



# CALCUTTA IS



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# CALCUTTA IS



**SIVAPRASAD SAMADDAR**



The Corporation of Calcutta

© Mrs. Shivani Samaddar

Written and compiled (1974-77) by S. Samaddar (b 1927)  
Indian Administrative Service & Administrator of the Corporation

**25 Vaisakh 1385 : 9 May 1978**

**Rs. 40.00, \$ 10.00 or £ 5.00**

Published by the Corporation of Calcutta,  
5 Surendra Nath Banerjee Road, Calcutta 700 013  
under arrangement with the Abhi Prakashan,  
10 Kiran Sankar Roy Road, Calcutta 700 001  
and Printed by Navana Printing Works Private Ltd.,  
47 Ganesh Chunder Avenue, Calcutta 700 013

To the Memory of  
Kiranbala & Manoranjan Samaddar,  
my Parents

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## Foreword

Calcutta is a controversial city. In the days of the Grand Mughals, Kalikata was the name of a parganah as well as of a village. Nestling on the left bank of the river Bhagirathi (Hooghly), the village was a haven of fishermen and small traders, lorded over by the local Zamindar who had his office probably near the present Benoy-Badal-Dinesh Bagh (Dalhousie Square renamed). When Job Charnock, the Agent of the English Company, proposed its choice as the Company's headquarters in the eastern part of India, mainly for strategic reasons, his masters back home at first turned down the proposal. They had a preference for Uluberia on the western bank of the river. But it was Job Charnock's tenacity which triumphed in the end, and the foundation of the new metropolis was laid by Charnock in 1690. Since then Calcutta has attracted, and continues to attract, eulogy as well as blame.

Volumes have emerged on Calcutta as it was, but this book by Shri Samaddar pinpoints our attention to Calcutta as it is. A man of letters, Shri Samaddar acquired intimate first-hand knowledge of the intricate problems of the city during his long tenure as the administrator of the Corporation of Calcutta. This book is an extremely readable account of its multifaceted problems, which have all along baffled solution.

The city grew and grows. In the wake of its growth new problems add up to the old. Shri Samaddar indicates them and hints at their possible handling. He describes how the Corporation manages (or, as the critics would quip, mismanages) the city. The din of the markets and the cry of the hawkers ring aloud in the following pages; roads, water supply, sewers and drains attract the city administrator's notice. He does not hide the filth and garbage of the city. Buildings and museums do not escape his searching eyes. The urban culture, of which Calcutta is justly proud, finds some place in this book. For the sake of comparison, the author also gives some account of India's capital and many well-known cities outside India.

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This book is a collection of articles, talks and interviews on Calcutta through which the author seeks to reveal the mystery of the metropolis. I am confident that at any rate he will stimulate the minds of the readers and whet some part of their curiosity about this controversial, yet lovable, city.

Dated, New Delhi,  
12 October 1977

**P. C. Chunder**  
Minister of Education & Social  
Welfare, Government of India.

## Preface

The first supersession of the Calcutta Corporation took place in the hands of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, shortly after he assumed charge as Chief Minister. The second supersession by the Congress Government 24 years after was almost immediately with its assumption of office. The similarity ends there. Dr. Roy was twice the Mayor of Calcutta and for seven years an alderman. Still he took two months to take the decision, and supersession on 24 March 1948 was by a specific enactment. The Congress Cabinet of 1972, although it had none with direct municipal experience, did not take more than two days in driving out the elected members of the Corporation, as it did on 22 March 1972. The law was subverted for the purpose by issuing an Ordinance on the day of the supersession!

According to the Calcutta Municipal Act, there could be no supersession unless the Government had issued a show cause notice on the Corporation asking for its representation within a specified period and considered the same. The amending ordinance (when the legislature was to sit in a few days!) not only deleted the provision but also added a sub-section to the effect: 'For the removal of doubt it is hereby declared that no notice whatsoever is required to be given to the Corporation for submission of any representation before making any such order of supersession.' This is literally adding insult to the injury!

Dissimilarity between the two actions a quarter century apart would be more glaring if we consider that the first supersession was followed within a month by the formation of a three man Commission called the Corporation of Calcutta Investigation Commission under the chairmanship of Justice Shri C. C. Biswas. The investigation was with a purpose to scrutinise the working of the Corporation during the previous 25 years under the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923 and to suggest remedies, by way of legislation or otherwise, for improving the finances and administration of the Corporation. The Commission held an elaborate examination of the Corporation's working in offices and fields and submitted its final report on 31 January 1950. Acting on its recommendations and also as a result of departmental efforts, the new Municipal Act of 1951 was framed. A newly elected Corporation came into being on 1 May 1952, that is to say after four years. No action whatsoever on these lines was taken this time by the Congress Government.

The supersession in 1972 was ostensibly on five charges of

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incompetency and four of persistent defaults. The former were :

- (i) inability to utilise capital funds and diverting a portion to revenue expenditure ;
- (ii) failure to provide a real opening cash balance of not less than Rs. 12 lakhs at the end of the year ;
- (iii) failure to raise sufficient funds to meet the basic needs of the citizens ;
- (iv) failure to maintain the Corporation streets in good state of repairs ; and
- (v) failure in prompt and regular removal of garbage from public streets.

The four-fold defaults were :

- (i) in payments to CIT, a sum equivalent to  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on the rateable valuation ;
- (ii) in payments under the Howrah Bridge Act, 1926 ;
- (iii) in taking action on audit reports ; and
- (iv) in statutory discharge of duties and functions.

In June 1977 when the Left Front Government was called upon by the people to serve them, the Corporation stood superseded till 21 September 1977, by several extensions of the order by the Congress Government. It would be interesting to take stock of the incompetencies and defaults as they stood then. As regards the first incompetency, capital works in drainage and water-works vested in CMDA since 1970, and, as required by, it a separate wing called the CMDA Cell was created in 1971 in the Corporation under the surveillance and guidance of CMDA. Nevertheless within a few months this allegation was raised against the Corporation and the blow of supersession fell.

It is a requirement alike of sections 127, 128 and 129 of the Calcutta Municipal Act 1951 that the budget estimates must allow for a cash balance of at least Rs. 12 lakhs at the close of the year. By the C.M. (Second Amendment) Act of 1973 all such provisions were deleted. For further comments regarding incompetency (ii) the following figures for the opening balance on the 1st of April for 1972 and the five successive years will suffice :

(-)	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
Rs. crores	7.36	7.28	8.82	11.01	12.65	12.82

Incompetency (iii) is an extension of the above. The basic fact is that the Corporation, or for that matter any local body, cannot impose taxes as it pleases, but only as permitted by the Government. As Mayor of Calcutta in 1969 and 1970 I strove hard in focussing attention of the State and the Union Governments to

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this fundamental malady. I recall how we joined the issues at the level of the President and the Prime Minister of India. As a result the Corporation was given a Union Government loan of Rs. 5.5 crores in 1970-71, out of which Rs. 2 crores was paid to CIT. Shortly after, the Centre gave permission to introduce octroi in the city, but the State Government allocated only 25% to the Corporation. In fact there were no efforts by the latter to come forward and help the Corporation in crisis. It has no doubt to ensure proper collection, and the Corporation has definite scope for improvement in this regard. But to level a charge of insufficient financial resources without going deeper into the matter cannot be called responsible.

Admittedly the roads of Calcutta were neglected for decades. There were no earmarked or captive funds for road repairs except Rs. 10 lakhs given by Government from its collection of motor vehicles tax. Nevertheless the Corporation had been spending Rs. 75 lakhs per year from its general revenue which meant Rs. 30 lakhs or so in actual works, leaving aside the establishment and fixed charges. The Congress Government, knowing all these, came hardly to the rescue of the Calcutta Corporation which has 510 miles of roads under its charge. The position did not improve during the long years of supersession. In 1975 the Corporation got Rs. 1.35 crores from Government for road repairs, but only as a loan which was promptly deducted from the next instalment of Corporation dues from the Government. It is only in 1977 that a regular flow of money was assured to the Corporation in the form of a road-repairing grant, being 75% of the additional surcharge on motor vehicles tax. I admit that the preliminaries in this regard were worked out before we came to power, but the actual flow of funds and the infrastructure required for a vigorous road repairing programme have been arranged only since the present Government took over. This will show that the charge of neglect to roads could be fixed more on the previous Government than the Corporation, much less the Corporation as it functioned in 1972.

Regarding the fifth charge, garbage clearance has deep-rooted problems, both technologically and managerially. With all the advice given by expert bodies and foreign teams, the Corporation has still to ensure hard and disciplined work round the year.

Such an appraisal for the four so-called defaults makes an even more interesting reading. The last one relating to defaults in duties and functions is a vague one and does not merit pinpointed discussions or appraisal. The first count is on default in payment to CIT. It was Rs. 80 lakhs on the date of supersession. Nothing

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has been paid since then and the total arrear accumulated to Rs. 495 lakhs on 1 June 1977. Similarly the dues for the Howrah bridge which were Rs. 38 lakhs at the time of supersession have gone up by June 1977 to Rs. 66 lakhs. The point is that the Corporation cannot, in the prevailing circumstances and finances, meet these obligations; but what is worse, the supersession, despite its self-righteous and indignant stance, was of no avail.

The record regarding audit reports has also nothing to commend. They were outstanding from 1943-44 at the time of supersession—till 1964-65 for settlement of the replies sent by the Corporation and thereafter for want of any replies. The position is still the same, although for the first two years only a few points, less than 10, are nominally under objection.

When the Left Front Ministry came to power we took an oath to place the charge of the Corporation as well as other superseded municipalities at the hands of elected bodies, irrespective of their political affinity. But before the elections are held we have to do some homework. Both the C.M. Act, 1951 and the Bengal Municipal Act require to be fundamentally amended. An Act Amendment Committee was formed and the officers of the Corporation were also required to give their suggestions. These are being examined and the agreed changes will be placed at the next Legislative Assembly.

We hoped to hold the Corporation elections in the winter of 1977. But it came to light that many names were omitted from the electoral roll for the last Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. It is the responsibility of the Election Commissioner to make good this deficiency. We are trying to expedite the matter by all means, but there are many formalities to be observed. Our present intention is to hold elections to the Corporation, after the amendment of the Act, by the middle of 1978.

It is because of this delay that we have formed a Central Advisory Committee to advise the Administrator and the Commissioner in municipal affairs and 21 Zonal Advisory Committees to advise and co-ordinate the work at district and sub-district levels. These committees are expected to bring a measure of public participation for the intervening period. The Central Advisory Committee has as members 15 MLAs of Calcutta who are not Ministers in Government and a distinguished ex-councillor who is a medical man. Its chairman is another veteran and respected councillor of olden days. In the Zonal Committees which cover four or five wards each, there is a representative from each ward.

Even before the municipal election it is the aim of this Govern-

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ment to step up civic services and give concentrated attention to areas which had been neglected in the past. A programme of work for 1977-78 at a cost of Rs. 3.5 crores has been chalked out for the repair of roads with particular reference to the east, north and south which are in the worst state. The members of the Advisory Committees should keep a watch on the quality and progress of road repairs, as also on the removal of garbage. Despite criticisms against the people's representatives, it is a fact that during the elected regime they looked after the services in their respective localities and helped in keeping the areas clean. We hope the same role would be played by the Committee members. I expect them also to bring back the sense of discipline and dedication among workers and employees. Conservancy service is particularly vulnerable to sudden disturbance and undeclared movements launched by some illadvised or motivated people. This has happened several times since the present Government took over, but we cannot allow any such group to bring the whole city to a stand-still at their whims and caprices.

From the conservancy department more than a thousand employees were retired on 1 January 1976 for exceeding the newly fixed retirement age of 60 years, and there has been persistent demand for recruiting nominees of the retired persons, in keeping with the practice in the Corporation, as also to ensure adequate service to the expanding city. A committee has been appointed to assess the requirement so that new recruitments can be arranged. We have taken several other steps in the interest of the workers and lower paid employees. The Puja advance of one month's pay given last year by the Congress Government has been converted into an ex-gratia payment which is not to be refunded. This year a similar amount was paid ex-gratia before the Puja. A Pay Committee is being formed to revise and rationalise the pay structure of the Corporation employees and, pending its recommendation, an ad interim relief of Rs. 10 per month is being paid to all employees.

Roads and pavements have been encroached upon by hawkers. Passers-by suffer and accidents occur. A decision has been taken by Government that no new encroachments should be tolerated and for old encroachments alternative accommodation should be worked out in consultation with people's representatives, before any clearance work is undertaken. About Rs. 1.10 crores has been sanctioned for the construction of a hump at the entrance of Sealdah Station for easing traffic congestion. This would also proceed after offering proper rehabilitation to hawkers.

Participation by people's representatives is desirable in administration to get the best out of the efforts to improve sewers, water

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supply and' more so the bustees. CMDA spent Rs. 15 crores for drainage and drinking water in the bustees, but the benefit is not commensurate with the cost, as there was no watch from the people's side. Service privies were converted into septic tanks, but there was no simultaneous arrangement for flushing water, and the bustee dwellers in disgust ask for breaking those septic tanks. During the next five years, we hope to spend another 20 crores in the bustees, but the work should proceed with full public consultation and cooperation. Bustee cleansing work should also be resumed fully by the Corporation covering garbage clearance, disinfection, desludging of septic tanks, removal of night soil from service privies etc.

