focusing on 'sanitation work' in order that 'after continuous work for two or three years a visible change for the better may be effected in the life of the people'.111

At Tardeo, for instance, the League chose to focus on four tenements, containing 'a population of about seven hundred souls', most of whom were said to be 'very backward in point of education'. Having acquired a rent-free room from the Maneckji Pet Mill, which owned the tenements, volunteers of the League set to work in October 1913. After convening a meeting of all the residents of the tenements, a committee consisting of thirty residents was formed 'to supervise the sanitation of the locality'. The League wrote to the municipality and the Health Department and 'obtained from them a separate dust-bin for each chawl'. They also succeeded in getting the city's civic authorities 'to send their cart daily to remove the refuse'. Tin boxes for the deposit of rubbish were placed on every floor of the tenements and 'members of the committee were asked to be vigilant in seeing that the floors and the compounds were kept clean and that all residents threw their wastage only in the tin boxes and in the dustbins'. At the end of the first year of the experiment, the League expressed great satisfaction with its achievement, claiming that 'while the neighbouring localities suffered from plague during the last cold season, these chawls enjoyed complete immunity'.112 Similar sanitary measures were also put into effect in its centres at Chikhaliwadi and Pareli. Furthermore, over the course of the next three years the League organized a variety of activities in all three localities: night classes, Sunday classes, lantern lectures, co-operative credit societies, temperance meetings, open air games and fresh air excursions.

These measures paved the way for a major innovation in January 1917 when the League established a 'permanent settlement' at Pareli. 'The basic idea of the settlement', the League's organizers explained, 'is that social workers should go and live with the poor, see their life at close quarters, try to help them in their close quarters, try to help them in their difficulties and raise their standard of life'.113 However, while the ideological influence of the English 'settlement house' movement is undeniable, the League's decision was also dictated by the practical constraints imposed on its work by the local context. For instance, it was noted that 'the distance of the centre of our activities from the residential quarters of the people, for whom the work was intended, seriously impeded the growth of the activities'. In particular, 'Much time was wasted unnecessarily in going to and coming back from distant places, and the worry involved put the enthusiasm of the volunteers to a very severe rest'. Furthermore, it was admitted that 'distance made it difficult for our volunteers to have an intimate touch with, and thoroughly to understand the life of the poorer people, who, in consequence, could not be very much influenced by the work done'.114

The League accordingly rented a ground floor apartment on Pareli Road and appointed two resident graduate workers to take charge of the new settlement's activities. This involved, in the first instance, setting up a library and free reading room; arranging lectures, first-aid classes, recreational activities such as drawing and music classes; and founding a co-operative credit society. The lectures, it was noted, were 'regularly given every Sunday and other holidays when the mills are closed'. Discourses on temperance, education, co-operation were also held and at these the resident volunteers took 'the opportunity of

109 Karanji, Joshi, p. 29.
113 Ibid., pp. 15-17.
explaining the aims and objects of the League to their working-class audience. The League’s workers also engaged in street preaching and it was reported that on Sunday evenings, ‘the singing band of the Branch attracts the passers-by into its compound, where lectures are given by various speakers on all sorts of practical and useful subjects’. Significantly, the public lectures that the League organized were often delivered by Hindu religious figures and a number of them revolved around themes drawn from the great Indian epics.

In February 1918, the League opened a second permanent settlement at Ghalabhai Street in Madangura, ‘in the midst of a large population of Mahomedan weavers from Northern India’, most of whom were said to be ‘illiterate’. The settlement was placed under the charge of a Muslim resident graduate worker and, in Parel, a range of activities were initiated including an Urdu Library, a free reading room, night schools, lantern lectures, fresh air excursions, co-operative societies for the weavers of the locality, fund-raising drives among local Muslim businessmen to fund scholarships for poor students of the community and general sanitation work. The last aspect of the work was seen to be especially important in a locality that was deemed to contain ‘some of the most insanitary slums inhabited by the labouring classes’. Indeed, the League noted that as a result of its activities, ‘the three portions of Ghalabhai Street were ... levelled, metalised and lighted’ and that it had sent a large number of representations ‘to the different departments of the Municipality, the Rent Controller and the Improvement Trust, regarding insufficient water supply, dilapidated condition of premises, improper situation of some latrines and urinals, erection of new urinals, insanitation in chawls, darkness in streets, illegal enhancement of rents, etc.’

