SIR PATRICK GEDDES AND BARRA BAZAAR: COMPETING VISIONS, AMBIVALENCE AND CONTRADICTION

BY MARTIN BEATTIE

The Department of Architecture, Planning and Landscape
University of Newcastle
The Quadrangle
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 7RU
United Kingdom

Tel no : (0044) 191 222 6015
Fax no : (0044) 191 222 6115
e-mail : m.r.beattie@newcastle.ac.uk
Abstract

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries successive British governments in Calcutta (Kolkata) became increasingly concerned with the links between the health of its inhabitants and the cleanliness of the city, particularly in the indigenous parts of town. European urban solutions, typically involving slum clearance and road building schemes, were imposed to address such problems. These colonial attitudes contrast with more ‘hybrid’ visions of health and hygiene that Sir Patrick Geddes’ adopted for proposals for a market area in Calcutta called Barra Bazaar, in 1919. Geddes’ ideas combined an approach that commended ‘traditional’ Indian courtyard houses, street patterns and external space, with more ‘modern’ ideas for business accommodation. In conclusion, I argue that Geddes’ often ambivalent and contradictory outlook to such competing visions of city space echoes notions of ‘hybridity,’ recently developed by Homi K. Bhabha.
Introduction: Hybrid Visions of Health in Barra Bazaar

During the nineteenth century, successive British Governments in Calcutta became increasingly concerned with the links between the health of its inhabitants and the cleanliness of the city. This was particularly the case in the northern parts of the city, such as Barra bazaar, where the indigenous population lived, and where it was believed many of the diseases originated. As a result of such health concerns, two committees that ran consecutively were established to investigate and allay such fears. The first set up in 1803 became known as the Lottery Committee, named after its chief means of obtaining funds and was instigated by Richard Wellesley, first Governor-General of India (1798-1805). Wellesley's motives were unashamedly aligned with social control, claiming that, "every improvement which shall introduce a greater degree of order, symmetry, and magnificence in the streets, roads, ghauts, public edifices, and private habitations, will tend . . . to secure and promote every object of a just and salutary system of police."

The Lottery Committee was replaced in 1836 by the Fever Hospital Committee, set up at the request of Indian and British residents to evaluate the sanitary condition of the 'native' town. Its appointment was primarily due to Sir James Ranald Martin, Surgeon of the 'native' Hospital in Dharmatala. Martin’s Notes on the Medical Topography of Calcutta (1834), recommended the establishment of a Fever Hospital and proper sanitation for the town and echoed Wellesley's earlier message of social control. The immediate outcome of the Fever Hospital Committee Report was, in 1848, the appointment of health officers, and the production of health reports and maps for Calcutta. Through these health officers, disease came increasingly under the scrutiny of the British authorities. Cholera mortality became the standard for measuring the healthiness of Calcutta. The Indian part of town, in particular the bustee or 'native village', was considered its breeding ground. Writing in 1872, C. Fabre-Tonnerre, Health Officer for the Calcutta Municipality explained the dangers of leaving these portions of the city unimproved: "It is a well known fact that many of the epidemics that have visited Calcutta have first made their appearance in the northern division of the town." Tonnerre’s language, as Swati Chattopadhyay points out, portrayed, "an inherently defective landscape and a barbarous people untutored in the science of sanitation."

In 1899, Frank G. Clemow and William C. Hossack completed the first health report specifically on Barra bazaar, titled, Report upon the Sanitary Condition of Ward VII (Burra Bazaar), Calcutta. Clemow and Hossack wrote that Barra bazaar consisted of, "extremely valuable property in an intensely insanitary state," and considered it to be, "the worst areas of its size in any city with which we are aquainted." They also questioned, "whether a stirring of the waters of Indian apathy and laissez faire in matters sanitary shall ever be possible."

What this account may hint at are different visions of health and hygiene than those typically prescribed by the colonial state. During the nineteenth century, British writers discussing disease and hygiene, in the Bengali home, often commented about the peculiar sense of cleanliness of the Brahmin. As Sudipta Kaviraj points out, it combined, "an odd combination of fanatical attention to personal cleanliness with an astonishing indifference to filth in his surroundings." The inside of a Brahmin home was kept scrupulously clean, with interiors swept at dawn and dusk, coinciding with times of worship, or puja. The brahminical sense of cleanliness and purity was quite different from emerging western ideas about hygiene.

In Kaviraj’s view, indigenous Indian cities were not distinguished conceptually and materially from the countryside, and performed very different historic functions to their European counterparts with their unmistakable strand of civic control. He claims there was a sense that the 'outside' in the indigenous Indian city, was, "not amenable to control - not by the individual or the restricted resources of a small family, nor by any organised authority."

However, mirroring the changes in urban life brought about by the modern colonial state, the ‘outside’ as a concept for Bengalis was changing radically in cities like Calcutta. As Kaviraj elucidates, "to the normal anxieties of people accustomed to living in caste society, which obviated the need to meet utter
strangers and improvise responses to untried situations, the new kind of colonial city sparked fears of miscegenation and unpredictability. To an increasing extent, the new colonial city represented a new spatial ideology where the ‘outside’ was governed by the colonial state instead of the state of nature. It is important to understand that these ‘mixed’ colonial and indigenous narratives framed competing debates about health and hygiene in Calcutta, for most of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. As Kaviraj comments, these histories were emergent forms that could not be identified in terms of either logic and indeed were hybrids.