Water supply has been augmented here and there by shallow tubewells and, mainly in Tollygunge and fringe areas, by big diameter tube wells sunk by CMDA and CIT. Some of them have become defunct and some are lacking in over-head arrangements, pipe line connexions etc. What was sadly lacking so far was the coordination between capital works agencies like CMDA and local bodies like the Corporation which have ultimately to be called in for operation, maintenance and running. Our Government is determined to see that there is proper dovetailing between these efforts, and for whatever money is spent, the benefit is passed on to the people in a sustained manner.

Shri Sama'dar has been the Administrator of the Corporation since 1974, after having spent a few months as the Commissioner. He is the third Administrator since the supersession and has had a long innings at the Corporation, judging by the normal turnover of officials deputed by Government. This book is a first hand account of the problems, efforts and results in this premier body of local self government as seen and felt by him. Without necessarily agreeing with his analysis and observations, I may say that it is a useful and timely chronicle of events by an insider for the major portion of the period the Corporation was managed by the officials. The publication has been brought out by the Calcutta Corporation and I wish that it serves the purpose of enlightening the people of Calcutta as well as outsiders about the working of this great institution.

**Prasanta Kumar Sur**

Dated, Calcutta,  
18 February 1978

Minister-in-charge, Department of Local Government  
& Urban Development, Government of West Bengal.

## In Gratitude

This is a collection of my published articles, speeches and interviews from 1974 to 1977 about the working of the Calcutta Corporation and various aspects of civic services. They could see the light of the day because of the interest shown by the people and the encouragement given by the media of communication like the All India Radio, Calcutta TV, newspapers and magazines and the various platforms in the city like social and welfare clubs, management and engineering associations, chambers of commerce etc. I was further encouraged by the citizens of Calcutta to bring out a collection of my talks and writings for the general reader as well as those who want to go a little deeper into urban administration and the management problems.

I am deeply grateful to all of them, as also to numerous friends and well-wishers whose suggestions, criticism and sympathetic interest prompted me not only in preparing the pieces but also in the more direct labour of running the Corporation in place of the people's representatives. In fact I found that the two became complimentary for me and reinforced each other. Perhaps this is what sustained me over the long years in a place like the Corporation.

I have offered in this compilation a mixed fare for the curious and the serious; for the general public a peep into the goings on in the Corporation and for the initiated some hard facts and figures which might be useful. I embarked on the job of editing with a pair of scissors and a bottle of glue and that of illustrations with a bunch of newspaper cartoons. I could not be persuaded against such a mixing of the sublime and the ludicrous. Naturally it is not for me now to raise any alibi or apology. In owning up all responsibility for the shortcomings, I hereby want to single out a few to whom I felt specifically indebted during the long phase of editing and compilation. Let me list out these objects of my gratitude:

Amrita Bazar Patrika: For permission to reproduce six of their cartoons for which I also convey grateful thanks to the cartoonist Amal.

Ananda Bazar Patrika: For permission to reproduce four cartoons—two by Chandi, one by Kutty and the fourth as illustration to Mr Amitabha Chaudhuri's verse. Thanks are hereby offered to the cartoonists as well as to Mr. Chaudhuri for permission to reproduce the verse.

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Banerjee, Kalidas : For help in translating some of my articles from Bengali.

Basu, Dr Santimay : For help in some translations, for general advice and also for all encouragement to bring out the book.

Basu, Samar Chandra : For locating some of the cartoons.

Basu, Sanjib Kumar : For keeping up the pressure so that the instalment supply of the manuscript and accompaniments could not be much defaulted.

Bourne & Shepherd : For permission to print two illustrations on Old Calcutta (1786 and 1900) and for preparing their copies as well as that of Calcutta 1916.

Chunder, Dr. Pratap Chandra : For writing the foreword which is an adornment to the book.

Government of West Bengal, Information & Public Relations department : For lending pictures for composing the art plate 'Sign of the Four.'

Hindusthan Standard : For the facility to reproduce their two editorials.

Jugantar : For permission to use three cartoons by Messrs Amal (1 No.) and Sufi (2 Nos.) to whom also my thanks are due.

Mookerjee, Subrata : For sponsoring the first edition of the publication through the Corporation of Calcutta.

Nandy, Manish : For checking up and editing the text, for advice on general arrangement and for translating two poems in the advertisement series.

Nandy, Pritish : For advice on layout, type face and illustrations, for photographic works for the jacket and the illustration 'Calcutta adulterates Moonlight' and for the use of his poem 'Calcutta if you exile me.'

National Advertising Agency : For processing with so much care the graphics, illustrations and the jacket and for preparing the separators.

Navana Press : For putting up often with my suggestions for changes and for not giving a longer rope to the Printer's Devil. Still at the end we take the valiant to the deep sea of corrections.

## IN GRATITUDE

Roy, Subhas: For constant advice and suggestions on text, illustrations etc.

Samaddar, Haraprasad: For doing the first translation of some of my Bengali articles.

Samaddar, Mrs. Shivani: For not enforcing her right as the spouse to get me for the morning bazar, the afternoon cup of tea, the movies and social visits in the evenings and as an escort on holidays; leaving me generally to the affairs and the repercussions of the Corporation e.g. disappearance to the office on holidays, descending on the drawing room at the day's end with a mountain of files, burning the midnight bulb whenever spared by load-shedding etc. My gratitude to her is for looking after my running and maintenance as a budding author, especially for suffering my readings and re-readings of the manuscript when daughters were not at hand or not too obliging.

Statesman, The: For facility to reproduce some of its comments in editorials and the 'Calcutta Note Book' and for making available two photoprints 'Into the fragrant Island' by Mr. Niranjan Halder and 'Swung its Trunk into the Sky' by Mr. Subrata Patranabis. My special thanks are due to the former who lent the print from his personal collection and gave useful advice on its use.

Sur, Prasanta Kumar: For support in completing the venture and for writing the preface.

United States Information Service: For making available some material on the City Halls of New York and Philadelphia.

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The  
Corporation  
Runs

## WHOSE CALCUTTA ?

Urban centres sprang from industrial revolution in West and colonial commerce in India. Calcutta, the hub of the English East India Company grew to become a metropolitan agglomeration. Municipal administration had to follow suit, for those to take up the white man's burden had to be assured of hygiene, health and reasonable comfort in the alien land. The first such body called the Mayor's Court came to be established in Calcutta in 1727, with a Mayor and nine aldermen. By the 1794 Act, Justices of Peace were appointed and assessment authorised for tax on houses and for license fee on liquor. In 1847 another Act introduced the electoral system. A new Corporation was created in 1876 with larger elected elements and comprising Chairman, Vice-Chairman, 48 elected Commissioners and 24 Government appointed Commissioners. In the 1899 Act a three tier authority was introduced, namely Corporation, General Committee and Chairman.

The Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923 then came as a watershed, giving municipal governance to the hands of the 'natives', as was necessitated by the British experiment of dyarchy which transferred some peripheral and non-critical items of administration to the elected representatives of people. The Corporation of Calcutta was constituted with 90 councillors and five alderman, all elected, and out of them one was to be elected annually as the Mayor and another the Deputy Mayor. The Act added Maniktala, Cossipore, Chitpur, Garden Reach and Kidderpore Docks to the city, and gave almost the present shape to the Corporation in area and activities. After a while Garden Reach went out and in 1953 came in Tollygunge.

The local bodies grew in the spirit and challenge of local self government, and the Act of 1923 was the prototype in the hands of Rashtraguru Surendranath, the first Minister of LSG, Government control was relaxed and the first Mayor for two terms was Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das (1924 & 1925). Subhas Chandra Bose (subsequently Netaji) came as his trusted follower and became the Chief Executive Officer, now called Commissioner. Actually the first CEO was Dr. Haridhan Dutt 1½ months (1.4.24 to 16.5.24). Then came Subhas, from 17.5.25

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\* Talk before Rotary Club of Calcutta under the title 'Municipal Services and Calcutta Corporation', 30 April 1974 and published in the Chaka, 7 May 1974.

## THE CORPORATION RUNS

to 15.12.24. J. C. Mukherjea had to officiate as Subhas was not available, having been interned by the Government.

The Local Self Government department was renamed Municipal Services on 20 March 1972 when the present Congress Government came to power. It could have been so designated at Independence, when the entire country became self-governed. In the British days a local body, particularly the Calcutta Corporation could be called something of a castle fortified by the moat and the high wall, the draw bridge providing communication with outside, as and when necessary. Inside the political mentors reared the novices and made them fighting fit for the larger arena against the Britishers. Another analogy which comes to mind is the wrestling ring or akhara where the teacher and the taught are tied by blood or adoption and form a closed clan. What obtained in the political field also percolated down to the establishment and many of to-day's distortions like ghost labour, babu mazdoors or jobs on heredity have their origin in such a socio-historic reason. To day of course the time has come for converting the draw-bridge into a permanent bridge and bringing the fortress fully into sunlight.

After Independence Government stepped in to take over the management of the Corporation from the elected elements. It was superseded from 24 March 1948 to 30 April 1952. On 1 May 1952 the Act of 1951 came into operation, replacing the 1923 Act. The new Act attained a combination of a British democratic institution and the system of American City managers. By construction and theoretically, most executive power is left with Commissioner who has been given a special role. Out of 615 sections in the Act as many as 238 or 40 percent mention Commissioner, giving him powers, responsibilities and functions. Obviously there is over centralisation for guarding against subversion or erosion of authority by the elected. In effect, the poor Commissioner is more vulnerable to union pressure, particularly, when the balancing factor of councillors is not available during supersession.

Today, on the management side, we are suffering from such an intense pressure. The unions feel that only a bureaucrat in the shape of a Commissioner is standing between them and the goal of getting as much as possible by way of pay and allowances. I have a sad feeling sometime that the spirit of the challenge and idealism of self-government in the British regime is evaporating rapidly. The reasons as I list them are rising expectations and rising prices, lack of fear and lack of respect for officers,

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lack of dignity for labour and the unions self-motivated and political role.

I decided to make an appeal straight to the people. Two such appeals in the shape of newspaper advertisements came in quick succession. One was 'To whom does Calcutta Belong—the 33 thousand Corporation employees or the 33 lakh citizens?'. It was published on 9 April 1974. In this I gave an analysis of our revenue and expenditure. Own earnings were Rs. 12.55 crores, Government subvention Rs. 3.50 crores and our share from entry tax Rs. 2.33 crores, making a total of Rs. 18.38 crores. The expenses are: establishment Rs. 13.30 crores or 71 percent serving of loans Rs. 1.25 crores and public services Rs. 4.13 crores. After spending thus the whole of Rs. 18.38 crores, we are saddled with liabilities which we cannot discharge, namely Government loan Rs. 1.45 crores and Calcutta Improvement Trust and Howrah Bridge payments Rs. 3.90 crores. Besides, we have the old outstanding amount of Rs. 1.75 crores due to CIT. In 1969-70 we spent Rs. 4.17 crores in public services which in today's prices should be at least Rs. 6.25 crores. Against this our current public service expenditure has been a poor Rs. 4.13 crores.

### SMILE A DAY



The Amrita Bazar Patrika  
dated 12 April 1974

They should have given a  
'do-work' call instead.

The other advertisement was 'Quo Vadis Calcutta?' published a week ago on April 22. We did not mince matters. We

affirmed that the call for dharma-ghat (the pitcher of righteousness, as a strike is called in Bengal) was in reality a call for dharma-nash, or the subversion of dharma, and that it would be met by the loyal workers and the volunteering public in a new satyagraha, or quest for truth and by shramadan or donation of labour. Response from the people was electrifying—in letters, telephones, personal visits and opportunity given to me to address them in groups and clubs. I shall cite a few.

I got a letter from a top executive in the private sector: "About similar Corporations in India and abroad you will ... find the pattern different in case of institutions which function efficiently. ... If you do not get the cooperation, you and your fellow officers in the State Government should refuse to be seconded to service in the Municipal Corporation." An old Gandhian, now connected with a social service organization wrote to me: 'Slogans, shoutings and gherao continuing from 10 to 5 o'clock before your room have reached inhuman proportions. Such tyranny and harassment is an insult to citizens. Your advertisement has made the people sufficiently conscious. . . . I congratulate you for steadfastness to duty, determination and patience, not with a view to inflate your ego but to give you further strength and stability which can be put to the good of the nation and the country.'

Maitrayee Devi of the fame of Mangpote Rabindranath' (since of 'Na Hanyate' too) was gracious enough to write me a letter of affection and encouragement. I try an English rendering of her beautiful Bengali: 'The just rigour you have shown is rare in recent times. Nowadays we avoid unpleasantness by continuous appeasement. Who does not know that the Corporation has corrupt employees? Those sustained by tax-payers' money resort to strike off and on for selfish ends and create deadlock all over the country. Political parties dare not consider taking suitable action against them. Naturally inevitably, they will be ranged against you in this crusade. The talks of union leaders notwithstanding, they are recognizably holding the country to ransom. . . . Many who have lost faith in this self-destructive and foolish politics will support you. Let the armed legion of Krishna go over to them; Lord Krishna will himself be on your side, for you have the courage to proclaim the truth without pretence.'

