

PhD Synopsis

Calcutta (1900 – 1912): Aspects of Changes in the City

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By

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The word Calcutta evokes a wide range of perceptions among scholars in different fields of studies. As a colonial city, the history of Calcutta has been well documented as many historians have written on the city from diverse view points. The city in their studies have been represented as a site of political contests, as a socio cultural space, as an economic zone etc. The aim of my thesis is to provide an account of colonial Calcutta as a site of transition during a particular period of time (1900-1912). Calcutta's position was altered in many ways during this period. The changes in Calcutta Corporation in 1899, the Universities Act of 1904, the Partition of Bengal in 1905, the rise of 'extremist' nationalist activities in 1907 and finally the transfer of capital to Delhi in 1912, altered the position of a city that had so long served as 'the second city of the British Empire'. A.K.Roy had he used the phrase 'second city of the Empire' for Calcutta in 1901. In Roy's description the city appeared to be hyper prosperous. But in reality there were some anxieties that were creeping in the urban environment. Since the beginning of the twentieth century there occurred some changes in Calcutta that left a permanent imprint on the city's future history. The objective of this thesis is to enquire into these changes. The city's modernization and the developments that had taken place during this time, shall be critically accessed. In the thesis, I have tried to examine the everyday issues in the city and in which ways the colonial governance touched them. To what extent ordinary life became extraordinary and in what ways it retained its ordinary character, shall be examined in this thesis. It was from the beginning of the twentieth century that the colonial rulers had started taking conscious steps towards urban expansion, that ultimately culminated in the formation of the Calcutta Improvement Trust in 1911. Similar steps had also been taken by the ruling authorities back in the nineteenth century through Lottery Committee; when by means of lottery subscriptions, some initial steps were taken towards city improvement. Owing to some oppositions in Britain and lack of funds, this initiative was abandoned which ultimately led to the closure of the Lottery Committee in 1860. During this phase the

Calcutta elite was suffering acute financial crunch, as a result of the fall of the Union Bank in 1848. So no further investments for city improvements was seen. It must be noted here that the major amount that was raised through subscription of lotteries, came from the Indian capitalists and absentee landlords residing in the city. So their financial crisis meant a temporary break in the initiative of town improvement.

It was from the beginning of the twentieth century that the colonial rulers again started making plans for city improvement. As a result, Calcutta witnessed a massive disruption of the urban order. Basti (slums in local parlance) demolition took place on a large scale in the name of improvement, without proper rehabilitation scheme from the government. This adversely affected the urban poor of the city, displacing them from their homes and compelling them to take shelter outside or in the periphery of the metropolis. The urban poor were actually a class hardest hit by the changes in the urban policies. They had to survive all the adversities. I have made an attempt in my thesis to explore the condition of the urban poor in the city in the first decade of the twentieth century. Kshitindranath Tagore, nephew of the poet Rabindranath Tagore, remembered how the C.I.T followed brutal policies to clear the bastis (in keeping with the recommendations of E.P. Richards¹) and demolish old structures to make way for multi storied buildings.² Altogether seventy five bastis were obliterated in the decade 1901-1911.³ Land was being acquired also for building hospitals, colleges and also for shopping areas as the corporation extended its civic networks. The C.I.T introduced housing schemes and plans to re-house the homeless, proved to be utterly impractical. In many cases there ensued a bitter struggle between the basti owners and the municipality not only with regard to basti demolition but also with medical and sanitary inspection issues.⁴

The early years of the twentieth century registered very different patterns of displacement and immigration in the city. Within just a decade from 1901-1911, the number

¹ E.P. Richards was the chief engineer of the C.I.T in 1912.

² Kshitindranath Tagore, *Kolikatay Cholafera: Sekale aar Ekale*, Adi Bramho Samaj Press, Calcutta, 1930, pp. 121-2.

³ Census of The Town and Suburbs of Calcutta, 1911.