1918 was an important year for the League in other ways too, as its social work acquired deeper institutional roots in the city. In March that year, the League opened a ‘Workmen’s Institute’ for the Currimbhoy Ebrahim group of mills. Funded by the industrial magnate Sir Fazulbhoy Currimbhoy, this institution undertook to provide the workers of this industrial conglomerate a range of ‘welfare’ services. Its activities included establishing a night school, a library, a lecture hall, a temperance club and co-operative credit societies that sought to provide members with loans ‘to the extent of three to four times their monthly pay at a reasonable rate of interest’. Special emphasis was placed on catering to the needs of women workers in the factories. Shortly after this institution was set up, the League was invited to organize and supervise a similar venture for the Tatas. The Tata Sons Workmen’s Institute commenced work in November 1918 and engaged in welfare activities for the company’s workers. At the same time, the activists of the League also advocated the creation of publicly funded ‘central workers’ institutes’ in various parts of the city, whose facilities rather than being confined to the employees of particular mills would be ‘open to all workers ... living in the different working-class localities’. To this end, the League drew up plans in the same year for the creation of an independent Workmen’s Institute ‘for the labouring classes in general’, which would provide ‘education and recreation for workers’ and aid them in ‘organising social and economic activities for their own benefit’.

Reflecting on its achievements, the League was able to claim that ‘the natural social work conducted by it, and the active propaganda for the promotion of social service that it had carried out are responsible in no small degree for the favourable atmosphere that has been created in this city for the service in the cause of humanity’. Indeed, its annual report for 1915 declared confidently that, ‘The spirit of social service is abroad; the air is full of it’. Young educated men, it noted, were coming forward in greater numbers than ever before ‘to volunteer their services whenever necessary arises’, many of whom were ‘content even with the meagre remuneration if they are allowed an opportunity of serving the great cause’. Furthermore, the League’s organizers argued, their recent activities had demonstrated the value of a new mode of social work, in which volunteers resided amongst the poor and impressed upon the latter, ‘the grandeur of pure life, economy, self-respect, honesty and fellow-feeling’.

But the League’s activities were not free of their internal constraints and contradictions. Its financial resources were not only precarious but also highly dependent on charitable donations from the city’s moneyed elites. Such financial constraints undoubtedly played a part in prompting the League to undertake welfare work on behalf of corporate firms that were able to fund such activity. But this, in turn, rendered its motives suspect in the eyes of many workers. It is not surprising that the Social Service League was rapidly marginalized once the communists established their political supremacy over Bombay’s working-class districts in the 1920s.

Significantly, while many of the League’s activists had genuine sympathy for the plight of the working classes, they nonetheless partook of the dominant elite discourse which represented the latter as ignorant, irrational and intemperate. Indeed, the difficulties that they encountered in conducting social work amongst the working classes served at times to confirm their inherent prejudices about the poor. Even though the activists of the League agreed that the task of social work was to make workers independent and self-reliant, their own outlook was paternalist and pedagogical. As a consequence, the rhetoric of ‘service’ was imbued with conservative impulses. In particular, their...
assumptions about the innate volatility of the poor prompted the leaders of the League to advocate social work on the grounds that it served to inculcate peaceful forms of self-expression in the working classes. Thus, in the wake of two massive general strikes in 1919 and 1920, N.M. Joshi declared that processes of socialization through education and the provision of other social amenities had a practical value in that,