From an old gentleman who worked under my dead father and saw me in younger days came a spirited letter which bucked me up: 'Such expression of patriotic feelings ... necessary when the country is in the depth of degradation—no less than during the Plassey days. We are now accustomed to bow

down to the violent and vocal few and sacrifice the masses.' But it has not been all bouquets and no brickbats. A nominated Anglo Indian Member of the Assembly took up the cudgel on behalf of the workers and told the house: 'It is unbecoming of a civil servant to issue such an advertisement. A civil servant must not take to a political role and a crazy publicity war.'

There have also been response and assurances from Rotary Clubs, Bharat Sevak Samaj, advocates and solicitors, Bharat Scouts and Guides, National Service Project of Education Ministry, civil servants, college professors, engineers and even Anchal Panchayats and Regional Councils in the periphery of the town. The essence of their message was a spontaneous promise of moral and, if necessary, physical support to me and others in the civic body for carrying on the service, despite all intimidation and interruption.

Let me go back in time and give you briefly the origin of the present trouble and the issues involved. A Deputy Commissioner gave temporary promotion to a few clerks outside the rules, although there were some such cases in the past. The promotions were cancelled by me, and it caused resentment in the union which wanted no interference. They came out with what appeared to be a declaration of their rights and the code of Corporation conduct, both rolled in one:

- (i) In the Corporation employees including officers have got officiating promotion, drawn full salary while officiating and retired from such promotion with full provident fund and retirement dues. That must continue.
- (ii) The Corporation cannot exist without workers and employees. In fact it exists for them, and other matters including officers (and by implicating service to rate payers) come thereafter. So no system can be tolerated in which adequate benefit is not ensured for employees.
- (iii) It is not the look-out of unions whether rules and regulations exist or not, whether and how regulations are framed or amended by the Municipal Service Commission, whether officiating or administrative arrangement is justified or not. Unions have to see that all available positions are filled up temporarily or otherwise. Any deviation will mean curtailment of existing rights which has to be fought.

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- (iv) The hardship of employees has gone up due to rising prices and other factors, and they are waiting for years for promotion. So promotion must be given here and now.
- (v) The Corporation has evolved certain working procedures and norms over the years. Convention is law, and such norms and law cannot be changed by the Commissioner or anybody else. If that were so, trade unions could be disbanded and the leaders could have gone home in a final salutation to him. But it could not be so, and if no solution is found out across the table, unions may be forced to meet the Commissioner on the maidan.

As I already mentioned, we do not spend any inconsiderable amount on our establishment and house-keeping expenses, nor do our employees fare unfavourably compared with Government servants and employees in undertakings. I present some selected indicators, regarding establishment charges and the wages of some categories. The first is shown as percentage of the total expenditure of the civic body, for us over the last 20 years, and currently against the municipal corporations of Madras and Delhi. For the second we have taken the mean pay and allowances of some categories at the lower end, both for us and some others in Bengal.

Corporation	Establishment Charges as %	
Calcutta	1957-58	40.9
	1966-67	45.2
	1972-73	65.5
	1973-74	70.6
	Madras	43.5
Delhi	46.1	

Mean Wages (Rs.)	Corporation of Calcutta	West Bengal Government	Durgapur Project
Unskilled labour	179	158	179
Orderly peon	235	158	205
Driver	350	265	281
Junior Clerk	340	328	281

The war of attrition in the Indian Airlines, the lock-out declared by its Chairman Air Marshall P. C. Lal, and the collapse of the strike may evoke some parallel study with our Corporation. The

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former has a limited and affluent clientele as also better skilled and better paid staff, whereas we have more people in the lower end of the spectrum who are overwhelmingly unskilled and lowly paid. Our job requirement also covers life in its entire span from the maternity centre and birth certificates at one end to the crematorium and death certificates at the other.

In his attempt to resolve the conflict, Chairman of the Airlines had first to take stock of the wasteful practices obtaining in his organization. We have also done a bit of homework. Let us take the motor vehicles department first which is the backbone of our conservancy department: this department being responsible for garbage removal is first disrupted in any conflict. We have 368 drivers but only 110 vehicles. Even then, we may be obliged to let the car chauffeurs go out for lunch with the car. The damage may run to 3 litres of petrol costing about Rs. 10/-. Similarly we may not avoid keeping the lorry drivers continuously on the vehicle, still getting bulk of the job done outside the eight hours of duty. Result: An allowance of Rs. 7/- for snacks and a much larger amount as overtime. A practice has grown by which the extra payment for overtime is obligatory. For example, the driver of a pay-loader will resent working, unless booked on the job from six o'clock in the morning, although the actual work starts two hours later.

We also cut a sorry figure in the maintenance and repairs of our vehicles. To pull out the workers and mechanics from their sluggish approach, we launched in the first week of March a vigorous and time-bound campaign for the repair of 100 vehicles in three months. A lot of fanfare and bon homie went into it. The campaign was also given an imaginative name 'Operation Phoenix' in the hope that our vehicles would rise from the old engine and chassis like the mythical bird from its own ashes. The result: union rivalry and conflicting claims of over time after a while and only 13 vehicles repaired in these two months.

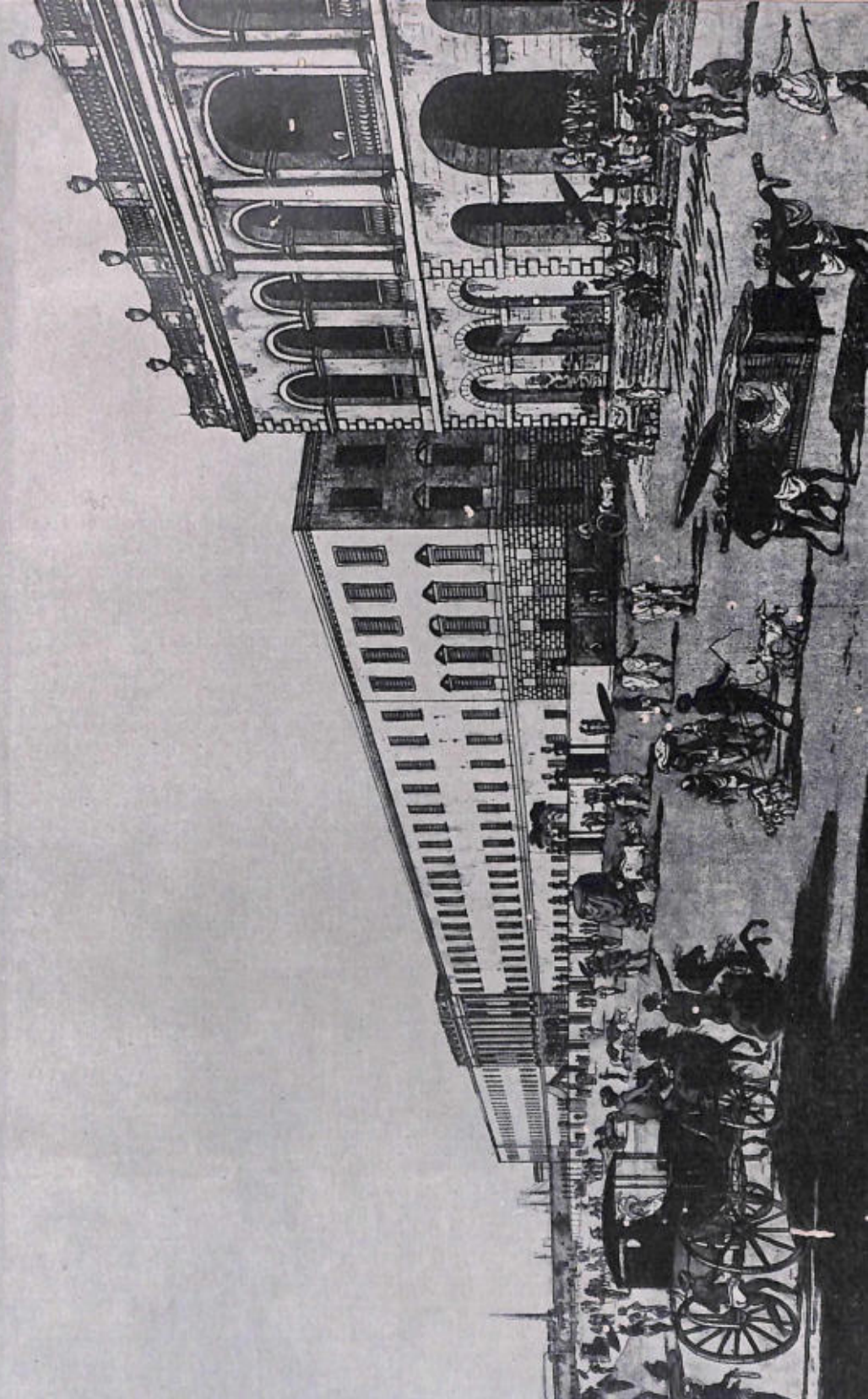
In Entaily workshop, another important unit for the manufacture of spares, and repairs to various equipment, there is supposed to be the capacity of 10 hand carts per day. The outturn is only two, although these handcarts are the primary equipment for collection and removal of garbage. The alibi is of raw material shortage. On checking up we found that 74% raw materials were available, but we have no answer to the question why output is only 25%. The workers demand a full fledged canteen with substantial subsidy in place of the existing tiffin room which only is our statutory obligation. We have therefore to be clear in our mind whether we should go beyond the obligation in such showing of output.

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Whenever there is a significant conflict in such a complex organization, the workers can 'work to rule' sticking to their fractionated work in the entire assembly line. The practice can be taken to lengths which may stop the assembly line altogether. For example, for a few days in January the peons ceased work but not the clerks. The collection ledgers on which head clerks are to work are taken out of the alimirahs by peons and put on their tables. The head-clerks sat quietly, saying that it was contrary to trade-union practice to meddle in some one else's job and when the Collector, the head of the department asked some junior officials to distribute the ledgers to the 16 head-clerks, they also declined. The Collector then carried the books himself to the tables for the work to start. I also had the privilege of such encroachment into some one else's area of duty during the same turmoil. I took a type-writer and a basket of files to work at home. On return, I carried them myself to my room up the flight of stairs, without embarrassing any of my clerical or personal staff.

To go on with the present story, the unions retaliated to my advertisements by the call of a token strike on April 25. They resented my going to the people over their head. They might have had particular objection to my second advertisement of April 22, as two days earlier they obtained an appeal from Minister to withdraw the strike notice. Fortified by the general support and the promise of voluntary running of deep tubewells and sewerage pumping stations, removal of garbage and switching of street lights, we were determined to keep the essential services running. The unions at this stage made a move which was both a coup de theatre and a climbdown. They obtained a written assurance from the Minister on April 20 that he was sympathetic to the demands of unions and did not believe in punishing workers. He affirmed that, if there were any disciplinary cases arising out of the trade union actions, those would be quickly disposed of and he would personally sit with the Sangram Committee of the unions to come to a satisfactory solution on all matters. He concluded by making an appeal to the Sangram Committee to get the strike called off.

The Unions considered the Minister's appeal but decided only to postpone the strike by one month by which time they should obtain satisfaction from the authorities. The climbdown is therefore only for a firmer ground for the next jump-off and the sword of Damocles is kept ominously hanging. I do not know what course future developments would take. On one thing however I am sure. We have to take a firm stand one time or the other—the earlier, the better. Temporary peace bought by a



#### CALCUTTA 1786

A drawing of Writers' Buildings in aquatint by Thomas Daniell in 1786. His 'Twelve views of Calcutta' and jointly with nephew William 'Oriental Seminary' have left for the posterity a vivid record of what Calcutta looked like in pre-camera days.

What they call Secretariat or Sachivalay elsewhere we call Writers' Buildings. The name is derived from the 'writers' of the East India Company—analagous to modern 'executive trainees'—who on arrival from England were trained for important positions in British Settlements. After the battle of Plassey when larger number of writers started arriving, the building complex was used for their residential accomodation. The Fort William College established by Lord Wellesley in 1800 was housed here for sometime. Later on, after repairs and renovations, the buildings became the administrative headquarters of the Province of Bengal. On the top of the three-storied buildings are four figures symbolising Science, Agriculture, Commerce and Justice.

The buildings are on the north of the Great Tank or 'Lal Dighi', the good water of which prompted the English to choose the site for their settlement. Later on, the tank was named Dalhousie Square after Earl (Marquess) of Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India (1848-56) and the term came to be synonymous with political and commercial power. It is only on 19 November 1969 that the square was renamed by the West Bengal Government as 'Binay-Badal-Dinesh Bag' in honour of three youths, hardly out of teens, who laid their lives in freedom fight: Binay Krishna Bose (born 11.9.1908—self immolation 13.12.1930), Badal Gupta (born 1912—self immolation 8.12.1930) and Dinesh Gupta (born 6.12.1911—hanged 7.7.1931). Earlier on 31 May 1969 the Calcutta Corporation put up a memorial tablet for the three on the southern footpath of BBD Bag.

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few concessions here and there, as has happened from the beginning of the supersession, will not lead us far. We have to ponder the staff problem in a proper perspective and make some hard decisions. If we fail to do so, it will only reveal the bankruptcy of a management, saddled with the responsibility of house-keeping for this great city. The authorities have to infuse proper ideas into themselves and among the workers. Otherwise the day is not far off when taps will turn dry, streets will swim in sewerage and wards will be buried in garbage.

## MANAGING THE CIVIC SERVICES

I am indeed grateful to the members of the All Nations Club for calling me and my wife to the dinner meeting this evening and for giving me this opportunity as the Chief Guest to talk to you about the Corporation and its activities. I dare say the subject is apt, for your invitation was conveyed to me by Mr. Keshab Chandra Basu, ex-Mayor of Calcutta and ex-Speaker, West Bengal. It is also gratifying to have a cross-section of India in this gathering.