⁴ Ghosh, Anindita, *Claiming the City: Protest, Crime and Scandals in Colonial Calcutta, C 1860-1920*, Oxford University Press, 2016, New Delhi, p.50.

of immigrants mostly male in Calcutta rose by 5.7%.⁵ Suburbs populated mostly by migrant labour, such as Manicktola, Garden Reach and Cossipore- Chitpore, also showed dramatic increase. With the expansion of jute mills and the rising demand for labour the number of immigrants grew rapidly in the city at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nearly a quarter of Calcutta's population was engaged in industry, a vast majority of them being employed as jute spinners and weavers.⁶ In 1911, Bihar supplied 155,000 and the United Provinces some 90,000 over a third of the latter coming from the districts of Benares, Azamgarh, Ghazipur and Jaunpur. Migrants from Bikaner and Jaipur areas of Rajasthan were also providing a steady stream from the start of the twentieth century onwards.⁷

The cosmopolitan city that took shape in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries owed its origins to primarily mercantile and maritime interests.⁸ At the beginning of the twentieth century, Calcutta had a mixed immigrant population from Europe, comprising of British, Germans, Austro- Hungarians, French, Armenians, Jews and Russians. The largest constituent element of the mixed population were the Chinese who in 1911 numbered 2349 and lived mostly in the Kalutala area.⁹ Burrabazar (mart), Watgunj (port), and Alipore (cantonment) contained the largest number of immigrant population, where nine tenths of the population was foreign born.¹⁰ A close examination of the caste constitution of the city's residents in the early decade of the twentieth century would enable us to form some ideas regarding the contemporary social profile of the city. While Brahmans and Kayasthas dominated the urban population, there was a significant presence of the lower caste of Chamars, Goalas and Subarnabaniks, followed by the Kahars, Tantis and Telis. The city provided multifarious opportunities for many of them.

The beginning of the twentieth century saw the city of Calcutta become a politically motivated center of nationalist consciousness. Calcutta, during this time, stood in the

⁵ Census of the Town and Suburbs of Calcutta, 1901

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Census of the Town and Suburbs of Calcutta*, 1901

⁸ Ghosh, Anindita, p 80.

⁹ *Census of the Town and Suburbs of Calcutta*, 1901

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

sufferings of a split character. On the one hand it was still the capital of the British Empire in India and on the other it was the seat of an emotionally motivated nationalism.¹¹ Calcutta's position as a seat of this "emotionally motivated nationalism" was mainly an outcome of the anti-Partition Swadeshi movement. Calcutta had suffered in many ways as a result of this change. This thesis tries to focus on Calcutta as the epicenter of the Swadeshi movement and in what ways the wave of Swadeshi touched the city and its people alike in its everyday life. It was from 1905 onwards that the politics of agitation and the politics of resistance increasingly began to grip the city. In post Swadeshi movement phase the city saw the rise of revolutionary terrorism. All on a sudden the city was grasped by violent anti colonial militant activities and daily life specially those of the bhadralok classes seemed to have been disturbed in many ways by such acts. The anti partition Swadeshi movement spearheaded by the bhadralok met with a success when the partition was revoked. Yet the city had to pay a high price too for which it was not at all prepared. The British colonial government in 1911 declared that the administrative capital of the empire was to be shifted from Calcutta to New Delhi and in 1912 such a move was completed. So the city's position in these ways was defined and redefined by the developments that had taken place in the first decade of the twentieth century and how the city's everyday life was moved or remained unmoved by these changes forms the theme of this thesis.

Secondary Literature Review

In course of my research, I have made some studies of the existing literature in this area of the discipline. Sumanta Bannerjee argues about the twin issues of crime and punishment in the colonial metropolis in a pre industrial society that was rapidly transforming itself into a semi capitalist society. He focuses on the innovations, ingenuinities, state of the art devises and new built contraptions that were being restored to by both the law makers and the law breakers in that transitional phase.¹² Sumit Sarkar argues in

¹¹ Sen, Ranjit, *Calcutta in Colonial Transition*, Routledge, Oxon, 2019, p.242.