The danger of allowing a large mass of discontented working class population to brood over their wrongs secretly in an industrial city such as Bombay is really very great. They form a mass of combustible material waiting to catch fire at the slightest ignition, and threaten to be a source of constant danger to the peace of the city.124

Equally, the fervour of the League’s activists was seldom reciprocated by the intended objects of their solicitude. Thus, the ‘difficulty of securing regular attendance’ at its night schools was said to have ‘baffled ... the managers of these classes’. In some instances, night schools in working-class neighbourhoods had to be terminated or ‘transferred from their original places to more suitable locations’. An article contributed to the Social Service Quarterly in July 1917 highlighted the travails of the earnest social activist. The writer recounted an incident that had occurred when he and his fellow volunteers sought to renew their acquaintance with a group of mill workers amongst whom they had previously conducted social work:

Armed with the question papers of Mr. Devadhar, which when opened out, looked like Railway time-table sheets and were at first sight as intricate as a Bombay transfer-team-ticket to a village, we ventured on our first systematic inquiry. We failed. The young lady of the house wanted to know whether we were the census enumerators; if so, her ‘Karbhari’ (husband) was out, and any way it was no business of ours to find how many children she had. We went a few doors further. We remanded an old gentleman leisurely combing his long hair, that we were old friends. Had not we shown him a lot of fine temples and other views only a week before? The old gentleman said he did not remember. It was one of his off-days and he was drunk. We tried to engage him in talk. He was very agreeable, and we were duly informed how rascally his neighbours were, what a hard lot it was to be in a Bombay mill, and how he had vowed he would beat his daughter soundly next time she slackened in work at the mills. We ventured upon some more personal inquiries regarding his debts, his income — to fill another column in Mr. Devadhar’s table — and were pointedly shown the door.

On another such occasion, the writer recalled,

I was ... ‘managing’ the laundries for a friend, a great temperance worker, when he was showing some mill-hand’s set of views illustrating the evils of drunkenness. And incidentally, this is what he happened to say: ‘You men should in this country’, shouted my friend, ‘you men should follow


Reflecting on his experiences, the writer admitted rather ruefully that ‘we do not know how to approach these strata of Indian society’. In particular, ‘the young man from College is no way equipped for the work he wants to do’. He is deficient in the knowledge of his own vernacular, he concluded, ‘and cannot make a five-minute speech before a group of working-men without larding his vernacular sentences with English words’. Hence, relatively little progress was possible in the collection of social facts unless the higher middle classes in this Presidency care to come into closer touch with the working-classes’.125

Conclusion

How ought one to assess the political consequences of the social activism of Bombay’s intelligentsia in these years? Undoubtedly, the civic initiatives of educated middle-class activists in the first two decades of the twentieth century were integral to the project of ‘nation-building’. Thus, in Bombay, as in colonial North India, the new traditions of service-oriented social and philanthropic work inducted ‘new social groups into public life’, brought a number of institutions under Indian control and infused civil society with ideas of ‘active citizenship’ and ‘selfless’ devotion to the cause of the downtrodden.126 Moreover, by enhancing a sense of patriotism, their engagement in social and philanthropic activities enhanced the self-worth and confidence of members of a class that had to contend with the humiliating condescension of the colonial elite.

Undeniably, too, their civic activism strengthened the claims to public leadership of the educated middle class during the first two decades of the twentieth century. By the end of the First World War, educated men were able to tout their credentials as the ‘real leaders of the citizenry far more confidently than during the late nineteenth century. Their ascendancy within the urban public sphere was confirmed by the increasingly strident manner in which organs of the intelligentsia such as the Bombay Chronicle and organizations like the Social Service League spearheaded campaigns for democratic reforms in the realm of municipal governance.127 In turn, the views of the intelligentsia were accorded more weight by colonial officials then than they had been during the era of ‘new imperialism’.