Verily Calcutta is a cosmos, and urbanization as a process towards the building of a cosmopolitan and universal society has found fulfilment in this city of ours. Nursed in the universalism of this city, Tagore gave the finest expression of the spirit of assimilation in two of his noblest poems 'Bharat-tirtha' and 'Bharat-Vidhata'. In the former he talked of the West opening its door in a quest of giving and taking, of uniting and harmonising and not turning away, on this shore of India's noble humanity. In the latter which is now our national song, Tagore talked of the East and the West joining at the throne of India and threading the garland of love. This call for cosmopolitanism and synthesis is what prevailed the atmosphere of Calcutta since its founding by the Factor of the British East India Company. Although the Britishers are gone today, Calcutta has its citizens hailing from almost the whole of India.

With the growth of the city, its municipal administration grew. The electoral system was successively given prominence in the Acts of 1876 and 1888. But there was a retrograde measure in the Mackenzie Act of 1899. The administration of the municipal corporation was vested in three co-ordinate authorities: The Corporation, the General Committee and the Chairman. The Corporation consisted of, besides the Government appointed Chairman, 25 ward commissioners elected by rate-payers and 25 others appointed by interested bodies like the Chamber of Commerce, the Port Trust and the Trade Association. The General Committee consisted of the Chairman and 12 Commissioners, four of whom were representatives of Ward Commissioners, four of the appointed Commissioners and the remaining four nominated directly by Government. The entire executive power was with the Chairman. This raised many protests, but

\* Address before All Nations Club, Calcutta, 24 July 1974.

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democratization had to await the framing of the Calcutta Municipal Act 1923 by Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee. It was next changed in 1951 after Independence and it is under this Act that we function today.

Concepts in civic administration have necessarily changed from time to time as they have from the original body under Government surveillance to the adult franchise of today or from the local self government of 1923 to municipal services of 1972 (when the Government department was renamed). In the 1951 Act we inbibed a lot of the ideas and style of the American City Manager and thinkings on a properly oriented goal for the purposes of policy making, prespective plan as well as plan implementation.

The way in which I took at it is that there are two opposing trends in municipal governance and organization of services. One is the micro-level personal services of which the big three are (i) the distribution of water, (ii) the construction and maintenance of drains and sewers and (iii) sanitation, conservancy and refuse collection. Notable among the remaining services affecting the individual are (i) electricity and street lights, (ii) roads, foot-paths and parking areas—their repairs, construction and improvement, (iii) immunisation dispensaries, child health and maternity services, and (iv) education, reading rooms etc.

The other trend of municipal activity is in the growth and development of infra-structures through largescale capital expenditure. These are a priori at the macro or impersonal level, but eventually come to affect the individual. We may list some to them: (i) water mains and water works, (ii) trunk sewers and sewage disposal, (iii) refuse disposal and treatment (iv) construction of new neighbourhoods, arterial roads and bridges.

A few more which are not handled by all municipalities, for example not by us, are the supply of electric power, large scale housing and transport facilities. Even though such functions were carried out by many large local bodies, they are gradually being taken up by some special bodies. For example in Delhi, electricity and transport were Corporation departments and then re-structured into corporation undertakings, but now converted into full-fledged Government undertakings like Delhi Electricity Supply Undertaking (DESU) and Delhi Transport Undertaking (DTU). There water supply and sewage disposal is, however, a Corporation undertaking still.

I talked of the trends as opposing each other, because these

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are two types of activities, involving different order of viability, technologies, financial operation and budgetary techniques. This much for the theory and the philosophy. You may be more interested if I come down to brass tacks and tell you how work is organized in the Calcutta Corporation.

Besides the Commissioner who is the Chief Executive, we have three or four Deputy Commissioners and half a dozen other Controlling Officers for specialised services and functions. They are delegated all powers of the Commissioner except those which, under the Calcutta Municipal Act, are not delegatable. The scheme and construction of the C.M. Act is of over-centralisation. About 40 percent of the sections make specific mention of the Commissioner saying that he shall or shall not do one thing or another. Then there is Section 34 which says that he is not competent to sanction expenditure above Rs. 25,000 or he must himself give all or appointments between Rs. 150 and 700 per month. He is seriously tied down in financial and personnel matters, many of petty nature. The escape clause is the provision of Special Deputy Commissioner which was introduced in 1961 by an amendment. Under this provision the Commissioner can assign one or more departments to Special Deputy Commissioners, whereupon they can exercise all powers of the Commissioner, notwithstanding Section 34. In a recent reorganization, utmost use is being made by us of this escape clause.

Now to tell you about the grouping of departments under these officers. I would first put the services and allied functions in three categories, namely (i) the hardcore or heavy services, e.g. water, drainage and garbage and the maintenance of supplies (ii) lighter or peripheral services and (iii) financial and house keeping matters. I shall present hard-core services under three functionaries namely Chief Engineer, Special Deputy Commissioner of Conservancy and the Special Deputy Commissioner of Supplies. Chief Engineer has water works, drainage, engineering wing of the municipal districts and sub-districts, as also asphaltum or road making section, electricity and lighting.

Two Special Deputy Commissioners are recently brought into being one is solely and exclusively in charge of conservancy, i.e. all matters relating to solid waste disposal for the city. His directorate arranges the removal of garbage including the placement of our conservancy vehicles as well as those from outside or contractors and is responsible for the conservancy wing of districts and sub-districts, the supporting wings of workshop, motor vehicles department and the Calcutta Corporation Railway for the dumping of garbage at Dhapa and Bantala by diesel driven wagons. The other viz. Special Deputy Commissioner of Supplies is

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responsible for stores and purchase through his directorate and provides the critical back-up support for these as well as other sectors.

For peripheral or allied services which are also essential for the city life, I would mention the Deputy Commissioners for Buildings and Properties departments and the Health Officer. Deputy Commissioner for Buildings is in charge of building regulation and prevention of unauthorised constructions and functions through the City Architect. Deputy Commissioner for Properties is responsible for the development and control of land and colonies in the Corporation area, functioning through Chief Valuer and Surveyor and for the running and development of municipal markets, functioning through the 10 market superintendents.

The Health Officer looks after hospitals and maternity homes, dispensaries and chest clinics, burning ghats and burial grounds, mosquito and malaria control, slaughter houses, the work of public analysts and in relation to the prevention of food adulteration. He functions territorially through District Health Officers, whose main thrust of work is in inoculation and vaccination and checking, unhygienic or obnoxious running of premises factories etc.

The third category of financial and house-keeping matters I shall introduce through the Deputy Commissioner of Revenue, the Deputy Commissioner for Personnel and Legal matters, the Finance Officer & Chief Accountant and the Secretary. The former is in charge of assessment, collection, licence, Tollygunge tax department, amusement section and the data processing unit, respectively through Assessor, Collector, Licence Officer, Deputy Collector-cum-Assessor, Amusement Officers and Data Processing Officer. As the names imply the Assessor values and revalues properties in the city and determines the house-tax to be paid. Collector sends out bills and effect collection. For Tollygunge which came to us as late as in 1953, its original system under the municipality is kept intact with some modification and both assessment and collection are in one hand. The Licence Officer collects miscellaneous dues like tax on trades, advertisements, cart registration, parking of cars etc. The Amusement Officers collect show taxes from theatres, cinemas, circuses etc. DPO is a new addition to the family after mechanisation of our rate accounting system and gets the house-tax bills prepared in punch cards by IBM machines.

The Deputy Commissioner for Personnel handles broad matters relating to personnel and workers' unions, and is also given the associated subject of law and education. In the last sphere he

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operates through Education Officer for the 270 free primary schools for boys and girls.

The Finance Officer and Chief Accountant is in charge of budget and accounts, establishment and audit, ways and means, estimates, tenders, bills, provident fund etc. and is supported by Deputy Chief Accountants. The Treasury, a related department is however under a Deputy Commissioner who operates through Treasurer. Secretary to the Corporation is for several housekeeping matters e.g. building, furniture etc. as also for Library, Corporation Press, the Municipal Gazette and Publicity. He has under him the Librarian, the Press Superintendent, the Editor of the Gazette and the Press and Public Relations Officer.

We have specific problems for specific departments, some technological, some managerial and some purely in human relationship. Admittedly labour indiscipline and the multiplicity of unions (the correct number at any point of time is difficult to give, but at a pinch it would be between 75 and 80) plague us most. We are continuously accused of inefficiency and corruption. Taking these in our stride, I venture to say that there is now a determined effort to modernise and improve this large and historical organization. In today's context we have also to coordinate with Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority, CIT and Metropolitan Transport Project (Tube Railway). With the former two we have large unresolved problems of the take over and maintenance of the assets they are creating in the town e.g. deep tube wells, wider roads, powerful lamps etc. I raised the problem with the people of Calcutta in a recent advertisement: today our dilemma is that, owing to total lack of funds, we may not bring into public service assets worth a crore simply for want of a few lakhs of rupees for annual maintenance.

We have been going about our job in water supply and sewerage too. In the sewerage and drainage sector the remodelling and improvement of major pumping stations at Ballygunge, Palmer Bazar and Maniktala is going apace, and suitable attention is given to the minor stations like Mominpur, Topsia, Chetla and Dhapa locks. In all these CMDA is doing solid and silent work. For the monsoons we have detailed arrangement for pumping out accumulated water from the city and emergency tie-up with the Civil Defence Organization.

People may not however be understanding and patient all the time. That is what is reflected in a Bengali paper of today which displays a cartoon on the front page: 'A donkey never takes water without first muddying it', and without leaving anything to the imagination of the people stamped the donkey as "Cor-

## MANAGING THE CIVIC SERVICES

poration'. The reference is to the turbid water which is being supplied for the last two or three days through the taps. We had full investigation made into the matter and the reason is that the sudden rise in solid content due to rain washings from upstream was not treated with adequate alum in our Palta water works. Somebody slipped no doubt and we are taking action. We also gave a press note that there was no risk of contamination or infection. But as I admitted, people feel that they have put up too much and too long with a body which requires to be rejuvenated and made more responsive to their needs. It is precisely with this objective that we, who are temporarily placed in charge of this great institution and this great city during this period of supersession, shall continue to endeavour. We crave all your support and constructive criticism.



Jugantar dated 24 July 1974

## CALCUTTA—PROBLEMS & PROSPECTS

THE Calcutta Corporation today is a superseded body in the sense that the councillors and aldermen are no longer functioning. Their place is taken by the Administrator, a veteran civilian sent by Government. The appointment of Administrator takes place under Section 47D of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951, although the word 'Administrator' does not find place there or anywhere in the Act. The section sets out the consequence of supersession in the following words: 'all the powers and duties which may under . . . this act or any other . . . be exercised and performed by the Councillors and Aldermen or members of standing or other Committees, shall be performed by such person or persons as the State Government may direct.' Administrator is the afore-said 'person'.

There is another top executive in the Corporation, but he belongs to the permanent set-up and is by design and law the Chief Executive Officer. Under Section 19 of the Act, the State Government shall appoint either a person who is or has been a Government officer or any other person in consultation with the Public Service Commission as the Commissioner. Under Section 28, the entire executive power is vested in the Commissioner and under Section 36 'all municipal officers and servants shall be subordinate to the Commissioner who shall prescribe the duties of, and exercise supervision and control over, such officers and servants.'

Since May 1974 the Administrator of the Corporation had been lying seriously ill and, under Government orders, I had to combine the current duties of the post with mine as Commissioner, to the extent possible. I mention 'to the extent possible', for under the law the mixing of powers at the different levels of authorities is not encouraged, and almost not permissible. Section 24 of the Act stipulates: ' . . . the Municipal Government of Calcutta shall vest in the Corporation, but the Corporation shall not be entitled to exercise or discharge any powers, duties or functions expressly assigned . . . to a Standing Committee or to the Commissioner.' However that may be, by a Government order I am authorised to take some emergent decisions as well as certain actions which are necessary to carry on the municipal governance. Today and for some time past, therefore, the Com-

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\* Talk before Calcutta Management Association, 14 October 1974 and published in CMA News Letter, October 1974.

missioner alone is the functionary responsive to the public and all authorities rolled into one. But this is an unusual arrangement and we hope the appointment of the pucca Administrator will take place any time now, as the turmoil is over.

The public is aware of the recent events in the Corporation, especially the declaration of a partial lockout on the 30th September to meet the eventuality of an all-out, general strike on the 1st October. The strike dramatically collapsed in twelve hours. The genesis of the problem is not with the workers of the Corporation but with its clerks. They demanded that all vacancies should be filled, that there should be no appraisal of performance and that all promotions and increments should be granted immediately. To elaborate this point, let me recount the story of the last few months.

We were getting cooperation from the bulk of 33,000 employees, support from most of the unions and blessings from Sangram Committee, the apex body of the unions. But a set of people closest to the process of deliberations saw in our efforts a systematic attempt to destroy their so-called rights. The Clerks' Union found, in my first confrontation with the Jamadars and Peons Association in mid-January, a development uncongenial to their activities. When the peons started cease-work, it is the Clerks' Union which on a plea of work-to-rule impeded the collection of taxes for about a week. We carried out our decision of pay-cut on peons, thanks to the moderating influence of the Sangram Committee.