¹² Bannerjee, Sumanta, *The Wicked City Crime and Punishment in Colonial Calcutta*, Orient BlackSwan, New Delhi, 2009.

details regarding Bengali nationalist leaders and their strategies, peasant movements, labour strikes, communal violence and politics. His arguments have helped me to a great extent to understand Calcutta's position during the Swadeshi movement and in understanding the role of Bhadrak middle class of Calcutta in the anti colonial movement.¹³ Amalek Tripathy's arguments offers an in-depth understanding of the radical current emerging out of the Indian National Congress and radical movements in and out of the Indian National Congress.¹⁴ Semanti Ghosh's arguments¹⁵ on how Hindu Muslim collaboration operated at local levels only and failed to work on an all India basis have also helped me. Suranjan Das's ¹⁶ arguments has enabled me to understand the complex nature of Hindu Muslim relationship in Bengal, and how the streets of Calcutta in many cases became the site of communal contest. Rajat K Ray's ¹⁷ arguments have greatly contributed in shaping my ideas regarding politics of Calcutta Municipal Corporation and how and upto what extent the various business groups in Calcutta could exert pressure in policy makings of this body. Amiya Kumar Bagchi's arguments¹⁸ have greatly helped me in forming ideas about British India in the early twentieth century and regarding the nature of private investment in jute industry of Bengal. Pradeep Sinha's arguments ¹⁹have helped me to know how the changing demography of the city at the beginning of the twentieth century made an impact on patterns of land acquisition. Anindita Ghosh's arguments ²⁰have been a very suggestive study for my research which has provided me an understanding of the urban processes that had shaped the city. Swati Chattopadhyay's arguments ²¹have helped me to understand the notion of Bengali modernity and how the notion of public and private space acted as an important component of this modernity. Ideas regarding public space is

¹³ Sarkar, Sumit, *The Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, Permanent Black, Ranikhet, 2014.

¹⁴ Tripathi, Amalek, *The Extremist Challenge: India between 1890-1910*, Orient Longmans, India, 1967.

¹⁵ Ghosh, Semanti, *Different Nationalism 1905 -1947*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2017.

¹⁶ Das, Suranjan, *Communal Riots In Bengal 1905-1947*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1990.

¹⁷ Ray, Rajat Kanta, *Urban Roots Of Indian Nationalism: Pressure Groups and Conflicts of Interests in Calcutta City Politics, 1875-1939*, Vikas, New Delhi, 1979.

¹⁸ Bagchi, Amiya Kumar, *Private Investment in India 1900-1939*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1972.

¹⁹ Sinha, Pradeep, *Calcutta in Urban History*, Firma K. L.M. Pvt Ltd, Calcutta, 1978.

²⁰ Ghosh, Anindita, *Claiming the City Protest, Crime and Scandals in Colonial Calcutta,, C 1860-1920*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2016.

²¹ Chattopadhyay, Swati, *Representing Calcutta: Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Unncanny*, Routledge, Oxon, 2005.

important for my research as it includes planning and segregation within cities. Arabindo Samanta's²² arguments have enabled me to understand the picture of epidemic stricken Bengal where such diseases like Cholera, Small pox, Plague, Malaria were taking huge toll on human lives and the measures that were instituted by the colonial authorities to combat such diseases. Ranjit Sen's arguments about the challenges of the city planning, has been very useful in my research. Partho Dutta's arguments²³ have also helped me to form ideas regarding the town planning and civic infrastructure of the city. Dutta's arguments that Calcutta was a planned city and in due course became a magnet for the merchants conducted by the colonial state without any real intention of the authorities to address the problems of the city like overcrowding etc, has provided me an insight into the basic problems of the city in mid nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Tim Allender's arguments have helped me to form ideas regarding presence of European women in public sphere of colonial India and also about their contribution. Shukla Sanyal's²⁴ arguments have also helped me to understand the ongoing trend, the inner components of revolutionary terrorism in Bengal. Above all, the two volume book Calcutta: The Living City (The Past, Present and Future)²⁵ edited by Sukanto Chowdhury has contributed greatly in various aspects as far as my understanding of the city is concerned.