Within the context of colonial India, the work of Homi K. Bhabha is routinely cited as authorizing such hybrid identities. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity builds on Mikhail Bakhtin’s work on linguistic hybridity, and in particular his notion of the ‘intentional hybrid.’ Bhabha’s hybridity theory points to a double process - firstly a fusing or merging together of cultures, but secondly and more importantly, a dialogic dynamic interaction in which certain elements of dominant cultures are appropriated by the colonised and re-articulated in subversive ways. Bhabha defines his notion of hybridity as, “a problematic of colonial representation . . . that reverses the effects of the colonial disavowal, so that other ‘denied’ knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority”.

Bhabha’s idea of hybridity suggests an approach to reading place that understands the overlapping geographies, both indigenous and foreign, and mixed narratives of the past and present day, that were and are constantly negotiated. Although Indian historians have partially relied on indigenous literature for depicting Bengali life in the nineteenth century, there has been little acknowledgement of the existence in the nineteenth and twentieth century of a dialogue between the British and Bengali intelligentsia on the cities condition and future, and only a few scholars have begun to present such competing visions. Echoing the doubling process of hybridity, the ‘mixed’ colonial and indigenous narratives that framed competing debates about health and hygiene in Calcutta not only point to a changing world view on both sides, but also simultaneously undermines the authority of the dominant colonial view. It is within this framework of hybrid thought that I relate a report titled, Barra Bazaar Improvement: A Report to the Corporation of Calcutta, written by Sir Patrick Geddes in 1919.

Sir Patrick Geddes’ Ideas And Influences

Sir Patrick Geddes was invited to India in 1914 by Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras. Pentland, a liberal Governor hoped Geddes would advise municipal administrators in India about the new emerging subject of town planning, mainly by reporting on a number of towns and cities and showing his, ‘Cities and Town Planning Exhibition’. As soon as Geddes arrived in Calcutta in October 1914, he embarked on a two month journey of Indian towns and cities. On his way from Calcutta via Bombay to Madras, where the initial tour ended in late December 1914, Geddes visited Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Agra, the site of New Delhi, Lucknow, Allahabad and many other places. Geddes was interested in seeing only indigenous architecture, and was later to write a euphoric article about the temple cities of the south as examples of the integration of culture, history, and urban form at its best.

Helen Meller points to three specific influences on Geddes’ work in India. Firstly, before Geddes had arrived in India he had come into contact with Margaret Noble (also known as Sister Nivedita), a disciple of Swami Vivekenanda. Sister Nivedita wrote a book called, The Web of Indian Life (1904), about the social life and customs of India, dedicated to Geddes, which he used as a guide. The book gives a spiritual overview of Indian culture, looking particularly at the sacredness of the house, and at the role of women in society. The second influence was a book by Mrs. C. M. Villiers-Stuart called, Gardens of the Great Mughals (1913),
which combined an account of the history of Mughal gardens with a strongly feminist bias.\textsuperscript{24}

Villiers-Stuart suggested that the preservation of these gardens, and the vital cultural traditions that it served, was the work of women. According to Meller, "Geddes was willing to see in this a way of revitalising the nurturing traditions of women in the towns and the cities where he worked."\textsuperscript{25} The third major influence was another book, by a public hygienist, Dr. J. A. Turner, called, \textit{Sanitation in India} (1914), which gave a perspective of sanitation at odds with the dominant colonial view.\textsuperscript{26} Turner believed that the water-borne sewage disposal in India was both expensive and impractical. Instead, he suggested that waste matter should be collected and used for gardening, thus eliminating the need for building an infrastructure of drainage pipes. With Turner's book, Geddes thought he had found a solution which could effectively clean up areas, and at the same time revive and nurture the customs and traditions described by Sister Nivedita and Villiers-Stuart.

Geddes was given his first chance to work out his ideas in the Madras Presidency in 1915, when he wrote a report for twelve small towns in the Presidency and one suburb of Madras.\textsuperscript{27} He also offered a course of lectures, to town surveyors of the Madras Presidency, which explained his own survey techniques. Geddes wanted to encourage the surveyors to map their towns accurately and to become aware of the historical, cultural and social factors which had created them. This Geddes saw as the essential preliminary to any planning work in a town or city.

The solutions he suggested were adaptations of the techniques he had developed in his regeneration work in Edinburgh.\textsuperscript{28} These included the themes of 'diagnostic survey', and, 'conservative surgery'. Geddes compared the survey of a city to the diagnosis of a sick patient: "the physician and surgeon are now and ever increasingly learning the advantage of full and detailed diagnosis of the patient - including therefore acquaintance with his surrounding circumstances, and even his means - before deciding upon his treatment."\textsuperscript{29} Geddes described the need for a 'Diagnostic Survey' as follows:

"These go more and more thoroughly into the topographic facts, the local advantages, the defects and difficulties; they re-study communications, and these in relation to traffic requirements of each kind, and their active working and congestions and so on. Similarly for shops and shopping; and also for the various occupations and crafts of the given area, and throughout their range, from skilled to unskilled. They give particular attention to housing; and this of each and every class; but especially to that of the people, since this has hitherto been most neglected."\textsuperscript{30}

Geddes draws the parallel between modern, 'Conservative Surgery,' and his own newly emerging 'science' of town planning:

"The treatment of the many millions of wounded during the War has afforded innumerable examples to its combatant peoples, and thus to India, of the contrast from the method of the older school in power before the present generation - that of 'Heroic Surgery', with its simple and off-hand, wholesale and thorough amputations - and the modern 'Conservative Surgery' which has increasingly replaced it . . . An exactly similar contrast exists between the school of 'City Improvement', and that of 'Town Planning'."\textsuperscript{31}

From his \textit{Report on the Towns in the Madras Presidency} (1915), Geddes described the advantages and method of conservative surgery, in more detail which consisted of firstly, "enlarging the existing lanes," and secondly, "with the addition of some vacant lots and the removal of a few of the most dilapidated and insanitary houses, these lanes can be greatly improved and every house brought within reach of fresh air as well as of material sanitation. . . ."\textsuperscript{32} (fig. 1). In the same report, Geddes estimated the cost of his method to be only 5000 Rupees compared with 30,000 Rupees for the "engineer's gridiron."\textsuperscript{33} He pointed out that, "the same method could, of course, be continued over the whole town and the 30,000 rupees, originally voted as the first instalment for the gridiron clearance, would go a very long way towards accomplishing a reasonable plan for the whole area."\textsuperscript{34}
Thus, Geddes’ approach combined concepts from both European and Indian cultures, to form new notions of city space. In a colonial world where attitudes to health and hygiene were changing on both sides, his approach not only reflects Bhabha’s first process of hybridity, namely a fusing or merging of cultures, but also the shifting social reality of Barra Bazaar at the time. By contrast, urban improvements to Calcutta made by the colonial establishment were based on the often racial ‘black-and-white’ belief that European models of ‘ordered’ urban space and form were superior to ‘chaotic’ indigenous ideas, and typified by the attitudes found in nineteenth century health reports and maps, described earlier. This was an attitude that would continue into the twentieth century, through the work of the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT).

Patrick Geddes and Barra Bazaar

At the beginning of the twentieth century, cities in India began to form Improvement Trusts, and Calcutta’s formed later than most, was established on 2 January 1912. According to Monidip Chatterjee, it was created, “largely in response to the critical situation revealed by a medical enquiry into the condition of Calcutta in 1896 owing to the outbreak of plague, and the Report of the Building Commission appointed in April 1897 to consider changes in the law relating to buildings and streets in Calcutta.” E. P. Richards joined the CIT as its Chief Engineer in 1912, and produced the first planning document for the whole of Calcutta, titled, *On the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta and Contiguous Areas* (1914). Richards analysed the situation with respect to the roads, slums, parks and open spaces, water supply and drainage, housing and residential conditions, and the distribution and movement of population within the city.

Although Richards did not mention Barra Bazaar explicitly, a whole section of the report is dedicated to ‘Calcutta slums’, which he compares to those of western cities, claiming that, Calcutta possessed, “a far higher percentage of slum area than can be found in . . . any city of the whole western hemisphere.” He concluded pessimistically, that they were, “many times more extensive, composed of buildings of about one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half times the height found in Western slums, contain only one-quarter to one-third of the open space found in Western slums, have an infant mortality about three times that of European slums, and appear to have the highest infantile mortality death rate in the world, also the highest recorded mortality for tuberculosis.” Richards believed that the CIT only had enough money to demolish about 10 percent of these areas. He opted for ‘slum-repair,’ the precedent for which he had seen in Birmingham, and which involved forcing owners to make and pay for the necessary renovations, rather than the municipal authority.

Richards stay with the CIT was short-lived and after only six months on 21 April 1913 he left; the reason given for his departure by his employers, the CIT, was that he had, “suffered from overstrain.” His report was written partly in Calcutta and partly in Ware, Hertfordshire, between January 1913 and March 1914, and published from England in 1914, where he was recovering. In the preface to Richards’ report, he cites a range of reasons for why it took so long to write, but stops short of linking these reasons to the deterioration of his own health. These seemed to boil down to lack of human resources and specifically included; “excessive outside advice and controversy”; and, “the interminable re-designing, investigation and preparation of replies to meet hundreds of scheme ‘objectors’.” Again, what this may highlight is increasing evidence of differing visions of health and hygiene than those typically prescribed by the colonial establishment.

Following Richards’ report, Barra Bazaar was first considered by the CIT during 1916. The problems of the area were summarised in their Annual Report of that year and echo many of the previous nineteenth century colonial attitudes:

“The area has been largely built over by four and five-storeyed buildings, many of these have been constructed in defiance of all building regulations, and form hot beds of disease and plague. Compared with other parts of the north of Calcutta the road system is regular, but the width of the roads is entirely
inadequate to the traffic, which they are asked to carry. These roads 16 and 20 feet wide, are constantly blocked by strings of Bullock carts and other traffic mingled in almost inextricable confusion. On sanitary grounds and to facilitate the operations of trade, the opening up of the area with adequate roads is imperative, but the difficulties caused by the high price of land, the expensive nature of the buildings and value of the vested interests are very great.\textsuperscript{45}

Predictably, the general CIT proposals for Barra Bazaar, opted for a programme of road widening and slum demolition. The principal features of the plan were; the provision of four roads north to south and seven roads east to west; the widening of existing lanes and opening up of new lanes; the slum clearance scheme in the south west corner of Barra Bazaar; the creation of a playground, and four parks adjacent to a new Boulevard in the north (fig. 2).