The Clerks' Union did not however take to this development kindly. In the beginning of April they came up with demands that officiating promotions must be given to employees, regardless of the requirement or regulations. I had to take the issue to the people in two advertisements, 'To whom does Calcutta Belong—33 thousand Corporation Employees or 33 lakh citizens?' and 'Quo Vadis Calcutta?' In the first issue on the 9th April I told that Rs. 13 crores was being paid for pay, allowances etc. of employees against Rs. 4.13 crores only for public services, while the Corporation's own earning was only Rs. 12.5 crores augmented by Government subvention and grant of Rs. 5.8 crores. Overwhelming was the people's reply that civic services must not be further curtailed to pacify the employees. The Clerks' Union's reply was a threat of total strike from the 25th April. Then came my second advertisement of the 22nd April calling the people to keep services running by self-help.

The Clerks' Union deferred the general strike by a month in anti-

## THE CORPORATION RUNS

icipation of settlement by the Minister. In a meeting with Sangram Committee on the 20th May the Minister gave two of the Union's members ad-hoc promotions and indicated that promotions and grade revisions would be expedited. His commitment in black and white was however limited to 'implementation in principle' and 'discussion of issues', leaving anomalies or disputes to be sorted out by the Commissioner with the Sangram Committee.

The Clerks' Union called off the strike on the 22nd May and we started negotiations with the Sangram Committee. The Union, however, felt that they were being deprived of what the Minister had clearly offered and their plea was that they were not bound by any decision arrived at with the Sangram Committee. They came up on the 17th July with a new set of 14 point demands, failing the settlement of which they would start an indefinite movement from the 23rd. I replied that three of the demands had already been settled, eight were abstract objectives, not capable of immediate solution round the table and only three were concrete demands which we could take up for discussion through the Sangram Committee. The eight abstract demands were (i) maintenance of the local self-government character of the Corporation, (ii) maintenance of rule of law, (iii) power to the Administrative Committee with equal share to employees, (iv) anything agreed on a point, agreement or decision to be implemented without any question of delay, (v) rights and privileges of employees, by convention or otherwise, to be maintained and extended, (vi) such rights to be ensured if better service to be given to citizens, (vii) working atmosphere in the Press Department for its better running and service and (viii) similar attention to other departments with emphasis on re-organisation.

The Clerks' Union was apparently not convinced by my letter and started on the 26th July an indefinite 'dharna' by four executives before my room from 10.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. They would sign attendance registers, but remain continuously on the sit-in, away from their desk and work, and shout pungent slogans. The movement was stepped up from time to time by new batches as also by work-to-rule and cessation of work.

The four leaders were asked to take leave, but they refused, saying that their duty as trade union executives must be recognized as their duty as employees. On the 14th August I passed an order of pay-cut on them. The Clerks' Union retaliated by cease-work, first unofficially from the 17th and then officially and by declaration from the 22nd. It paralyzed the collection of rates and taxes. From the daily average of Rs. 3 lakhs, collection fell to Rs. 27,000. Baliffs of the Collection Department tried to deposit the collection in hand into the Corporation Treasury, but

clerks prevented. Bailiffs could not therefore go for further outdoor collection.

The Corporation Treasury became empty at the end of August. There was Rs. 10 lakhs only and we got from Government Rs. 50 lakhs. Our requirement was Rs. 88 lakhs for payment of wages alone—Rs. 40 lakhs for 22,000 labour, Rs. 8 lakhs for 3000 factory workers and Rs. 40 lakhs for 8000 officials and staff, including 1500 members of the Clerks' Union. We had to defer the payment of salary to officers and staff, and start disbursement for labour and factory workers only.

The Commissioner is essentially a lone man in the Corporation. Whenever a deputationist comes and tries his hand to improve the services and introduce discipline, there is a milling crowd to his room with a mouthful of slogans. It makes even routine work difficult, not to speak of deliberative decisions. During the last Puja there was a collapse of conservancy service, due to the same trade union conflict and labour demand. We were however determined to organize ourselves and keep the civic services in reasonable running this time.

I made a radio broadcast and press conference on this line on September 2, 1974. The culmination which came on October 1 and the gathering of storm in the intervening month I shall attempt to give in a brief outline.

On September 9 we started the disbursement of salary after nine days' delay and that too after imposing pay-cut on the striking clerks. The Clerks Union retaliated by pay boycott and indefinite hunger strike. Officers, unaccustomed though they were, completed the disbursement in a week. To solve our collection problem as well as to mitigate the hardship of tax-payers we approached first the United Bank of India and the State Bank of India, and then other nationalised banks, to collect the taxes and fees tendered by the public. They showed some interest in the beginning, but by the middle of September it became clear that the management was helpless in the face of opposition by staff unions.

We had therefore to try a new approach. On September 17 the hunger strike was withdrawn by the Clerks' Union in view of the notice for general strike on and from October 1, which was served by all the 80 unions and Sangram Committee. Next day, according to a plan carefully worked out by us, we tried to open collection counters in the council chamber of the Corporation. It failed as my officers and I were physically blocked at the en-

## THE CORPORATION RUNS

trance of the chamber. We came back under deafening cries of 'Shame, shame', 'Commissioner keep out'! But the stage was set for the real drama in my office where other officers had already collected many protesting ratepayers who came to deposit the taxes. Our netting operation was successful and gave us a catch of Rs. 2 lakhs. Working on this idea we opened the next day collection counters run entirely by officers in the Writers Buildings and a few days later ward counters in South Calcutta. There was an unprecedented response from the people who stood in long queues to deposit the dues. Our collection till September 28, the last day of such extra-territorial operation, was Rs. 4 to 5 lakhs per day.

### SMILE A DAY



The Amrita Bazar Patrika  
dated 15 September 1974

We warn you... we'll cease  
work from October! if ....!

In the meanwhile we got busy with the preparation for the threatened general strike. We requisitioned members of the Civil Mobile Emergency Force, the National Volunteer Force and the Army for running the essential services. We were particularly determined not to suffer any dislocation at the Palta-Tala complex for water supply, Mallickghat station for pumping unfiltered water and drainage pumping stations at Ballygunge and Palmer Bazar. The force reported accordingly to the places by the evening of September 29.

We also had to consolidate on another front. When before the last Puja there had been a threat of general strike, work in the

Corporation was declared essential services under rule 119 of the Defence of India Rules. Any desertion or dereliction of duty could therefore be punished with fine and imprisonment. Nevertheless in the context of the larger threat this time, we proposed to Government another order under rule 118 of DIR, banning strike in the Corporation on the analogy of the railways. An officer was sent on September 28 to Delhi and came back the same day with an order from the Government of India banning strike in the Corporation for six months. The same day the Labour-Commissioner tried to conciliate between us and the Sangram Committee, but there was no success, as the Unions wanted the pay-cut to be withdrawn first.

On September 30 a few senior officers and I arrived at 6 a.m. in the Central Municipal office and locked it out against the agitating employees. It was an unprecedented and surprise move, and prevented the vanguard of the strikers from taking possession of the Central building and paralyzing anti-strike arrangements, as they could on all previous occasions. Unions had hurried consultations throughout the day and late at night, apart from condemning the ethics of the 'lock-out', could only think of another measure: unilateral exemption of water-supply, crematoria, ambulance service and hospitals from the scope of the all-out general strike.

On the 1st October the inevitable happened. The strike started from sunrise. Thanks to the careful preparation, the help from youth volunteers and general public and the mohulla meetings held by the Municipal Minister, conservancy lorries moved, tube-wells were run, water supply was maintained and offices were kept open. Workers' attendance varied from 50 to 75 per cent. Then there was an equally dramatic denouement. At sunset the Sangram Committee called off the strike unconditionally.

Peaceful and workable atmosphere returned almost immediately to the Corporation. According to the withdrawal notice of the strike, the unions and the Sangram Committee left all unresolved issues in the hands of the Minister, requesting him to give an award including inter alia the Corporation's right to transact business through the banks, for example to collect revenues. But a more vital element is the proposal to set up a personnel department to administer all matters relating to the staff of the Corporation.

The Corporation has 33,000 employees of which as many as 22,000 work in the conservancy section. For their appointment and automatic replacement there exists a 'panel system' but

## THE CORPORATION RUN!

there are no rules of work, leave or superannuation. As a matter of fact the Act provides that Commissioner must deal personally with all employees earning over 150/- and all expenditure above 5000/-. In normal circumstances therefore the over-burdened Commissioner is confronted with a fait accompli by the councillors or the unions, the latter numbering as many as 75 or more. In unusual circumstances, as in the present superseded state, the pressure is more intense, since to make the Commissioner or better the Administrator—agree to their demands by hook or by crook is the shortest cut to their success.

The financial position of the Corporation is also poor, partly because arrears accumulate. These charges may be increased with Government sanction, but before that the Corporation has the task of establishing its credibility before the citizens of Calcutta and to ensure that no part of the money badly needed in civic services is diverted elsewhere including the increased wages of workers.

The Corporation with its various divisions is a highly compartmentalised body, but administratively it ought to be treated as a whole and a principle of uniformity has to be applied. It is essential that the Corporation acquire the competence for modern city management by systems improvement, by doing away with most of its ancient ills and by the introduction of modern methods. This would provide a way of reinforcing existing monetary incentives for the greater motivation of the Corporation workers.

The present administrative arrangement can continue only temporarily as a kind of caretaker arrangement. Also, modern functional departments could be incorporated in the Corporation, but these would have to be properly 'grafted'. The first thing however was to ensure some minimum discipline and re-acquisition of credibility through limited but concrete improvements.

The Corporation basically provides a domestic housekeeping service and therefore does not require long-range planning, as in industry, or overcoming technological problems, as in agriculture. Its success would require a short-run but determined effort. Civic services are needed for a cluster of men living together so that utility and orderliness are brought to the common abode. But they are at the same time routine and repetitive—the daily cleaning, the continuous generation and supply of water, the attention to running and repairs round the clock and what not. Whatever is repetitive generates boredom and tends to bring laxity. That is why, by drill, discipline and devotion, we have to ensure that the daily chores are performed correctly and the essentials of house-keeping are not in any manner subverted.

## CORPORATION CLEANUP—IN OFFICES & FIELDS\*

In facing this brave band of lions, I am reminded of the story of Androcles and the Lion. The poor Christian was thrown into the amphitheatre to face the hungry lion. Before however the latter could take a mouthful of Androcles, he reached the lion's ear and whispered something. The lion lost appetite and allowed Androcles to coexist. The secret, as it came to be found out, is that Androcles warned the lion that he had to give an after-dinner speech. Tonight fortunately I have to go with the lions to the table—to eat and not to be eaten and that too after the speech and not before!

I am however not a total stranger among the lions. Last year soon after my loud thinking on newspapers entitled 'To whom does Calcutta Belong?' and 'Quo Vadis, Calcutta?' I was in a Lions Club anniversary celebration for the eating part only. For the talking part a very distinguished gentleman was brought in as the Chief Guest. As soon as he spotted me occupying a front chair, he beckoned to me and I respectfully went over. "City Father, how is your Corporation now? Have the workers learnt their lesson and are now on the job?", he demanded. I meekly suggested "Call me city grandfather, Sir, for I am verily the Dhritarashtra of Kaliyuga and the battle of Kurukshetra is just joined". The honorable chief guest chuckled and I gave him quite a mouthful of my trials and tribulations. It was time for him to ascend the dais and he did so after donning the pair of dentures. I came back and found it convenient to occupy a back chair.

The chief guest underwent a transformation in his mien and voice and roared 'Lions and lionesses'. As he warmed up he referred to his young and energetic friend sitting in front of him who had been trying valiantly to improve the Corporation. He commended my strategy to take the people in confidence and confided that he had been watching my steps with great interest. But, and 'buts' abounded in his speech, things have a tendency to remain where they are—whether potholes on roads, or a whole street of missing lamps or the garbage round the corner with its phases of wax and wane or the baldy park siting cottage industries exhibition, swadeshi mela et al in an unending procession.

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\* Address at a joint meeting of Lions Clubs of Calcutta Metropolitan, Calcutta Behala and Calcutta Central, 8 January 1975.

## THE CORPORATION RUNS

At the end of the meeting I walked up to the chief host and told him that the evening session had two morals for me. One, before opening your mouth to the chief guest of the evening, be sure whether he has his denture on or off. Secondly, if you want to take a back seat, do so in the beginning.

I have been asked tonight to give a talk on the working of the Corporation in the peaceful condition that prevails now after the collapse of the general strike on October 1, 1974 and particularly to elucidate what clean-up or improvement is being effected in the central office as well as in outlying offices and field work. The story of dharna, demonstrations, ceasework, complete cessation of work, lockout, notification under Defence of India Rules (DIR), general strike and withdrawal in 12 hours is only three months old and still fresh in public memory. Rights that we won on the battle field have to be conserved and consolidated in the office tables and workers' benches. We won the right to manage and I would call this a unique win, as no punitive action was taken against a single person, armed though we were with what may be called draconian powers. But I want the audience to remember that we did not and do not have any magic wand in our hand to improve matters overnight. The battle with trade unions was essentially a battle of wits and now the battle for betterment in civic services has to be a battle of reasonableness and minimum discipline so that we can make the workers give their best.