Arguably, their social activism also enabled sections of the educated middle class to widen the basis of their political influence vis-à-vis the ‘masses’. For instance, when a controversy erupted towards the end of 1918 over the decision

126 Watt, Servants of the Nation, p. 272.
to organize a memorial for Lord Willingdon, Bombay's departing governor, a large number of Muslim and Marathi mill workers turned up at the meetings organized by the 'Moderate' politicians, who favoured the move and opposed the boycott campaign launched by the 'Home Rulers' led by the young Mohammad Ali Jinnah. It has been noted that their turnout in support of the Moderates' cause was not entirely unconnected to the influence that men like Sir Narayan Chandavarkar wielded within some of the city's working-class communities on account of the activities of the Social Service League and the Depressed Classes Mission. 124 Similarly, the contacts that they had developed with the working classes through their social service activities enabled some sections of the educated elite to play a prominent role as mediators during the 1919 and 1920 general strikes in the cotton-textile industry.

On the other hand, notwithstanding the zeal of some 'social servants', the civic activism of the educated middle class could hardly be said to have resulted in the imposition of a successful 'bourgeois' cultural hegemony over the city's working classes. For instance, the moral crusades of middle-class moralists to stamp out liquor drinking appear to have ended in failure. The limited impact of the anti-liquor crusaders can be discerned in the frustration of one contemporary observer who declared that despite the efforts of the various temperance societies, 'the people had since returned to their old habits and there was now a very small proportion of them who did not drink and who had been able to save money'. 125 Similarly, the activities of the Hollika Sammelan also received a lukewarm response from the lower classes. Referring to the activities of the Sammelan, one contemporary reported in 1912 that while its efforts were 'no doubt making themselves felt amongst the middle classes, who are ready to appreciate such reform', the working classes and the lower castes 'still enjoy the orgies which accompany this saturnalia with all the zest of their forefathers'. 126

Perhaps the most significant long-term political consequence of the 'social service' movement lay in the 'moral capital' that it gradually generated for middle-class publicists and social activists seeking to make contact with the poor. Certainly, the conduct of social work came over time to epitomize exemplary commitment, in the face of extreme personal hardship, on the part of individuals drawn from educated middle-class backgrounds who took to such activity. For instance, during the early years of the Depressed Classes Mission, its full-time workers were drawn mainly from Vithal Ramji Shinde's own family and that of a Muslim friend, Syed Abdul Kader, who was a teacher in the Islamic School in Bombay. In order to establish a direct connection with the 'untouchable' students of the school they had established, Shinde and Kader moved their families to the same neighbourhood as the community amongst whom they worked. They also took into their homes destitute children from these communities and tended to them. Furthermore, on account of the meagre

funds at the Mission's disposal, Shinde's mother 'would sit through the night to sew garments out of old saris and other garments, given to the Mission by its well-wishers', while his father helped 'in maintaining all the cash vouchers and the books of the Mission, in order that the work of the accountant was facilitated'. 127 It was largely upon their efforts that the Mission was able to ride over the difficulties of the early years and expand its activities during the following decade.

Similarly, middle-class social activists displayed great resolve and dedication in organizing relief work during times of distress. Thus, during the influenza pandemic of 1918, students of the Wilson College performed voluntary work in the 'Sweepers' Chows' at Tardeo, with a devotion that could not have been excelled if the patients had been literally their brothers. They not only paid diligent visits to the tenements of the poor, but also 'shrank from no task which the doctor or nurse is accustomed to perform for the sick'. As a consequence, it was noted, 'a bond of confidence and affection was established between members of classes which are normally widely severed from each other'. 128

This aspect of social service was to have a more enduring impact. Indeed, the 'moral capital' of the Indian nationalist movement in its mass phase stemmed in large part from notions of 'disinterested selflessness', of ceaseless striving for the betterment of the 'weaker sections', and of voluntary work, personal asceticism and self-sacrifice on the part of heroic individuals drawn from 'respectable' social backgrounds. 129 Mahatma Gandhi is generally regarded as the originator of this mode of social activism, and the inter-war decades as the period when it became prominent in Indian public life. However, the ethic of social service crystallized in an earlier era when members of the educated middle class first began to engage in novel forms of civic activism in their quest for public leadership. 130