This thesis attempts to explore aspects of the city's daily life, through which the transition has been explained. Everyday issues have received micro-level focus in this thesis. Daily newspaper reports, government reports, memoirs and autobiographies available at the archives and libraries, mainly constitute the base of this thesis. But like many other works of history, this thesis too suffers from certain limitations, the first and foremost among them being paucity of sources, sources damaged by brittle conditions, poor conservation etc. Using the available sources, (both primary and secondary) this thesis is a humble effort of mine to rediscover a city's position in history once again. The arguments

²² Samanta, Arabinda, *Living with Epidemics in Colonial Bengal (1818-1945)*, Manohar, New Delhi, 2017.

²³ Datta, Partho, *Planning the City: Urbanization and Reform in Calcutta C.1800- C-1940*, Tulika Books, Delhi, 2012.

²⁴ Sanyal, Sukla, *Revolutionary Pamphlets, Propaganda and Political Culture in Colonial Bengal*, Cambridge University Press, Delhi, 2014.

²⁵ Chaudhuri, Sukanta, (ed.), *Calcutta: The Living City, Vol: I and II*, Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1990.

are entirely based on my own perceptions of the changes that were taking place in and around the city. The chapters in the thesis focus on different aspects of the city's daily life.

Chapter - 1: Ordinary Crimes

Largely based on my own experience of reading Sumanta Bannerjee, this chapter of the thesis deals with crime and criminality in twentieth century Calcutta. Crime is a common phenomenon in both cities and villages. But it differs characteristically when it occurs within the urban framework. At the beginning of the twentieth century, when the city was gradually changing its position, crime and criminality was thriving well. While some committed crime to adjust themselves in the changed urban scenario, some committed it from habitual criminal mentalities. In the first decade of the twentieth century Calcutta experienced a wide variety of crime from petty thefts and house breakings to murders. While going through the contemporary police reports it was found that petty thefts were common in those areas of the city, which were adjacent to slums. So it was a kind of class struggle ensuing between the slum dwellers and their rich neighbours, acquiring the form of petty thefts. In many cases not much was stolen, bicycle or an umbrella being stolen items. House breaking as a crime originated in the city from the second half of the nineteenth century. In twentieth century more cases of house breakings were seen in the suburbs of Calcutta like Behala, than the city proper. Gambling although was a common crime in the city but it was precisely in the first decade of the twentieth century that the addiction of gambling became so widespread that its deep rooted impact could be seen among all sections of the city's populace. Even women from middle class households could not escape the attraction of this game, that was entirely based on speculation. Cotton gambling and rain gambling were some forms of gambling, that became most popular in the city at the beginning of the twentieth century. This chapter contains in details regarding cases of gambling.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Calcutta also witnessed cases of forgeries, specially note forgeries that was uncommon in the city in the nineteenth century. One Annoda Mohan Roy was found to be the chief culprit with many of his associates in a

note forgery case. The instruments of printing false notes were seized from his home and his link in this case was found to extend as far as Burma. This kind of crimes evoked extreme sensation among the city populace as well as within the police department itself. The city during this time also witnessed murders that mainly fits into the category of property crime. Sumanta Bannerjee while studying crimes in nineteenth century Calcutta had observed that the chief victims of murders in this century were the prostitutes. They were mainly murdered by their paramours or else because of their properties, mainly jewellery. The similar feature, I have experienced too, while studying crime in twentieth century Calcutta. Women were seen to be the victims in most of the murder cases, be it a family feud ensuing between a husband and wife or that in which prostitutes were involved. It was actually the patriarchal norms of the society that were never ready to accommodate free women within its threshold. These murders were only a manifestation of such mentalities, that had firmly deep rooted itself within the society long back. It was to shut up the voice of women that such murders were committed.