Towards the end of 1918, Geddes was commissioned by Calcutta Corporation, to review the CIT improvement plan for Barra Bazaar. Largely following his own methods of 'diagnostic survey' and 'conservative surgery,' Geddes report outlined an alternative scheme to the CIT plan, the principle features of which were; the provision of three broad roads east to west and two through roads north to south; the improvement of existing lanes and opening up of new ones; the development of an improved business quarter west of Clive Street and Darmahata Street, with new business and domestic accommodation; the removal of the Mint; and, the creation of three large open spaces and of 46 small local play-grounds. The report was completed and submitted to the Calcutta Corporation in March 1919 (fig. 3).

**Thoroughfares**

Geddes' primary objection to the CIT proposals for thoroughfares was that there were too many new roads being driven through Barra Bazaar, as well as too many existing roads and lanes being widened unnecessarily. Perhaps anticipating his audience, Geddes' argument against these proposals was largely economic, rather than necessarily in the interests of conserving indigenous urban forms. Geddes thought that road widening schemes were popular because of a misplaced belief that they automatically led to rises in property prices and land value. He had become convinced that Improvement Trusts, instead of working in the interests of the people, especially the poor, "derived their advantage, even their survival, from the opposite viewpoint and interest, that of the propertied and land-speculating classes and their economists; by making site space and working class dwellings permanently and increasingly dear.\textsuperscript{46} Furthermore, he argued that, as in Lucknow, "the wide and fine thoroughfares . . . supplied by a vigorous improvement policy, have not proved profitable, at least outside the European quarter if even there."\textsuperscript{47}

Geddes’ report began by looking at the new thoroughfares, proposed by the CIT, bounding Barra Bazaar and required for, "general city improvement."\textsuperscript{48} He gave unequivocal backing to the new north Boulevard (now Kali Krishna Tagore Street/ Vivekananda Road), and approved with some modifications to the widening of Chitpore road (now Rabindra Sarani), and to Strand Road (figs. 4, 5, 6). However, Geddes was deeply critical of most of the CIT road alignments, stating that, "in the Trust plan the rough and ready method of the drawing-office, that of ruling perfectly straight lines irrespective of the angles of existing properties, involves great delay in execution, by increased inconvenience to householders, and increased expense to them accordingly . . . .\textsuperscript{49}

Broadly speaking, the CIT Plan proposed to widen Cotton and Bartala Streets and also Banstala Street (now Sir Hariram Goenka Street) at each of its ends (figs. 7, 8, 9). It further proposed to widen the still predominantly residential streets remaining to the north, and a complete set of north and south thoroughfares. The CIT plan favoured widening existing thoroughfares.\textsuperscript{50} Geddes was critical of this proposal believing that when widening existing streets, "it is the buildings along the frontages, which are generally the largest and most valuable, which are affected.\textsuperscript{51} By contrast, Geddes thought existing roads should be left intact and where necessary new routes should be cut through congested areas as, "these only affect frontages at intervals, and then merely for their breadth."\textsuperscript{52}
In the area between Harrison Road and Banstala Street, Geddes argued for a variety of alternative thoroughfares to those proposed by the CIT. He proposed to leave Cotton, Bartala, and Banstala streets unwidened, apart from, “minor local widenings, especially at crossings, so as to speedily decongest them.” For Geddes, the preservation of these streets, was, “not simply for the sake of avoiding destruction of their large and valuable premises, but for the ordinary purposes of trade and shopping.” He considered three new alternative east and west thoroughfares, preferring the least costly, which was just north of Bartala Street. In the area between Banstala Street and the new Boulevard, Geddes again put forward three choices preferring the widening of Sobharam Basak Street to Kalakar Street and then cutting through to Chitpore Road. He justified this decision because of its, “greater directness,” and, “more median position,” but, “above all, its continuity through Nawab Lane with Jagannath Ghat Street gives it great advantage; alike for traffic, and also for bathers, who are so numerous.”

Geddes next considered the North and South thoroughfares. Firstly, he agreed with the CIT proposal to widen Strand Road. He also agreed, with some modifications, to proposals to widen Clive Street, Maydapati Lane, and Mayrahata Street (now Nalini Sett Road), and with the proposal to widen Kalakar street from Harrison Road to the new Boulevard, although he believed it should be widened to 40 feet rather than 60 feet as suggested by the CIT. However, Geddes was critical of the, “excessive” amount of north-south thoroughfares in the CIT plan believing that many were too close to other major roads to warrant the disruption and cost of their implementation. Geddes claimed that, “the great pulse of the Port-City’s business, . . . has its main pulsations across the city, and only in a minor degree along it, parallel to the river.” For Geddes, Strand Road, Clive and Darmahata Streets, especially when widened, would remain its main arteries on the west side of Barra Bazaar, and Chitpore Road on the east.

Showing influences from his work on the regeneration of Edinburgh old town closes, Geddes’ plans showed various improvements to lanes, “for foot-passengers only”, which included the extension of Goenka Lane to Chitpore Road, and that from Haraprasad De Lane to the south-east corner of his proposed Northern Playground. His justifications for improvements to the existing lanes and the proposed new ones were that they would relieve congestion on the main thoroughfares. Geddes was aware of how these lanes were viewed by the colonial authorities stating how they were, “much out of fashion. . .with most large-scale planners especially.” In a move seemingly characteristic of more nineteenth century colonial ideas, Geddes accepted that, “where necessary lanes on which no dwellings open can be provided with an iron gate at each end, to be locked at sunset by the local policeman.”