124 Masselos, 'Bombay City Politics', p. 164.
125 BPPSAR, XXVII: 32, 1914, para. 1071.
126 BPPSAR, XXV: 11, 1912, para. 472.
127 Gere, Vithal Ramji Shinde, p. 150.
130 On this point, see also Watts, Serving the Nation, pp. 204–205.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

There is no question that Bombay has become a much darker place from what it was in the 30s and 60s. Of course, Bombay was always a city full of poor people and of course there were slums and there was crime... It has become much, much worse.¹

On 11 July 2006, Bombay’s status as a world city was underlined by a macabre urban experience that is fast becoming definitive of our times. A series of bombs, planted to coincide with the evening rush hour traffic, ripped apart trains on the city’s suburban railway network, killing over two hundred people and injuring scores of others. These attacks on Bombay are only the latest in a series of cataclysmic events over the past decade or so that have had a profound impact on the city’s existence and identity. Recurrent sectarian strife, mob violence, ‘gang wars’, and terrorist attacks have battered the famed self-confidence with which its residents once confronted the world. These upheavals have reinforced the perception among contemporaries that Bombay has ceased to stand apart from the rest of India as a haven of peace, prosperity and progress. A variety of reasons are commonly given to explain the city’s current travails: its crumbling civic infrastructure and antiquated rent laws, the inexorable pressure on its resources generated by an ever-expanding migrant population, the decline since the early 1980s of the cotton-textile industry, the culture of violence fostered among its plebeian classes by the Shiv Sena, the exacerbation of sectarian conflict as a result of the alienation of its Muslim communities, the stranglehold exerted on its economy by organized crime, and the abdication of social responsibility by its elites and middle classes. In the light of Bombay’s mounting difficulties, many observers are convinced that the city is in terminal decline and that it has ceded its competitive edge to sleeker rivals.

Its recent misfortunes have prompted long-standing residents of Bombay to lament the passing what once supposedly made it a dynamic, innovative and cosmopolitan metropolis.² Contemporary reflections on the city inevitably invoke a lost idyll, an age when ‘Bombay’ was not ‘Mumbai’³ These narratives represent the city’s past as a golden era, when individuals from different

¹ Salman Rushdie made these comments, with other remarks in a similar vein, in an interview conducted at the Centre for South Asian Studies, University of Michigan in March 2003. For a full transcript, see Ashutosh Varshney, ‘The Political Rushdie’, The Journal of the International Institute, 10/3 (2003).

² See, for example, the essays in Seminar, 528 (August 2003).

³ Hansen, Violence in Urban India, pp. 4-5.
communities and faiths lived together harmoniously. They also portray the fashioning of modern Bombay until the 1970s as an orderly, conflict-free process, with the state and the citizenry discharging their mutual responsibilities and obligations in a decorous manner. Thus, according to one writer,

There was an amplitude about it [Bombay], even in the tracts of Girgaum and neighbourhoods of Parel. They were busy and crowded certainly, but the people filled spaces that were planned for them, designed for those numbers ... Citizens lived and worked to an orderly city plan, paying sensible prices for space, without land grab and vote bank politics as at present.4

Such misty-eyed nostalgia, as Blom Hansen has recently pointed out, can be read as 'a local appellation of the narrative of loss of order, morality, authenticity and community that seems intrinsic to most experiences of urban modernity'. The discursive representation of 'ideal Bombay' is essentially an exercise in 'historical fantasy' that slides over the extent to which the city has always been divided by caste, class and religion.5 Furthermore, it glosses over the fact that the making of modern Bombay has been an unruly and fractious affair from the very outset.