This chapter also deals with the policing system in the early twentieth century city. Some common crimes within the city police force like taking bribes, allowing illegal occupation on public thoroughfares, neglecting their duties and indulging themselves in gossips during duty hours etc has been explored too in this chapter. This chapter also tries to enquire into the kinds of measures that were taken by the police in various criminal cases, as keeper of law. Although law was meant to be equal for all individuals but the real story of policing proved to be very different. Thus within the scope of this chapter comes city based crimes or urban crimes. Political crimes has been dealt in a separate chapter. What a kind of impact did crime had on the daily lives of the city dwellers has been enquired in this chapter. However crime with all its negative impacts was not a peculiar feature of twentieth century Calcutta alone, but it was the same story in all other colonial metropolises of the world, at the same time. The cut throat competition that the changing face of urbanity had forcibly thrust on its urban dwellers, actually gave rise to crimes. To many of the citizens it meant the survival of the fittest and being not fit

with honest means of living, they had to take recourse to dishonest ways, that were legally termed as crimes.

Chapter – 2: Politics, Radicalism and Daily Life

The first leg of the twentieth century saw Calcutta to emerge as the epicenter of political movements and protests. In 1905 the infamous decision of partitioning Bengal by the colonial rulers into East and West Bengal was completed. As an inevitable result of this, a huge storm of protest swept over Bengal in which of course the pivotal role was played by the educated Calcutta middle class from a Hindu upper caste background. The year 1907 saw the Indian nationalist movement to take a violent turn that ultimately culminated in the rise of extremism. Calcutta once again played a dominant role in spread of revolutionary terrorism. This chapter enquires into the reasons why Calcutta had emerged to be the epicenter of these movements, how the reverberation of these movements were felt in the daily lives of the city populace. It was indeed an era of transition. The city of Calcutta never before had witnessed such massive political upsurges. Although the swadeshi movement had certain limitations and failed to gain a mass base, yet its impact on the city itself was not limited. The city streets became sites of swadeshi processions, the squares and parks became sites of swadeshi meetings and so on. The British Indian government responded by closing such squares where swadeshi meetings were held, arresting the swadeshi leaders etc. At several instances Beadon Square, College Square was closed down by the colonial rulers to prevent political gatherings of any kind. Mass arrests of the swadeshi leaders like Maulavi Leakat Hossain, Bipin Chandra Pal etc were also a part of the repressive measures followed by the rulers. This phase of political unrest also saw importation of fire arms into the city. The city as a result of all these witnessed the Calcutta bhadrolks to turn into criminals in the eyes of the colonial police force. This phase saw series of house searches in Calcutta, specially in those belonging to the bhadrolks and the bhadrolks to get entangled in false cases. In fact it was a strange face of Calcutta with which neither the rulers nor the ruled were habituated.

It was in fact beyond the doubts of the colonial rulers that the bhadroloks of Calcutta who had always been moderate in their opinion and loyal in their position to the government, could be instrumental in provoking such an anti-British movement like that of swadeshi. On the other hand to the middle class and elite bhadroloks of Calcutta it was a kind of night mare that they would be subjected to such kinds of humiliation like house searches by the colonial police authorities. It was indeed a source of anxiety for both. This mutual distrust further aggravated with the rise of the extremist movement. With the rise of the extremist movement the city saw political murders of government servants. Nanda Lal Bannerjee, Asutosh Biswas, Shamsul Alam and Srish Chandra Chakroborty were murdered in Calcutta in between 1908-1912. Some other attempts to challenge and disrupt the colonial authority in the city were also made. Dalhousie Square bomb outrage, throwing bomb on a tram car at Grey Street, an unsuccessful attempt at destroying the May races of the Europeans were manifestation of such attempts. All these attempts proves beyond doubt that revolutionary violence was rapidly increasing in Calcutta and also points to the fact that how distrust and disgust against the British rulers were accumulating in the minds of the Bengali youths. The British government definitely felt highly alarmed with these political developments in Calcutta. They could by now understand that if this zeal of the young revolutionaries could be channelized and motivated through proper way, it would surely result in the overthrow of the British rule.