When the workers called off the general strike unconditionally, they left the issues to be settled by the Municipal Services Minister. The Minister gave his award on October 7, 1974. What I consider most important in this award are: need for modernising management, the desirability of revenue operation through banks and acceptance of the principle of 'no work no pay'. Several chronic and long drawn out staff matters also featured in the Minister's award e.g. triple benefit pension scheme, medical facilities on government scale, minimum wages of Rs. 250, three-tier promotion, dearness and house-rent allowance at Central Government rates, education allowance for employees' children etc. Minister accepted some in principle and for some desired further examination, but we need not go into the details.

To study the post-strike situation, it is however necessary to quote the basic portions of the document in extenso, Let me do so first:

"... the undersigned recommends to the Corporation the setting up of a central Personnel department which will

## CORPORATION CLEANUP—IN OFFICES & FIELDS

take over all personnel, establishment and industrial relation matters which are being dealt with presently in a scattered manner by various departments. It is awarded that all appointments, confirmation, seniority, promotion and transfer should be on the basis of Corporation as a whole for a particular category of employees to the extent possible. To start with, the Personnel department will be set up under a Deputy Commissioner with a Personnel Officer and a few key personnel to be drafted from the existing departments concerned along with the work to be taken over from them with special arrangement for Conservancy Directorate which has the bulk of Corporation employees. The Minister recognises the need for laying down a rational personnel policy based on modern management technique as well as for evolving a suitable machinery for prompt and expeditious settlement of disputes and grievances. The existing arrangement may therefore be examined by a special body or agency which will make recommendations about the personnel policy including grievance procedure and the setting up of a competent personnel department. The undersigned expects that trade unions should extend their whole hearted co-operation to the Corporation authorities in any such attempt for the rationalisation of personnel matters which would involve some readjustment of the existing manpower. . . . .

"Since the strike resorted to under the direction of the Clerks Union and the general strike by the Sangram Committee are both illegal and unjustified, the principle of 'no work no pay' will be followed for the period of cease work including that of lock-out. In view, however, of the prompt withdrawal of the general strike, it is awarded that the Corporation will condone the irregularity of their one day strike and not take any action against any workmen including pay cut for the day namely 1.10.74. . . . .

"With a view to mitigate hardship to workmen, the Corporation authorities, . . . shall permit the workmen who had resorted to cease work to submit individual applications praying for privilege/earned leave for the requisite period, whereupon absence during the cease work would be adjusted against the leave due. If however no such leave was due in any case on 21.8.74, the period of cease work will be regularised by way of adjustment against the future accrual of leave as a very special case which shall not be quoted as precedent in the future. . . . .

"The diversification of revenue operation through banks on a limited scale is agreed to as an aid to the collection of

## THE CORPORATION RUNS

bills as well as for better and enlarged service to the citizens. ....

"... . . Puja advance (inclusive of ex-gratia payment) will be made on the same rate and pattern as in the last year. Of the amount so payable, 8 per cent will be paid before the Pujas and 20 per cent by 31.12.74. Before the December instalment is released the city should be brought to a reasonable state of cleanliness and the minimum of three trips per shift per conservancy lorry be enforced on the conservancy side, and Rs. 2 crores of arrear consolidated rates should be realised on the collection side. ....

"In making this pronouncement the undersigned appeals to all employees of the Corporation to give their best in making the Corporation an effective and viable institution so that it can render best services to the community. He believes that an amicable settlement of the present dispute and the spirit in which this Award is made and expected to be implemented would usher in a new period of peace and co-operation in place of conflict and confrontation."

Now to give you an idea of the spectrum of our work with the battle clouds melted, I should first choose the most conspicuous and important sectors of our field-work namely, conservancy, water supply, drainage and sewerage and road repairs.

In the conservancy department a determined effort is being made for quicker repairs to running lorries, augmentation of the fleet by new purchases and renovating the roads to and within dumping grounds. In these matters we are getting support to the extent possible from CMDA and World Bank. The Calcutta State Transport Corporation have quite a few old buses which may not run as such but might give us service on conversion into garbage lorries. We are having a dialogue with them. For easing congestion on the dumping grounds, we welcome Government and private concerns to get land and garbage from us and set up mechanical composting plants. Apart from local parties, including the West Bengal Agro-Industries Corporation, we have some recent inquiries from a French firm Trigga which manufacture composting machineries. The firm has the symbol of a rose and sent us their lady representative. Let us hope that such a touch of beauty will do good to our garbage. It is also heartening that our garbage lorries which used to give us for ages an average of 1.6 trips per day are now doing 3+ under a new incentive scheme. Now only additional trips above three are eligible for the extra payment.

For water supply, winter is the fair weather period when preparation has to be made for the difficult summer months. We have therefore given systematic attention to the Palta-Tala complex which forms the backbone of water supply to the town. We have started, with the massive support of CMDA, the removal of accumulated silt in pre-settling tanks as well as the renovation of slow sand filters. The counter-part of this slow and traditional system for the treatment of raw water are the moving clariflocculators leading to rapid gravity filters. They are also being renovated and we hope that we shall not, in the coming season with the assured supply of fresh water from Farakka, be plagued by the problems of salinity and turbidity, as we were last year in the summer and monsoon respectively. Corresponding to Palta's larger capacity to treat water, we are also raising the pumping capacity at Tala. Simultaneously work is on for the sinking of large diameter tube wells by CIT, mainly in the south of the city and by CMDA, and of 500 small tubewells by us distributed all over.

চিত্রক



Ananda Bazar Patrika  
dated 10 November 1974  
'And then the Story of the  
Blind and the Lame' in the  
series 'The Oblique'

অসম অ-বলম্ব, কথা

In the sewage and drainage sector, the objective is to raise the capacity of drainage pumping stations and simultaneously to match it with the peak hour need of sewerage and storm water. At Ballygunge and Palmer Bazar, the two largest pumping stations for the south and the north respectively, it is precisely what is being done. Ankle-deep or knee-deep water might still

be there occasionally after a quick large shower but the spectacle of Thanthaia with waist deep water and people being carried on baskets a la infant Krishna across the Jamuna is a matter of the past. As regards road repairs, CMDA is working selectively on a few large roads. If they find it convenient they can farm out the actual work to us, for we have three asphaltum or road repairing units which sit idle for several months for lack of work. Our difficulty is that we get only about 40 lakhs of rupees for the entire city.

Such cooperation has been strengthened by the arrangement we made last year with CMDA in line with its 'one-umbrella' concept and as a modus vivendi we had worked out with it regarding the residuary works as well as the completed assets. The newspapers were so amused that one brought out a cartoon showing the Corporation with a plastered foot mounted on the eye-less CMDA. Well, the Corporation may be limping and the CMDA may not be Mr. See-All, but in today's situation we two have to work out a symbiosis. And I guarantee that between us it cannot degenerate into the other story of Sinbad shouldering the Old Man of the Sea.

Coming now to the question of improvement in offices, let me at the outset state that we in the Corporation are a top-light organization. Although the workers are legions, the senior and middle level officials will not exceed a hundred. Government have to send the topmost two namely, the Administrator and the Commissioner. From May to October 1974, i.e. during the period of continuous conflict in the Corporation, there was no Administrator and I, as the Commissioner, was asked to attend to his urgent functions as much as I could. It was also by an informal arrangement, for the functions of the two cannot be legally combined. Now, of course we have two separate officers for the two posts. But the Commissioner is one seconded by the Centre from the Audit and Accounts Service and we keep on receiving love letters from there that we should make our own arrangement and let him go.

Special mention may be made of another managerial arrangement we are shortly making. This is on the conservancy side which has already been bifurcated from the engineering set up and is to be totally separated into a directorate. We want to bring here in a senior position a veteran trade union leader who handles directly or indirectly 22,000 of the Corporation's 33,000 employees.

Simultaneously we have ideas for the reorganization of our engineering service, particularly in the context of capital works done by CMDA and the corresponding responsibility of main-

## CORPORATION CLEANUP—IN OFFICES & FIELDS

tenance coming to us. We propose to have a regular planning and development wing under a deputy Chief Engineer.

For any worthwhile improvement in the functioning of the Corporation two things are necessary. One is the Amendment of the Municipal Act, particularly for financial and personnel matters. The other is the augmentation of resources. While we have submitted our proposal for the former, shortly after the return of peace in the Corporation, for the latter some more discussion would be useful.

Last year the budgets of the three largest municipal corporations were: Bombay Rs. 63 crores, Delhi 27 crores and Calcutta 18 crores. We spend 72 per cent on establishment, 3 per cent on loan servicing and 25 per cent on civic services. Bombay gets Rs. 27 crores from motor transport as against our Rs. 15.5 lakhs. The State of West Bengal however nets Rs. 6 crores. Madras Corporation collects the whole of amusement tax, here the State Government.

Our financial position started deteriorating right from the time of supersession. When there was, at the instance of Government, a strike settlement in early 73, we were given Rs. 218 lakhs of which Rs. one crore was to be outright grant. But Government went back on its promise and the whole amount was converted into ways and means advance and is still being recovered from us in instalments: Rs. 89 lakhs already collected from subvention on dearness allowance and the balance 129 lakhs, now being proposed for adjustment against our share of octroi and d.a. subvention. Needless to mention that we have not been given any further ways and means advance. On the other hand d.a. subvention is to be paid to us in advance in the first month of the quarter at the rate of 80 per cent of the total d.a. paid by us, as per an agreement with Government before Independence and authenticated by a letter from J. L. Llewellyn ICS, the then Secretary of Local Self-Government. We therefore feel that our efforts in the fields and offices have to be matched by Government support on the financial front and it cannot, for its own difficulties or otherwise, disregard or modify the past commitment. Let us hope that Government will give us all the support.

You asked to know about the Corporation clean-up, and this is how I look at it critically but hopefully. People are skeptical still and raise questions whether it is a matter of brawn requiring a modern Hercules to divert a whole river or of brain requiring a Hercule Poirot to materialise and exercise his little gray

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cells. I quote from the editorial of an English daily some six months ago when we were in the thick of the conflict:

'We have been in the habit of thoughtlessly referring to Calcutta Corporation, when no original phrase came to mind, an Augean stables, ... The immense stables of Augeas, the legendary king of Elis, was not cleared for thirty years so that the accumulation of filth and disorder was such that it seemed beyond the power of man or god to clean it. We do not know if Mr. Samaddar is the Hercules to clean the Augean stables on Surendranath Banerjee Road ... before fleeing to some safer job in the mofussils or the Writers Buildings, ...

'Indeed, the filth of the Corporation has accumulated for more than 30 years and it would require the diversion of all the waters of Farakka—fatted Hooghly to flush it clean. There was a time when garbage used to be carried from Calcutta to Dhapa in horse-drawn gharries; the Corporation owned 46 horses and paid an annual grass bill of Rs. 37,000. Mr. Samaddar has revealed that the Corporation's stable has sunk to just two lonesome horses; but it maintains six syces and seven fodder men and pays out an undiminished grass bill of Rs. 37,000! What a fabulous animal was chewing the cud in these Augean stables all these years! The stink of that monster's dung hangs like an oppressive cloud over all Calcutta.'

In a signed article I tried to clear the portion of the interview which gave a wrong impression. The amount related to the inflated budget copied from previous years and not to the actual expenditure, and the horse-brigade of 13 was still shown as such on the Corporation books, although detailed elsewhere in the conservancy department, barring a couple of them. It is because of the sluggish, traditional means of communication and record-keeping in the Corporation. Result: a lot of people shifted 'administratively' to work elsewhere, and not by straight transfer with corresponding correction of records. It is this right to adjust and rationalise taking the Corporation as a whole that we got established by the Minister's award. The formation of a central personnel department is the first step. We feel that many distortions and accompanying malpractices can be weeded out now, if we try hard and systematically in the new atmosphere.

## MANAGEMENT IN MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

if management means skilful handling or cajolery, the funning of the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta will today require it galore. Let us look further into the meaning of a few words To 'cajole'. This means to persuade soothe by flattery of deceit. Again the meaning of 'manage' is 'to conduct the working of', 'to have effective control of', 'to bend to one's will', and lastly 'to cajole'. This may give the qualitative difference of management from one end of the spectrum to the other. Essentially however it should be at the end of skilful handling or conducting rather than cajolery or deceit.. Did not Vivekananda say that no great work is done by cunning alone ?

Management is essentially teamwork directed towards the optimum handling of men, material, machines and money. Our civic body though engaged primarily in services and only incidentally in production, has also these four M's of management, as in any undertaking or production unit. Man is truly above all and there is none to surpass him, not merely because Chandidas put it that way, but as he is the *raison d'être* for all civic activities. The role of man for service to the city has therefore a lot for study and analysis ; how the work is organized, what role the trade unions have to play, what the civic body offers to its employees through its own establishment and house-keeping, how the relation between the workers and management can always be upgraded and rationalised and so on and so forth.

Civic management is a matter of house-keeping. It is management for more and more people living intensively in an area supported and sustained by the fruits of science and technology. In this talk we can only give a limited look to the question of optimising human performance in our context. We should remember that civic services are the direct application of human efforts for human comforts, for the benefit of the human machine which thinks, works and creates in a limited space, sustained and toned up by limited link with native and natural surroundings.

In the Calcutta Corporation we have a pattern of organization quite different from that of any other normal business unit, and this is a unique situation. The Corporation is concerned with a

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\* Talk before Calcutta Management Association, 6 May 1975 and published in the Manager, May 1975.

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labour-oriented domestic service which encompasses facilities right from the maternity room to the crematorium.