**Business Accommodation and Business Quarter**

Perhaps the most overtly hybrid vision that Geddes had for Barra Bazaar was for new business accommodation set in a new business quarter. In Barra Bazaar, Geddes questioned the efficiency and economics of the existing business accommodation. Typically, this was constructed around a courtyard with godown, or storage accommodation on the ground floor, offices on the ground and/or first floor and living accommodation in the storeys above. He described the character of these buildings as follows:

“The actual amount of godown space which is afforded even around a large courtyard, is surprisingly small when the actual room-space is measured: while the inconvenience and disproportionate labour involved by this whole method is too obvious to need exposure in detail. . . . Furthermore, these courtyards readily become dirty, like the streets; while dust is constantly being raised, and thus into the upper storeys, to which their notorious unhealthiness is greatly due.”

Geddes proposed a unique hybrid building type consisting of two business storeys fifty feet wide, with two storeys of dwellings above. On the ground floor, was accommodation for ‘modern’ warehouses built naturally, “with due respect to Municipal regulations . . .”
necessary, offices and shops could occupy the frontage. On the fire-proofed first floor, he proposed offices, or shops, with godowns behind them if required. On the second and third floors, Geddes proposed family dwellings based on indigenous urban forms built around, “an upper courtyard open to breeze and sun on at least one side and with rooms facing outwards upon balcony and spaces.” In the centre of the courtyard space, he designed a small fountain that he claimed could be readily adapted as the reservoir of a simple ‘sprinkler’ mechanism, for the offices and warehouses below. He describes the disposition of the housing as follows:

“Such two storey dwelling-blocks may thus be adapted for all classes, and any number and size of rooms required, from those of spacious two-storey houses to comfortable ‘flats’ of various sizes, and . . . to (two or) one room dwellings; always with due bathing and latrine accommodation. In every case the stair should be carried up to the roof, which thus affords an open space for play and rest, and for sleeping out in hot weather.”

Geddes believed that the, “business advantages of, efficiency, time and trouble and therefore saved money presented by the new Warehouse blocks,” would persuade owners of existing godowns to relocate. Perhaps optimistically, he believed that, “the gain in domestic comfort and well-being to each household adapting itself to the proposed change would be obvious from its very earliest cases; so as in a few years to spread even to the most conservative, overcrowded and uncomfortable of present buildings, and to modify opinion and action accordingly.” He anticipated that the provision of new warehouse accommodation would free up the ground floor of existing traditional courtyard houses to give more living accommodation.

In addition to identifying new sites for businesses along Dharmahata Street, and on both sides of a widened Maydapati Lane, Geddes proposed a new business quarter west of Dharmahata Street, in a strip parallel to the river. Starting from Harrison Road, near Howrah Bridge in the south, it would incorporate the improvement of Kasinath Babu Bazaar and Burdwan Raja Bazaar, and finish at the railway in the north. The area would have to, “be replanned and rebuilt, so as to condense the existing interests and activities, yet with added efficiency and with space for bigger businesses etc., and for a considerable population as well.”

Again, Geddes was critical of general working practices in Barra Bazaar, believing them to be behind the times, and to be in need of radical overhaul. Comparing methods of handling goods in Calcutta with those of Germany and America, Geddes pointed out that, “what in Calcutta is done by a hundred coolies and bullock drivers, with costly superintendance, endless toils, delays and confusions, and corresponding expense can often be seen done in America by one or two skilled men. . .” He called for more efficient business organisation. The model he had in mind was an American ‘produce-exchange’ which he described in detail as follows:

“For here in one vast and many-storeyed building, normally located beside - or as at St. Louis etc., even over - the railway lines of an associated goods depot, the bales etc., are run easily or lifted vertically from the railway wagons into the warehouses, or then lowered, again with vast economy of handling, and no cartage. In higher storeys are the offices, great and small, of the bulk of firms in the given line. A spacious and well-lit hall, or even floor, is the Exchange, in which all connected with the business can meet.”

Geddes acknowledged that the notion of looking to America for ideas came from, “at least one Calcutta captain of industry,” who was, “already applying some of these [methods] in his own large and modern undertaking.” However, in comparison to his people-centred approach typified by ‘conservative surgery,’ the idea of product-exchanges seems something of an anomaly. Whilst admittedly improving working conditions for some, in the name of business efficiency, many people would be put out of work by them. Geddes justification was that business had to be, “replanned and concentrated, with every modern appliance - that is now needed here, to bring Calcutta business more fully abreast of the times.” He believed that the concentration of businesses in one area that was found typically in American cities if utilised in Barra bazaar would lead to, “higher efficiency and economy.” Again rather optimistically, Geddes thought that as this business quarter filled up congestion in Barra bazaar would
correspondingly diminish. Perhaps he thought that if he offered this concession to the business community, his other less commercial ideas would gain acceptance.

Also lying within the boundaries of Geddes proposed new business quarter was the Calcutta Mint. Geddes advocated its removal, proposing a lay-out for more warehouse accommodation on the site, that preserved, “the old Main Building as one of the fine architectural monuments of Calcutta, and one adaptable to public use.” One possible use for the building that Geddes proposed was as a high school for Barra Bazaar: “If this idea be adopted, all blocks to its eastward must be given up as playground, hence shown vacant.” Geddes also realised that with all the new and widened roads, demolitions, playgrounds, and parks, some new housing would be required in Barra Bazaar. The new warehouse blocks he proposed to the east of Dharmahata Street, he claimed would, “provide over 300 rooms upon their third and fourth storeys, over their warehouse and office floors.” In the new business quarter Geddes thought he could provide another 3,500 rooms.