Focusing on a seminal epoch in Bombay's evolution as a metropolis, this book has drawn attention to the city's turbulent passage to modernity. In many ways, the parallels between the contemporary phase of the city's history and the period covered by this book are quite striking. If the last decades of the twentieth century have been the city contend with the traumatic fall-out of industrial decline, the end of the nineteenth century found it grappling with the equally momentous consequences of rapid industrialization. Similarly, present-day inhabitants of Bombay who believe they are living through the worst of times should perhaps ponder the fraught lives of their ancestors. Between 1890 and 1920, Bombay was not only at the receiving end of two global pandemics that killed thousands but was also convulsed by recurring episodes of collective violence. Furthermore, in both eras, the city's polyvalent public culture has played a key role in the constitution of political identities and social imaginings.

This book has highlighted two central developments in Bombay's late Victorian and Edwardian past that set the template for its subsequent history. First, it examined the response of its ruling elites to the 'unintended city' spawned by industrial modernity. Second, it considered the ways in which the public culture that evolved in the city came to be shaped by competing visions of collective identity and the 'common good'.

Chapters 3 to 5 suggested that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries inaugurated a fundamental shift in the political rationalities of urban governance in colonial Bombay. Prior to the 1890s, it was argued, the city's rulers had remained relatively unresponsive to the social and political

5 Hansen, Violence in Urban India, p. 5.
behalf of influential local interests provoked the very breaches of 'public order' that colonial officials were anxious to prevent.

The need to contain and discipline the 'unintended city' remained a primary objective of governance in the late colonial period. In the inter-war decades, the politics of class, religion and nation acquired a new mass appeal and momentum. The mounting frequency of labour strikes, communal riots and nationalist protest alarmed colonial authorities, who began to fear that Bombay was turning into an insurrectionary centre. As a consequence, Colonial rulers who witnessed the growth of popular politics as the disorderly effusions of the ignorant and the fanatical, easily roused by disaffected publicists, were increasingly driven by the imperative to restore public order at the earliest opportunity, indeed with immediate and moral effect. At the same time, the city's police force remained deeply ensnared in the power structures of the neighbourhood and the street.

Colonial attempts to address the perceived causes of political unrest also produced new forms of 'governmentality' that perverted to be more benign. Thus a Labour Office was set up in Bombay after the end of the First World War in order to document empirically the conditions of work, life and pay of the city's working classes. Furthermore, the acknowledged failure of the Bombay Improvement Trust did not deter the authorities from launching yet another attempt at redressing the city's civic problems. A Development Directorate was established in 1920 to oversee urban development and redress the severe housing crisis confronting the city's working classes. Escalating costs, poor planning and a series of blunders combined to ensure that this agency proved to be a spectacular failure in fulfilling its aims.

The postcolonial state's response to the 'unintended city' has continued to exhibit many of the characteristic features of colonial rule. In particular, like the colonial state, it splits its objects of governance into two categories. On the one hand, there are the vast 'masses', represented as 'irrational, passionate, and traditional', and on the other, the educated middle classes and elites, regarded as rational and 'governable'. Consequently, as in the colonial period, making the contemporary city a modern, orderly place is seen to entail the disciplining of the 'masses' and the spaces that they inhabit.

The enduring legacy of colonial modes of governance is clearly evident in contemporary urban policing in Bombay. For instance, a recent account has noted that police officers still operate on the assumption that within the 'anonymity' of a large chaotic city, peopled by a predominantly floating population, there lurk hordes of 'hoodlums' bent on disrupting public order. Significantly, the figure of the 'hoodlum' has now been invested with a specific sectarian identity. Thus, the 'Muslim badmaash' has become a relatively tangible symbol of the frightening and fastening chaos and anonymity of

CONCLUSION

Areas of the city predominantly inhabited by Muslims are perceived not only as 'dens of crime' but also as a 'security problem'. In turn, this has led to intensified policing in Muslim areas where there are more police stations than other areas in the city. The police also deploy other strategies informed by notions of bio-political governance, however unsophisticated in their content, that target the entire Muslim population as a problem. In other ways too, 'the problems of knowledge and policing in colonial Bombay ... have remarkably continued into contemporary Mumbai'. Most notably, the police in contemporary Bombay are still highly dependent 'on their networks of neighbourhood informants', which are lubricated and sustained by 'an ongoing flow of hafta (literally, weekly; a colloquial term for regular bribes) and other economic transactions'. Equally, the 'bio-political forms of government' that inform urban policing remain as 'precarious' and 'contested' as they once were in the colonial period.