The concepts and practices which are followed today in this local body were started in the nineteenth century and there has not been any significant change ever since. Originally it was a highly politicised body; persons like Surendra Nath Banerjee, Chittaranjan Das and Subhas Chandra Bose were associated with it. In those days, the Calcutta Corporation was the fortress where the younger nationalists were trained for more complicated tasks demanded by the political environment in the country.

In such politico-historical situation, the workers came to outweigh the work in the Corporation. This interesting but peculiar feature was brought out by us in a recent advertisement 'Square Peg in a Round Hole':

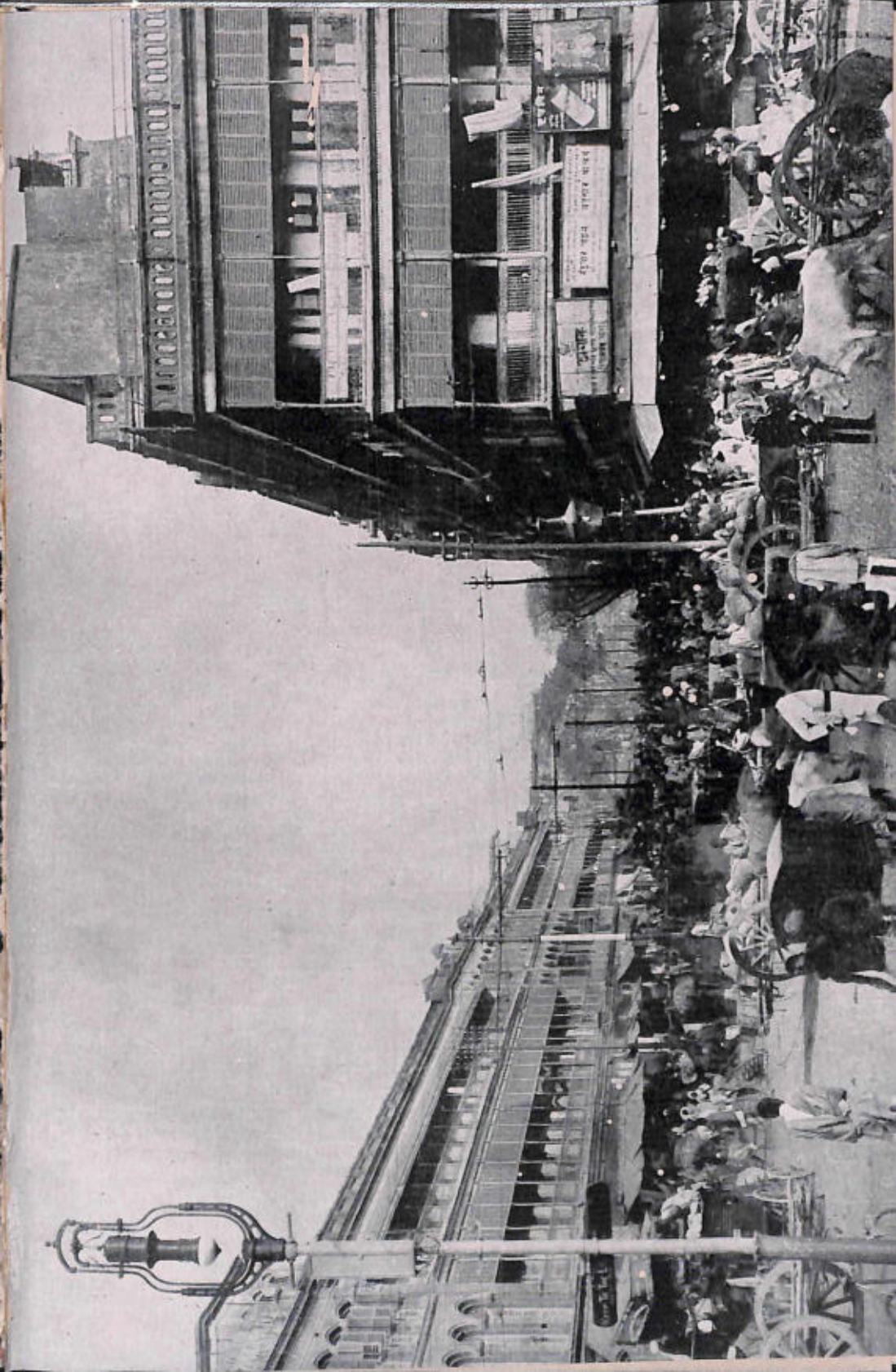
In British days it was a crime to love the country. It was enough to be borne on the rolls of the Police. If one made a pilgrimage to the rulers' reception centre bounded by high red walls, that would have spelt the end. Any chance for job was then sure to be struck down with a twenty maund boulder. In those Zamindari days of British India, swadeshi was sustained within the four walls of the Calcutta Corporation. For all those driven away from Government establishments, it was the only place to get a job and earn bread. Even though there was no need for new hands, even though it was a square peg in a round hole. Where else could these nameless soldiers otherwise repair to?

That is why workers outweighed work in the Corporation scales from then onward. Perhaps it was needed then. A coat hanging on the empty chair would have vouched for the coat-owner's attendance. Those to oversee had to overlook.

It was of a piece in those easy days when motor cars with detachable hoods wended Calcutta streets. Today's Calcutta has jet planes on the sky. But the roads have cracks and holes. Here is a mound of garbage and there a collection of silt spewed out by a gullypit. Kinu Gowala's lane overflows into the high streets of the city.

To mend and clean, many things are needed: money, equipment and materials. All of them are in short supply. One thing we do not lack is men—the 33,000 workers of the Calcutta Corporation with 66,000 hands. The other thing we can depend upon is fellow-feeling from the citizens and what they demand of us. Our only assets in this Corporation are the citizens' good wishes and the workers' awareness of general weal. Can't we make an amalgam of the two and make it a picture post-card of Calcutta?

Another lop-sided growth on the personnel front is that workers at the lowest rung in conservancy, drainage and allied departments who number 2/3 of the total have come to get jobs on



#### CALCUTTA 1900

A photo of Harrison Road in 1900 by M/s. Bourne & Shepherd, one of the earliest photographic establishments in the world. Photography was invented in 1839 in France by Daguerre and was taken up for commercial exploitation in 1840 in New York and Calcutta and in 1841 in London. Mr. Bourne who was probably operating an artist's studio in Calcutta added a photographic wing in 1840 and was joined a few years later by Mr. Shepherd, a photographer from Simla. The studio was perhaps first using daguerreotype and pezzavel cameras and wet collodion plates in 10" x 12" and 13" x 8" sizes. About 1923 it was shifted from 10 Chowringhee to 141 Corporation Street (renamed on 29 August 1926 as Surendra Nath Banerjee Road) opposite the Corporation building. The company was taken over by Indians in 1955.

Till the middle of the 19th century the most densely populated part of 'native' Calcutta was the area between Bowbazar and 'Mutchooa' Bazar Streets. A committee of the Calcutta Corporation recommended in 1884 the opening of a new road from the Howrah bridge to Sealdah, incidentally connecting the two systems of East Indian and Eastern Bengal railways. The Government of India promised a loan of Rs. 2 lakhs without interest, repayable after three years. Taken up in 1889 and completed in 1892-93, the scheme cost Rs. 28.25 lakhs and gave a road 8700 feet in length and 70 feet wide. Acquisition of land cost from Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 15,000 per katha and resale of surplus land on the flanks gave between Rs. 7,500 and Rs. 80,000 per katha.

The new road was named after Sir Henry Harrison, Chairman, of the Corporation (18 April 1881—15 April 1890). It was renamed Mahatma Gandhi Road "after the Father of the Nation" as resolved by the Corporation on 31 August 1956.

heredity. For such people numbering close to 22,000 and belonging to the Harijans, mostly drawn from the Chhotanagpur plateau, perhaps there could not be any alternative to the panel system by which an existing incumbent nominates one from among his kith and kin, most often son, son-in-law or nephew, to work in his place on leave or relinquishment of the job. This became an established practice for two reasons. One is that the normal rules of recruitment or replacement for such 'dirty jobs' would not be available, except to the extent that some unemployed youth directly in need of service and with the support of Councillors would masquerade as candidates from the mazdoor class after having dropped their surnames and bag a small faction of the jobs. They would be kept elsewhere on some cleaner jobs, irregularly though and came to be known as 'babu mazdoors'. The other reason is that officially there is no age of superannuation for such mazdoors and the panel system had to be worked out so that jobs are passed from generation to generation and work goes on uninterrupted in the field.

These features of the Calcutta Corporation have given rise to peculiar management problems. Firstly, for such a large personnel force, the large proportion of which are manual workers in diverse activities and casual workers, it is difficult to formulate a rational wage structure. Secondly, there are about 80 recognised unions who are operating in the organisation and the handling of such a large number of trade unions poses an immense difficulty. Thirdly, the Commissioner who is the executive head of the Calcutta Corporation is directly in charge of all personnel earning a monthly salary of Rs. 150/- and above; their recruitment, selection, appraisal, promotion, superannuation and all other staff matters are within his ambit and he has to apply his mind to every single matter concerning these, which is a difficult and complicated task.

The Corporation is a vast organization but suffers from highly compartmentalised work and the lack of a quick centralised control. For the 33,000 workers we do not have more than 100 senior and middle level managers and 300 bottom level supervisors. This leads to a piquant situation in which the weakness in the central line of communication or brain power has often to be made good by intense personal involvement of the few senior officers, mostly the Commissioner sent by Government.

The analogy which comes to my mind is that of the dinosaur which stalked the earth regally in the triassic age or of the pterodactyl in the jurassic age. Dinosaurs were the mighty reptiles which reached an average length of 60 feet, and a particular species *altantosaurus* reached 80 feet in length and thirty

feet in height. More interesting and extra-ordinary was the pterodactyl—grotesque and terrifying lizard with leathery wings twenty feet long. But for each tonne of flesh and bone, they did not possess more than thirty grammes of brains! For its huge chunk of body complete with trunk, tusks and a tall tail, some species had even three centres of brain—the second to regulate the front pair of legs and the third on the tail to regulate it and the hind pair of legs. Still the centre of understanding and reaction was so sluggish, that the reptile had to yield place, by the kainozoic period, to the mammals with larger brains and more skilful limbs. We have therefore to infuse more mobility of the mind and dexterity of the limbs into this historic institution which is the Calcutta Corporation.

However, since the supersession of the Corporation by the Government, attempts are being made to come out of this strait-jacket condition. The measures so far adopted have all been of a short-term nature since long-term management solutions will be a much larger issue. The measure employed for rationalisation of man management include, amongst several piecemeal measures, a long-term policy stated in the Minister's Award instituted after the strike last October, which stipulated that a central personnel department be established to rationalise personnel policies of the Corporation as a whole applying modern management techniques. Implementation of the Award has already begun with the setting up of such a central department under a Deputy Commissioner (Personnel). Following the setting up of the Personnel Department, a Training Wing is also in the process of formation. The newly established Department has to be handled as a tender plant. To introduce modernity into a state of things which is traditional, a change has to be effected in the organizational culture, philosophy and behaviour-pattern. If we want the legion of workers to behave differently on a 'work' basis, different goals, authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities have to be thought out and correctly grafted. A proper power-base has to be developed in the Corporation for the purpose and such a base obviously has to be the management staff of the Corporation who must be given clear goals for action, and simultaneously trained in modern management and behavioural sciences.

The old departments may, in theory, be carrying out their functions, but not in practice. In the day-to-day jostle they may only carry on somehow, each inventing for himself or inheriting from his predecessor the skill to avoid a decision or pass on the buck. Such a development is so universal in corporate and governmental business that many jokes have grown round the behaviour and practice. With your permission let me end this talk on

## MANAGEMENT IN MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

such a mock-serious tone, and present to you the following table of excuses for your information and guidance :

### Table of Excuses

1. That has been our procedure all along.
2. I never thought you were serious when you talked of the goal.
3. I didn't know you were in such a hurry for it.
4. That's not in my department.
5. No one told me to go ahead.
6. I am waiting for an O.K.
7. How did I know this was different ?
8. That's his job, not mine.
9. When Haridas comes back, you ask him.
10. I thought I told you.
11. I didn't think it was so important.
12. I'm so busy, I didn't have time to look into it.
13. I forgot.

N.B.—To save time of the Central Municipal Office as well as yours, please give your excuse by number. This list covers most of the everyday situations, but the sweetest and sincerest is the thirteenth.

## TOO MANY PRESSURES

Mr. Sivaprasad Samaddar has been in the Corporation of Calcutta for only 17 months. He joined as the Commissioner in December 1973 and was elevated as the Administrator in October 1974. Since May 1974 however he had virtually to combine the two posts, as the Administrator had been on long leave. His tenure has been a stormy one, chiefly because unlike his predecessors, Samaddar does not avoid unpleasant issues, seek safe, inoffensive half solutions to difficult problems. He fights for his viewpoints till the bitter end. This earns him the fear and hatred of the majority of Corporation employees and the respect of a discerning few. It is not difficult to see why this should happen, when one recalls the image of the average Corporation employee in the minds of most people.

It is no secret either that Samaddar has often been left high and dry by his superiors in his lone-wolf campaigns against corruption. Some have condemned him for resorting to what they think are "stunts". The fact remains, however, that Samaddar has been able to shake the lethargic civic body thoroughly and is not taken for granted by his employees. Anybody acquainted with the Corporation will agree that this is no mean achievement. However, it would be stretching the truth to say that Samaddar has been able to change the Corporation for the better substantially. He is deeply worried about its future and does not think he has achieved very much.