Parks, Playgrounds and Public Gardens

There is little doubt that Geddes preferred parks over roads, many of which he attempted to show were unnecessary, and in his appendix to the Barra Bazaar report states that, “gardening is the healthiest recreation of man, and one of the best elements of education for children.” Geddes agreed with the CIT plan for a playground behind Banstala Street, Jagamohan Mallik Lane (now Kalakar Street), Bartala Street and Doyehata Street (now Digambar Jain Temple Road), and for a park to the south of Sikdarpara Temple, although he argued that it should be smaller, to avoid unnecessary demolitions. He was dismissive of the three parks proposed by the CIT immediately south of the new Boulevard as being too costly for demolitions (fig. 2). Geddes recommended a square, “a little further east and north east of the end of Sibtala Street (which is already mainly cleared and more or less in daily playground use) be levelled and planted with trees around its margins.”

Geddes appreciated that, both crowded buildings and high land-values would render clearance for any real park impracticable within Barra Bazaar. In a significant departure to the CIT plan, instead of large parks, Geddes proposed forty six small playgrounds. He justified these playgrounds on health grounds, and in particular referred to the high infant mortality rates in Calcutta:

“among these children the amount of sickness and the rate of their mortality . . . is the disgrace of our cities, and the heart-break of their homes. More playgrounds must therefore somehow be found: else all other sanitation must remain inadequate, and disappointing accordingly.”

Following his own philosophy of ‘Conservative Surgery,’ he proposed the demolition of, “some of the unsatisfactory interior houses, at due intervals, thus forming open courts in which neems, palms or other trees (not sacred) can be planted; and which can be used as local playgrounds; i.e. for the children of their immediate neighbourhood.” According to Geddes, the houses proposed for demolition, were, “the ill-built or ill-ventilated, un-repaired and even dilapidated tenements of Barra Bazaar, which lie behind the frontage houses.” Geddes was optimistic about the outcome of such playgrounds, claiming to have long practical acquaintance with, “many such playgrounds in other cities - as notably in the worst quarters of Old Edinburgh and Old Dublin, and in American cities, which alike present all the evils of Barra Bazaar and more, indeed too often in exaggerated form.”

Conclusions: Ambivalence And Contradiction

The Calcutta Corporation compared Geddes’ proposals with the general proposals of the CIT and, “found that according to Prof. Geddes’ scheme about 50 percent. of the houses would remain in their present condition without any improvement, that large blocks of insanitary areas
would not be sufficiently opened up and that the Trusts proposals would provide more road accommodation.\textsuperscript{85} The Corporation dismissed his ideas about small local playgrounds, “as it was considered that these small patches of ground surrounded by high buildings with access through narrow lanes would not serve any useful purpose and would be used for dumping refuse.”\textsuperscript{86} However, the Corporation did adopt some of the alignments suggested by Geddes for road improvements and his proposal for a large park to the north of Ratan Sarkar Garden Street. They also suggested that the idea of a general improvement scheme should be abandoned in view of the enormous destruction of property and dislocation of business it would entail.

With some exceptions, most of the new roads proposed by the CIT and by Geddes were never implemented. However, the new north Boulevard (now called Kali Krishna Tagore Street) was completed in 1928. Chitpore Road (now called Rabindra Sarani) and Strand Road were widened in places. Clive Street (now called Maharashi Debendra Road) was widened, Maydapani Lane and Mayrahata Street (now called Nalini Sett Road) were widened from the junction of Cotton Street northwards to the new north Boulevard. Kalakar Street was also widened to become the main north-south road through the area. Geddes’ Business Quarter was never realised. The Mint building now remains unoccupied, the land around it still undeveloped. However, some new warehouse and housing accommodation was built on the triangle of land between Maydapani Lane, and Darmahata Street. This was the area Geddes had proposed for 300 homes. The park north of Ratan Sarkar Garden Street proposed by Geddes is now a rubbish dump.

On the face of it, Geddes’ impact on Barra Bazaar would seem to be limited. He was not only criticised by the British colonial establishment, but also by the Indian businessmen of Barra Bazaar. Indeed Geddes seemed to anticipate the criticism admitting in one of the appendices to the report that, “every town-planning scheme has to meet abundant criticism; and this from every point of view, local and general; e.g. from those of the individual as householder, as businessman, etc., from the local communities and trade interests to those of the well-being requirements of the city as a whole.”\textsuperscript{87} Geddes found himself committed to trying to put his civic reconstruction doctrine, with its commitment to places and people, in an urban context where the interests of the market were paramount. His approach was arguably out of step with the pace of change of aspects of modernisation in certain sections of the community in Barra Bazaar.\textsuperscript{88} There was always an inherent conflict in his work between preserving ‘traditional’ urban forms, and steering a path into the ‘modern’ world. This is the ambivalence at the centre of Geddes’ position.

Despite these criticisms, Geddes was adamant that his methods were the way forward, and he attached a number of appendices to the report trying to put his message across more forcefully. In these appendices, he argued for the need for a city and local survey, defended the appropriateness of traditional Indian houses such as the courtyard house, warned against the widening of too many streets, advocated the need to regulate the height of buildings, argued for re-housing of the labouring classes, warned about demolitions and social unrest, described the possibility of cheap housing solutions, the importance of roof gardens, and the desirability for a riverside promenade. As Helen Meller reminds us, “the way Geddes expressed most of his planning ideas in his reports was designed to goad civic administrations into a new perception of their duties, and to avert some of the damage they were causing,”\textsuperscript{89} and the appendices to the Barra bazaar report were there for this purpose.