It is not intended to suggest, of course, that there are no discernible differences between colonial and postcolonial techniques of governance. One major distinction between the colonial period and the post-Independence decades has been the burgeoning 'welfare' provision by the state. In particular, the explosive growth of Indian cities in the 1970s and 1980s, and their attendant social consequences, 'led to a new concern for providing housing, sanitation, water, electricity, transport, schools, health services ... aimed at the urban poor'. At the same time, it has been suggested, the administration of welfare schemes for the urban poor was premised on the tacit acceptance by governmental agencies of a variety of 'illegals', ranging from squatters' settlements on public land to the pilfering of electricity and water. According to one influential view, these transgressions of the law by the denizens of the 'unintended city' were commensurate by the state, 'partly because they provided the necessary labour and services to the city's economy and partly because if they were not cared for at all, they could endanger the safety and well-being of all citizens'.

Of late, however, this grudging tolerance of the urban poor has begun to wear thin. As new global images of the 'post-industrial' metropolis captured the imagination of Indian elites and the middle classes in the 1990s, organized civic groups have come forward to demand from the administration and the judiciary that laws and regulations for the proper use of land, public spaces, and thoroughfares be formulated and strictly adhered to in order to improve the quality of life of citizens. Simultaneously, the agencies of the state have

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10 Chandavarkar, Imperial Power, p. 212.
11 Ibid., p. 191-207.
12 Ibid., p. 191-207.
13 Cardon, 'Industrialization and the Housing Problem', pp. 164-8; Sharda Dwivedi; and Rahul Mehrotra, Bombay: The Cities Within (Bombay, 1995), pp. 186-80.
14 Hessen, Violence in Urban India, p. 147, 217-18.
15 Ibid., p. 223.
16 Ibid., p. 151.
17 Ibid., p. 217.
18 Chatterjee, Politics of the Governed, pp. 134-5.
19 Ibid., p. 140.
began to crack down on the ‘unintended city’. Recent years have seen aggressive civic campaigns aimed at beautifying Bombay, or rather Mumbai, by clearing it of ‘slums’. In the eyes of the authorities and the middle-class public, slums are the repositories of dirt, disease and disorder. Their inhabitants, when they are not regarded with moral disapproval, are represented as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Furthermore, ‘slum clearance’ drives are only one aspect of a much wider attack on the city’s poor that has included the eviction from footpaths of hawkers and the deportation from the city of beggars. The colonial legacy continues to cast a long shadow over the postcolonial megalopolis.17

 Chapters 6 and 7 shifted focus and explored Bombay’s evolving public culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of the characteristic features of this culture – the numerous voluntary associations, the co-existence of multiple forms of collective identity organized along lines of caste, class, religion and nation, the constitutive role of public performance and spectacle in the fashioning of political identities, and the centrality of the neighbourhood and the street in urban public culture – first emerged in the period covered by this study.