So this was indeed a phase of political transition for the city and its people. It is amidst of all these political developments that daily life in this chapter has been studied. In their everyday life what kind of anxieties and tortures, the city dwellers had to face as a result of these political developments has been delved into in this chapter.

Chapter - 3: A disease ridden city

This chapter of the thesis tries to explore Calcutta as a diseased space. At the turn of the twentieth century life in the colonial metropolis of Calcutta was paralysed by occurrence and re-occurrence of a number of diseases like Cholera, Plague, Pthysis, Beri-Beri etc. While Cholera, Malaria, Pthysis had their beginnings in the preceding centuries,

Plague was an exclusive twentieth century phenomenon. In this chapter, we will deal with those diseases only that had taken huge toll of human lives in the city, during the period of our research. Main focus has been given on Plague and Beri- Beri or Epidemic Dropsy as both of them were new additions to other existing diseases, at the beginning of the twentieth century. How disease became a source of anxiety for daily existence of the city dwellers has been addressed in this chapter. The measures adopted by the colonial government, to combat these diseases has also been explored. The role of the bhadrolok middle class in extending health care facilities among urban poor of the city has been examined too in this chapter.

While making a study of disease stricken Calcutta it was found that the urban poor of the city were the worst sufferers. The ill ventilated habitat and the unhealthy surroundings along with malnutrition actually rendered this class hardest hit by these diseases. Those for whom poverty was the daily companion to them there was no alternative measure to combat diseases. Among the urban poor as well as in the middle class households women were the worst sufferers. It was once again the patriarchal instrument that always wanted to exert tighter control on women. Hence mortality rate was higher among women than men in the city. The Muslim section of the city population too were suffering a bit more than the Hindus of the city. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century also it was a common picture to see the Muslims to be more absorbed in manual labour intensive jobs in the city like that of daftrees, syces, khansamas, baburchis etc. These low paid jobs demanded intensive physical labour but to compliment it these labours were not in a position to take full square meals a day. So they were more prone to get infected by disease, as natural immunity in their body was at a declining stage because of such stressful jobs.

Poor quality of life, ill ventilated and poor housing, over- crowding, population explosion, under nutrition, large families, early marriages were some of the social factors directly or indirectly responsible for producing various kinds of diseases. The colonial government practically paid no heed to these problems of their subjects. They rather tried

to restrict the diseases within the Indian part of the city. It was not that the remedy of this diseases was not known to them. But lack of initiative on their part and very little expenditure on public health and hygiene actually worsened the effects of the diseases. At the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, in 1911 the contributions of the Europeans for the health care purpose in Calcutta was Rs 13,321 and that of the Indians amounted to Rs 43,786.²⁶ The role of the Bengali bhadroluk class in extending health care facilities among the urban poor was not above question. While a handful of them had made some generous contributions for establishment of charitable dispensaries in the city, most of them remained silent spectators during the ongoing health hazards in the city. The charitable and reformist initiatives of the Indian doctors although had a wider democratic concern yet it could not protect the urban poor from mass death during the epidemics. The general role of the colonial doctors of the period has also been touched in this chapter too. Their collective initiative towards eradication of tropical diseases ultimately culminated in the establishment of the School Of Tropical Medicine in Calcutta in 1911. This chapter of the thesis also deals with various perceptions of the city dwellers regarding disease. So this chapter speaks of a different Calcutta and narrates how Calcutta became a breeding ground for infectious diseases.