Geddes was clearly offering an alternative approach to the colonial establishment of the day, combining ideas from both European and colonial cultures, an early ‘hybrid’ approach, with all its uncertainty and ambivalence. The themes of his own work, ‘Diagnostic Survey’ and ‘Conservative Surgery,’ whilst having European roots in his work in Edinburgh, were radically different to nineteenth century establishment ideas of health and hygiene. Geddes also acknowledged the huge part played by the indigenous population in shaping cities in India. For Geddes, meeting and interviewing the people of Barra Bazaar was essential so that a mental picture could be formed, “of the daily life and working of the district in its various branches of activity and of these in their action and reaction with the city as a whole.”\textsuperscript{90} When the Barra Bazaar report was produced, he had become shunned by the British Administration, and in Calcutta had become involved with Rabindranath Tagore and Sir Jagadis Bose. As Helen
Meller points out Geddes identified, “the search for a regional identity, the built environment which encapsulates its form and history, and the conscious cultivation of cultural diversity, . . . issues which remain perennially pertinent.”91

Hybridity theory also offers some reflections on the contradictory interpretations Geddes’ report appeared to receive. Homi K. Bhabha in his book, *The Location of Culture*, describes the arrival, in India, of another piece of writing, the English Bible and its subsequent translation into various Indian languages. In its ‘original’ context Bhabha sees the English Bible as a symbol of church and colonial authority, but in India, the translated ‘native’ Bible becomes, “an *Enstellung*, a process of displacement, distortion, dislocation, repetition [in which] the dazzling light of literature sheds only areas of darkness.”92 The Bible’s arrival is a paradox; “it is at once a moment of originality and authority: as well, a process of displacement that paradoxically makes the presence of the book wondrous to the extent to which it is repeated, translated, misread, displaced.”93 Bhabha presents the Bible, used by colonizer and colonized alike, in, “the wild and wordless wastes of colonial India,”94 as a product of, “colonial hybridity that no longer commands authority,”95 as uncertain as colonial rule itself. For Bhabha, the colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference.

The ambivalent reception of Geddes’ report on Barra Bazaar echoes some of Bhabha’s own interpretations of the arrival and subsequent translation of the English Bible in India. Whilst the Bible in its ‘original’ context was a symbol of colonial authority, Geddes’ report arguably written from a more ‘hybrid’ space similarly could not command authority in its colonial setting. His report on Barra Bazaar reminds us of the doubling process of hybridity; specifically, the fusing and merging of cultures - in Geddes’ case, of his own approaches to city planning with more indigenous ones; with the dynamic undermining of a dominant cultural view - highlighted by the reception Geddes’ report received. It is worth re-emphasising that it is this second part of the process of hybridity that Bhabha, and Bakhtin before him, see as the most significant reason for pursuing hybridity theory as a key interpretive tool.

For Bhabha the hybrid is formed, out of the dual process of similarity and difference found in the act of translation. Meaning seldom translates with pristine integrity, and often requires a degree of improvisation. Hybrid identities, therefore, are formed not out the transformation of foreignness into the familiar, but out of this awareness of the incomplete interpretation that lingers on. It is from this position of ‘in-betweenness’ that Bhabha suggests the most interrogative forms of culture are produced, situated as they are at the cleavages and fissures of class, race, gender, nation and location. Bhabha encourages us to perceive this irresolvable, borderline culture, which is at once, “the *time* of cultural displacement, and the *space* of the ‘untranslatable’.”96 The case of hybridity is pressed because the process of translation is, in his view, one of the most compelling tasks for the cultural critic in the modern world today. Geddes’ work in India in general, and his report on Barra Bazaar in particular, represents a key example of how this theoretical phenomena works in practice.

Research on Sir Patrick Geddes’ report, *Barra Bazaar Improvement: A Report to the Corporation of Calcutta* (1919), was made possible by the kind generosity of Helen Meller in supplying a copy of the report to the author.
Figures

1. Geddes plans of Tanjore, showing ‘conservative surgery’
2. Calcutta Improvement Trust Plan for Barra Bazaar
Source: Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow (22/1/1245)
3. Patrick Geddes' Plan of Barra Bazaar, showing final recommendations
Source: Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow (22/1/1245)
4. View of Vivekananda Road
Photographed by the author. August 2000

5. View of Rabindra Sarani
Photographed by the author. Easter 1999
6. View of Strand Road
Photographed by the author. Easter 1999

7. View of Cotton Street
Photographed by the author. Easter 1999
8. View of Bartala Street
Photographed by the author. August 2000

9. View of Sir Hariram Goenka Street
Photographed by the author. Easter 2003
10. View of Kalakar Street
Photographed by the author. August 2000

12. View of the Old Mint, Strand Road
Photographed by the author. August 2000
15. View of courtyard house off Rabindra Sarani
Photographed by the author. Easter 1999

1 For a more detailed discussion on these health themes refer to, article by the author, ‘Colonial Space: Health and Modernity in Barabazaar, Kolkata,’ *Traditional Dwellings and Settlement Review*, XIV, II (Spring 2003), pp. 7-19
4 S. Chattopadhyay, *Depicting Calcutta* (University of California, PhD in Architecture, 1997), p. 80
6 ibid., p. 1
7 ibid., p. 60
8 ibid., p. 61
10 ibid.
11 ibid.
12 For a more detailed discussion of these narratives refer to, article by the author, ‘Colonial Space: Health and Modernity in Barabazaar, Kolkata,’ *Traditional Dwellings and Settlement Review*, XIV, II (Spring 2003), pp. 7-19
13 Kaviraj, ‘Filth and the Public Sphere,’ p. 100
two types of hybridity, namely ‘organic’ and ‘intentional.’ Organic hybridity explains how cultures evolve historically through unreflective borrowings, appropriations and exchanges, fusing or merging a new language or world view. Intentional hybridity sets different views against each other in a conflictual structure, which retains, ‘a certain elemental, organic energy and openendedness.’