 Departing from conventional accounts that have understood urban civil society in India solely in terms of the activities of the liberal-nationalist elite, Chapter 6 showed how this domain was shaped by countervailing forces. Certainly, the city nurtured forms of association that adhered closely to the normative ideal of modern civil society. However, many of the clubs, societies and trusts established in Bombay were organizational ‘hybrids’, which combined ‘voluntary’ and ‘ascribed’ features. Furthermore, this chapter drew out the contradictory tendencies that underpinned the realm of associative life. Activities within civil society energized public life in the city, developed sentiments of mutual goodwill and prompted individuals and communities to act in the interest of the ‘common good’. Yet competing visions of the ‘common good’ could also lead to vituperative conflicts between their respective adherents. Nor was the internal organization of associations free of their tensions and rivalries. Powerful individuals and patrons could undermine the putative egalitarianism of associations and traditional forms of authority could reproduce themselves in new guises. These aspects of associational life were not unique to India; similar themes have been explored in a number of recent accounts of civil society in the West.

 What is perhaps more distinctive about urban public culture in India is its polyphonic character. This study has reaffirmed the proposition that the public sphere of civil society in colonial India was ‘deeply segmented’. However, as Bhattacharya reminds us, ‘This segmentation is not the past of the modern public or the early stages of its formation; it has become its intrinsic and stable characteristic and defines its cultural richness and polyvalence as well as the ever-present possibility of violent fractures.’ The public sphere in contemporary India continues to be informed by attempts to foster homogeneity, most notably through the discourse of the ‘nation’. Furthermore, the contemporary public languages of ‘community’ and ‘nation’, ‘tradition’ and ‘reason’, remain as mutually enmeshed as they were in the colonial period.18

 There has been one major change in the public culture of contemporary Indian cities. Spectacles of gratuitous collective violence have become integral to the politics of public arenas. For instance, Blom Hansen’s recent study of the Shiv Sena in Bombay shows how this organization ‘has ritualized systematic and excessive violence as a political instrument’. This often takes the form of ‘unnatural and unpredictable’ forms of collective violence in public spaces, directed sometimes against the government and its agencies and in other instances ‘against political opponents or other communities’. Hansen points out that the repertoire of contention deployed by militant outfits like the Shiv Sena are ‘not about generating new rules’. Instead, their primary aim is to contest existing rules in the broadest sense, to defy the law, and, most important, to make a community or cause as visible as possible in order to claim benefits, public services, or entitlements for that community or cause.19

 Of course, the phenomenon of urban collective violence is by no means a new one. Indeed, riots frequently convulsed Bombay in the colonial and immediate post-Independence eras. Nonetheless, the rise of an organization like the Shiv Sena does mark a rupture in so far as violence is integral to the identity of those who constitute its rank and file. As Hansen observes, the Shiv Sena has fostered a new culture of aggression in public spaces through its mobilization and reliance on young, mobile, and plebian men as activists and audience.20

 The long-standing plebian discourse of masculine assertion that the Shiv Sena espoused and encouraged over the last three decades, has severely eroded the culture of ‘paternalism’ that once permeated the relationship between the elites and the plebeian classes in Bombay.21 The final chapter of this book investigated one strand of this interaction and documented how the city’s intelligentsia first came to take an interest in the problems of the poor. It highlighted several overlapping developments, ranging from the concern for case uplift evinced by Hindu reformers to the impact of discourses of active citizenship that were diffused across the globe between 1890 and 1920. This chapter also sought to relate civic activism to processes of middle-class formation in the urban context.

 The paternalism that informed the intelligentsia’s interaction with the poor in the late Victorian and Edwardian era had an enduring impact on Indian political culture in the late colonial and post-Independence decades. However, as the ‘democratic revolution’ has gathered pace in the late twentieth century and the plebeian classes have grown increasingly assertive, the public authority of the city’s educated elites has been substantially undermined. Retreating behind the security of their gated estates and high-rise apartments, Bombay’s

17 Hansen, Violence in Urban India, pp. 205-211.
19 Hansen, Violence in Urban India, p. 230.
21 Ibid., pp. 70-74. See also Gerard Heuze, ‘Cultural Populism: The Appeal of the Shiv Sena’, in Patel and Thorne (eds), Bombay: Metaphor of Modern India, pp. 213-47.
elites and middle classes once again view the poor with ever greater anxiety and antipathy.

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