Chapter - 4: Municipal Infrastructure and the Rate Payers

Any attempt to write a historical narrative on Calcutta remains incomplete if Calcutta municipality is not taken into account. So in this chapter I have addressed to what extant Calcutta became affected or remained unaffected by the reforms of the municipality which were enacted during the period of our research. In this chapter an attempt has also been made to show how the colonizers and the colonized were affected in different ways by the municipal infrastructures. While examining these issues, the rate payers and their problems that had been thrust on them by the authoritarian colonial rule has also been delved into. In 1899 the new Calcutta Municipal Act came into force and under this new act the re- organization of every department of the municipality was to be done. By

²⁶ *Notes on Annual Returns of the Hospitals and Dispensaries in Bengal for the year 1911.*

recommendations of this new act some constructions of public utility were undertaken in the city at the beginning of the twentieth century like that of Lansdowne Market, extension of New Market,, Sterndale Road, the new municipal office building, the model dwellings at Convent Road and the incinerator at Entally. At the turn of the twentieth century the city corporation had also vigorously persued the policy of ending obnoxious bustees without adopting alternative housing measures for the poor inhabitants of these bastis. As an invariable result of this some areas of the city witnessed abrupt overcrowding during this time.

As far as the municipal infrastructure of the city was concerned, this chapter deals with water supply and electric supply and in what different ways it left its impact on public life. It was in the first decade of the twentieth century that water supply in Calcutta became mechanized. In 1911, the establishment of Tallah Tank was an event of great significance in the history of water supply in Calcutta. But in reality no significant achievements could be made to minimize the problem of water crisis in the city. It rather became acute. Specially in the Muslim muhallahs of the city this was a grave problem. On the other hand it was again at the beginning of the twentieth century that to ensure smooth supply of water in the Fort area the colonial rulers established a big tank namely the "Havildar's Tank", where two tanks were already there in existence. So the problem of filtered water supply was seen in the Indian quarters of the city only and the European portions of the city escaped it. This chapter also deals with colonial surveillance on usage of water in Calcutta.

At the turn of the twentieth century Calcutta became electrified. The city corporation had granted license for supplying electricity to a European company – Kilburn and Company. The European quarters of the city were as usual the first to reap the benefits of the introduction of electricity and gas lights continued to be there at the northern part of the city. Initially the price of electricity in the city was so high that a man of ordinary means found it difficult to afford it. However, complaints from the Indians as well as the Europeans were seen in contemporary newspapers regarding exorbitant price of electricity in Calcutta.

Often crooked type of manipulations were seen in electricity bills. Distrust and dissatisfaction among the consumers against the electric supply company led them to urge for a Consumer's Protection Association. Complaints regarding bad lighting too were seen in contemporary newspapers. This chapter also deals with the oppression of the rate payers in the city. It was complained that the majority of rate payers had no voice in the huge expenditure of the Calcutta Municipality in experimenting with such constructions like new markets, dhobikhanas, gowkhanas and model houses. So the rate payers insisted on forming a Central Rate Payer's Association which was thought to exert a better and tighter control on the municipality. It was during this time that the corporation had carried on an extensive basti demolition programme and in many such cases only a months time was given to the owners. The underlying motive of the corporation was to increase the land value and the land rent in the city and this was the reason why such wreckless eviction policy in name of city improvement was carried on by them. This chapter throws light on the changing layout of the city too in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Chapter - 5: European life

This chapter deals with European life in the colonial metropolis of Calcutta in the first decade of the twentieth century. European life in Calcutta at the beginning of the twentieth century also underwent a transition. From the second half of the nineteenth century European women started to appear in the public life of Calcutta. The twentieth century saw their increased and in many cases their exclusive participation in public functions. The Victorian Era had kept them away from public gaze. The beginning of the Edwardian era saw rise of feminist movements in the west and as a result life of European women underwent certain changes. From late nineteenth century constituted a vital part of the fabric of imperial social circles.²⁷ In Calcutta they were seen to become more active in charity shows and official get togethers. At the onset of every year there were various entertainment shows in which they played vital part like the Fancy Fair organized at the Zoological Gardens, the Ladies paper Chase Cup and other official and semi official parties.