15 H. K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London and New York, Routledge, 1994), p.156
16 ibid., p. 25
19 The Cities and Town Planning Exhibition represented Geddes’ latest thinking in town planning with contributions from the United Kingdom, America and Germany.
20 Geddes, Patrick, “The Temple Cities,” Modern Review, (India) 25. He also wrote about temple cities in a letter to his family, 7 January 1915 (Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, NLS MS10515)
22 Geddes met Swami Vivekenanda and Sister Nivedita at the 1900 Paris exhibition.
23 M. Noble, The Web of Indian Life (London, William Heinemann, 1904)
24 C. M. Villiers-Stuart, Gardens of the Great Mughals (London, Adam and Charles Black, 1913)
25 Meller, Patrick Geddes, p. 219
26 Dr. J. A. Turner, with contributions by B. K. Goldsmith, S. C. Hormusji, K. B. Shroff and L. Godinho, Sanitation in India (Bombay, Times of India, 1914)
28 For a summary of this work refer to, Meller, Patrick Geddes, pp. 73-79
29 P. Geddes, Bara Bazaar Improvement a Report to the Corporation of Calcutta (Calcutta, Corporation Press, 1919), p. 28
30 ibid., p. 27
31 ibid., p.25
33 ibid.,
34 ibid.,
35 For a more detailed discussion of this racial argument refer to, article by the author, ‘Colonial Space: Health and Modernity in Barabazaar, Kolkata,’ Traditional Dwellings and Settlement Review, XIV, II (Spring 2003), pp. 7-19
36 The Calcutta Improvement Trust was established later than most being delayed until after the capital was moved from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911.
38 E. P. Richards, Report By Request of the Trust on the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta and Contiguous Areas (Ware, Jennings and Bewley, 1914)
40 Richards, Report on the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta, p. 229
41 ibid., p. 301
42 ibid., p. 251
44 Richards, Report on the Condition, Improvement and Town Planning of the City of Calcutta, p. xiii
46 A letter from Patrick Geddes to H. J. Fleure, 4 April 1917 (Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, NLS MS 10572). Quotation taken from Meller, Patrick Geddes, p. 208
47 Geddes, Barra Bazaar Improvement, p. 30
48 ibid., p. 4
49 ibid.
50 Geddes calculated the total extent of new thoroughfares on the CIT plan to be 4 miles 750 yds., of which, 3 miles 128 yds. were old thoroughfares widened; and 1 mile 630 yds. were new thoroughfares, cut through existing buildings.
51 Geddes, Barra Bazaar Improvement, p. 6
52 ibid.
53 ibid., p. 7
54 ibid., p. 9
55 The second option was just north of Cotton Street, and the third, between Harrison Street and Cotton Street.
56 The second option involved the widening of Basak Street up to Kalakar Street, then cutting through to Sibtala Street, again cutting onto Sibu Thakur Lane, leaving it as it turns northwards, and cutting on to Chitpore Road; the third option, the widening of Ganguli Lane and then cutting through to Chitpore Road.
57 Geddes, Barra Bazaar Improvement, p.9
58 ibid., p. 11
59 ibid., p. 12
60 ibid.
61 ibid., p. 12
62 Geddes first questioned the efficiency and economics of the existing business accommodation in Barra Bazaar and suggested a possible solution, in a letter to Col. Pugh dated 3 March, 1919, (Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, NSL MS 10516)
63 This is an arrangement that is still common in Barra bazaar today.
64 Geddes, Barra Bazaar Improvement, p. 13
65 ibid..
66 ibid., p. 14
67 ibid..
68 ibid., p. 15
69 ibid..
70 ibid., p. 16
71 ibid., p. 16, 17
72 Geddes, Barra Bazaar Improvement, p. 16
73 ibid., p. 17
74 ibid., p.17
75 Geddes first proposed the removal of the Mint, in a letter to Col. Pugh dated 3 March, 1919, (Sir Patrick Geddes Collection, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, NSL MS 10516)
76 Geddes, Barra Bazaar Improvement, p. 18
77 ibid.
78 ibid., p. 19
79 ibid., p. 35
80 ibid., p. 21
81 ibid..
82 ibid., p.22
83 ibid..
84 ibid., p. 23
86 ibid.
87 Geddes, Barra Bazaar Improvement, p. 27
88 In a letter from the Marwari Association of Calcutta, to the CIT, dated 26 March 1912, The Secretary, Ram Dev Chokhany, whilst acknowledging the difficulties of displacing people from their homes and the need to keep any rise in land and property prices to a minimum, argues for a significant road widening

89 Meller, Patrick Geddes, p. 205
90 P. Geddes, Barra Bazaar Improvement, p. 27
91 Meller, Patrick Geddes, p. 326
92 Bhabha, Location of Culture, p.105
93 ibid., p.102
94 ibid..
95 ibid., p.113
96 ibid., p. 225