²⁷ Proscida, Marie. A, *Married to the Empire*, p.7.

These kinds of gatherings where European women participated actually provided them with an opportunity to socialize in public but with members of their own community. However their public conduct revealed a carefully cultivated racial awareness.

Other events which formed important components of European socialization process were also regularly held in the city at the beginning of the twentieth century. Under the patronage of Young Men's Christian Association (Y.M.C.A) hockey matches, annual sports etc were held. Boxing Day, annual dinner at the Turf Club etc had also become popular among Europeans in Calcutta. Needless to say that these social functions of the Europeans in the city were marked by strict racial segregation. Participation of the Indians were strictly prohibited.

This chapter also explores the business and commercial world of the Europeans in Calcutta at the beginning of the twentieth century. The business concessions they had been enjoying till the time, continued to be so. It was from this particular time that trade relationship between India and Argentina commenced. The South American consumers were becoming more and more demanding for gunnies from Calcutta. As a result direct steam communication started between Calcutta and Argentina. At the beginning of the twentieth century the government of India had proposed to impose an export duty on jute and jute products of India with a view that this raised tax would be utilized for Calcutta's improvement. But the Dundee merchants vehemently opposed to this proposal as this would have been detrimental to their business interests. They were never ever ready to spend even a small part of their profit for the improvement of that particular city which acted as a life line of their business and commerce. This chapter also throws light on other import and export items in which the European business men fared well like salt, tobacco etc.

This chapter also deals with advertisements published in European owned newspapers. It is through advertisements that we have also made an attempt to study those items that had become an integral part of European life in the city. In this context, the glorified languages that has been used to explain the attributes of the particular

product for which the advertisement was given has also been explored too. Even while exploring the languages of the advertisements one can find that European exclusiveness was asserted here also. Advertisements became a vehicle through which racial arrogance was expressed. So in this chapter an attempt has been made to draw the picture of European life in the city at the turn of the twentieth century in which smaller events that had become a source of anxiety for the European in the city too has received focus.

Chapter - 6: Transfer of Capital in Press

This chapter aims to investigate the contradictory perceptions surrounding the capital transfer from Calcutta to New Delhi through a micro-analysis of colonial records, chiefly dealing with the Indian press. Though the press reports entered the colonial records in a filtered and selective form, they reflected the shades of local opinion and positions related to the transfer.

Chapter – 7: Everyday Issues during the Era of Capital Transfer

The aim of this chapter is to investigate aspects of daily life in the city of Calcutta which concerned the Indian middle-class and European public and were reflected in the press at a time when the city was losing its position as the capital of colonial India. It deals with education, municipal, sports, health, commercial and miscellaneous news centering on the city and its suburban areas. They prompt certain questions: to what extent were aspects of everyday living among the middle-classes and European ruling classes of the city and the region affected by the capital transfer? What did they reveal about social conditions in the city and beyond at the time? What was the attitude of the local newspapers to the British Government and vice versa? These are some of the themes that will be delved into. By tracing the micro-level developments in these spheres, an attempt is made to understand how the modernity of the colonial urban public sphere showcased hierarchies and discriminations rooted within the system of colonial rule.

This thesis thus traces the history of an imperial city at a time when it was gradually losing its imperial character. A new age was emerging. The seat of supreme colonial administrative power now became the seat of a confrontational nationalism. For so long Calcutta was ruled by a paramount imperial will. Now besides that will and parallel to it an indigenous will came up to shape the everyday mood of sections of the people.²⁸ This thesis unravels this transition.

Singed by Supervisor

Singed by Candidate

²⁸ Sen, Ranjit, *Calcutta in Colonial Transition*, p.256.