*Sunday*—There is an apprehension in many quarters that despite your stormy campaign for efficiency among workers at the beginning, which earned you the support of the common man, you too have settled down into a groove, like your predecessors, and do not exert yourself any longer. Is it a fact?

*Samaddar*—Not really. You see, when I took over, the situation was very difficult. There were demonstrations and slogan-shouting every day. I had to combat that. Now things are much better, so you don't see me crossing swords with my employees. And why should I? After all, they are my employees and I cannot be fighting them all the time.

*Sunday*—But do you really believe that you have been able to do what you wanted to in the first place? For instance, you wanted a more efficient conservancy department, and to weed out ghost employees. Have you succeeded?

*Samaddar*—Again, no. The trouble is (he laughs) the Corporation is a toplight, not top-heavy organisation. Like a dinosaur, it has a very small brain in the shape of about 100 or so gazetted officers, supervising about 22,000 or so workers. So, there is

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\* An interview by the Sunday, 25 May 1975.

little supervision. I wanted a list of the employees who don't exist, "ghost" employees, as you say. You see, I have to take help from people who may be in the racket themselves.

Same with the Conservancy department. I think it remains the fountainhead of all corruption within the Corporation. But here you encounter peculiar sociohistoric factors. Most workers come from a certain district of a certain State and local people are not interested in the work of that sort. Modern management concepts simply recoil here. Even if they work for four hours daily, there should not be much accumulation of garbage. But there are, as you may be aware, too many pressures at work here, all of which are not within my domain either.

*Sunday*—Well, we all know that dinosaurs for all their largeness, made a poor exit from the earth. Let's hope the same doesn't happen to the Corporation. (laughter). But seriously, how does it feel as Administrator, to listen to talk that civic workers are basically more corrupt than others? You yourself made all effort initially to make them take their duties more seriously.

*Samaddar*—Yes, I admit that my workers are slack. But tell me this: Do you think workers or even officers at Writers' Buildings, the Telephones, the Post offices or the Railway Offices are any more efficient, honest or punctual than my much-maligned staff who have to serve the people from the stage of maternity—that is their birth—to the burning ground,—that is their death? Do you think any other staff have to contend with duties as varied as this?

*Sunday*—You have a point there. Now, how would you list your priorities as Administrator?

*Samaddar*—Well, in summer, there is water scarcity. You see, there are just not enough deep tubewells etc. There must be a permanent solution, but we cannot think about it until the new water-works as well as the reservoirs now under construction at various points are built. Then, garbage. This is a more explosive issue, as far as the people are concerned. But here, I must emphasize that our best efforts will not succeed unless our citizens, too, are a little more civic-minded and co-operate with us. Is it asking a great deal of them, to request them to keep conconut shells properly stacked, and not to spit on the open roads and so on? They do all this instinctively when they are out of Calcutta. Why don't they realise that this is their own city, where they live or work?

Then, the problems of roads. Do you know I have to look after

510 miles of roads on a shoe-string budget of Rs. 10,00,000? Is it fair or reasonable to expect us to maintain our roads like concrete runways on that amount? The CMDA now look after 100 miles of road, and the budget is Rs. 1 crore. While on the point of water supply, it might interest you to learn that the State Government itself thought that we needed at least 15 more engineers to take charge of water supply. We are operating with only 3 or 4.

*Sunday*—It is common knowledge of course that State Government has given a raw deal to the Corporation over the years. Has it changed a lot?

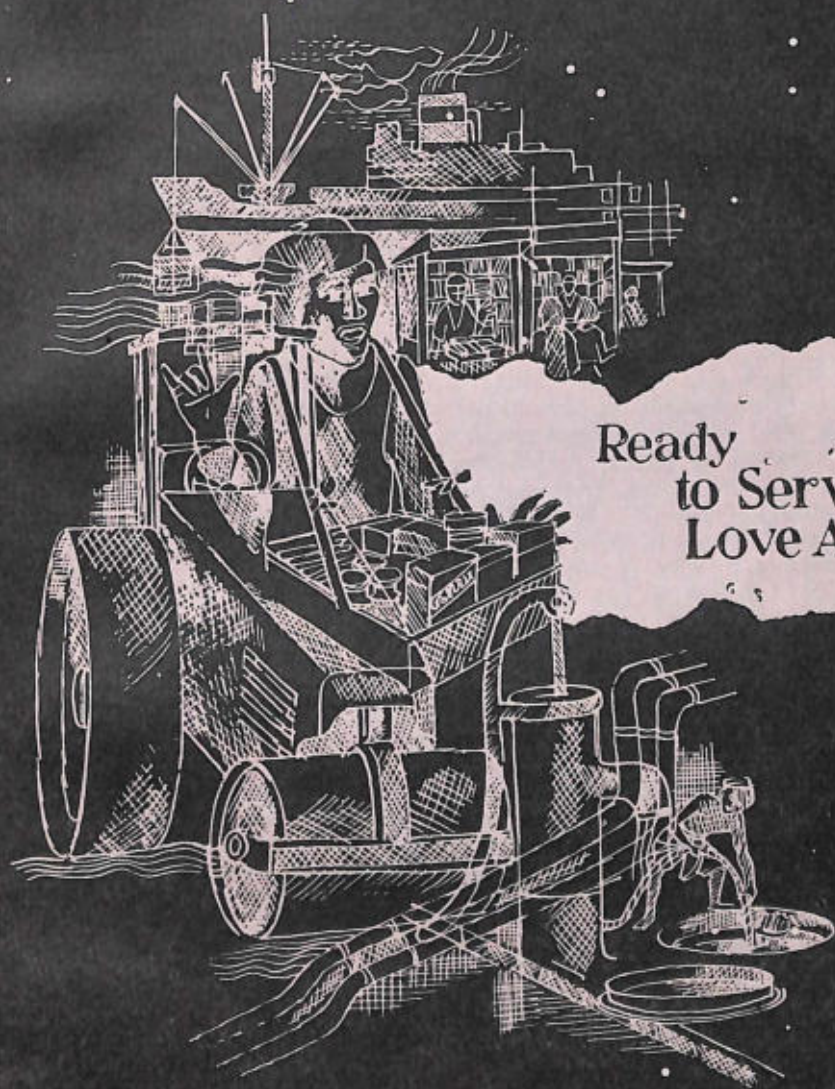
*Samaddar*—(Smiles) Not a bit. We get only Rs. 10,00,000 annually of Rs. 8 crores collected as Motor Vehicles Tax. Local Corporations in other major cities get the whole amount. The Entertainment Tax? We get a show tax of Rs. 50 only per performance. Now the Government is bringing fresh sectors under control within the city, and again, the poor civic body gets nothing, with its chronic budget deficit hanging about its neck like a dead albatross. The Government is afraid its own cake would become smaller with each cut demanded by the Corporation. Even so, the cash position, especially the revenue collection is much better than before. No longer do you hear of the perennial pay crisis which gripped the civic body almost every month.

*Sunday*—That's certainly true. While there can be no doubt that other improvements, too, have come unobtrusively, are you quite satisfied with the present state of affairs?

*Samaddar*—No. I am worried that whatever we have been able to achieve, has not become a permanent, ingrained element of the Corporation's functioning. There is a real danger that the improvement, if you call it that, will again vanish within five years or so. What is needed is a package deal solution for the Corporation's problems, not isolated acts of surgery here and there. I have suggested a number of amendments to the Municipal Act and referred them to the Government.

*Sunday*—And what did the Government do?

*Samaddar*—I am a civil servant, but the answer to your question is—nothing yet.



Ready  
to Serve -  
Love All

## WATER TO SHIPPING—A BEACON OF HOPE

Water supply to shipping is a small compact section under our Water Works Department. I confess I have not been able to see much of its work. This is partly due to the quiet and timebound functioning of the section and partly due to the perpetually disturbed condition in the head office which hardly gives me time to look around. In a recent radio broadcast, I lamented that out of my 255 days of stay in the Corporation, I faced a minimum of 20 items of agitation and that I could not work in peace for more than 25 days. The reply to my radio broadcast and newspaper insertion was a hunger strike unto death by top leaders of the Clerks' Union started at midday on the 8th September, 1974.

Coming back to the Water for Shipping section, I have a feeling that it is not worked to its capacity due to managerial neglect. It has a band of experienced and conscious workers who know their job as well as the bottlenecks blocking full utilisation. This is essentially a commercial section, selling much needed water to the ships and with a little organization, we can develop the revenue manyfold. The Calcutta Port Commissioners, the Shipping Corporation of India and the other shipping lines are showing sustained interest in the expansion of our activities. In fact between Singapore and Colombo, Calcutta is the only port of call where a ship can fill up with sweet water of the highest quality. And for this, there is no match for the piped water of the Calcutta Corporation, whether for human consumption or for boilers in the old fashioned ships.

If we look to Bombay, we find that the liability for supply there rests with the Bombay Port Trust and not the Corporation of Greater Bombay and what the ships get is chlorinated water, not filtered. The monthly supply is of the order of 17 million gallons which do not meet the full demand.

It is to step up the water supply that we have, after a lot of tussle with Government got our water rate raised recently from Rs. 4.50 per 1,000 litres to Rs. 6.00. The proposal was mooted as early as in 1970, along with another proposal for a surcharge of 57.5 per cent on water to be sold to international ships. Government rejected the latter proposition on the plea that Section 282 of

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\* Biswakarma Puja Souvenir of Water Supply to Shipping Department, 17 September 1974.

the Calcutta Municipal Act has no provision for surcharge; it only says that "The Corporation shall, on demand, supply every ship leaving the Port of Calcutta with a reasonable supply of filtered water for use on the voyage, at such price for every thousand litres as the Corporation may with the approval of the State Government determine." We could not therefore proceed further with the idea and all these years we were selling water at less than our cost of production. Government was also dragging its feet on the straight proposition of 5 per cent raise in water price till we decided in May '74 in informal consultation with the consumers to charge the increased price in anticipation of Government approval. Fortunately the approval came in the month of July and we are at least recouping our cost price from the 1st August, 1974.

On the 19th August, we also had a meeting with the Calcutta Port Commissioners to find out ways and means for improving water supply to docks, river barges and the shipping lines. We went in depth into the various problems connected with the extension of water lines to Netaji Subhas Dock, the construction of reserve mains, the augmentation of water supply through barges of the Corporation, the supply of water to the vessel Pathfinder of the Port Commissioners, supply to shipping lines etc. In the discussion we were ably supported by Adviser to the Corporation, who is an eminent water engineer and joined us recently. The Port Commissioners agreed to finance and execute the extension work in the docks on the basis of repayment by the sale of water. They have also shown interest in financing the thorough repairs of our water carrier Bhishti either themselves or through the Shipping Corporation of India on loan basis to be repaid similarly in kind by the sale of water. Our other water carrier Charles Payne has already been repaired at a cost of Rs. 6 lakhs and the Shipping Corporation had been negotiating with us preferential service from it on payment of part or whole of the repair charges. The matter could not be finalised because of some legal problems. But all this goes to show that our Water to Shipping section is essentially in a sound and fit condition which can take more and more load and contribute significantly towards a solution of our chronic problem of funds.

Before we can take up the work in right earnest we have to create a working atmosphere and a workworthy system. Looking around to-day, I find that the trade unions are more interested in getting what they can from the authorities rather than what they can do for better and more disciplined work. In the current agitation which has paralyzed the working in the Corporation, it all started with a 14 point charter of demands by the Clerks'

## WATER TO SHIPPING—A BEACON OF HOPE

Union. Then they stepped up the movement to indefinite dharna, cease-work etc. You know the result, The Corporation has virtually come to a stand-still, as also the collection of revenue. With the greatest of difficulty and scraping the last paisa, we could start payment of the monthly wages on the 9th of September, instead of the 1st, and when the payment is completed, our coffers will be empty with little prospect of further cash flow. We do not know what will happen to the civic services, nor how to give salary payment in October.

I should nevertheless end on a note of optimism. We have taken specific steps for the improvement of the Corporation's working, particularly in garbage and silt clearance, water works and water supply, and the removal of water logging. In our herculean efforts for improvement, we are getting co-operation from the bulk of the 33,000 employees, support from the mass of the unions and blessings from the Sangram Committee. If we step together even in a limited manner, we shall sooner or later take large strides. I trust that in any such effort, the unit of Water Supply to Shipping, small though, will be a beacon of hope and will show us the way.

## MARKETS & HAWKERS IN CALCUTTA

When I was called to a conference on "The Role of Marginal Distribution Systems in Development", I was puzzled for a while. What could I do on such an economic subject bordering on the esoteric? I had therefore a down-to-earth feeling when I found that the subject is no other than "Hawkers and Vendors in Asian Cities", one with which we in Calcutta are too familiar. I thought therefore I should come prepared with a discourse on "Markets and Hawkers in Calcutta".

According to Section 5(42) of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 the expression 'market' is deemed to be synonymous with the expression 'bazar' and means :

- (a) a place where persons assemble for the sale of meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, livestock, or any others articles of food of a perishable nature, whether or not there is any collection of shops, or ware-houses or stalls for the sale of other articles in such place, or
- (b) any other place of trade where there is a collection of shops, or ware-houses or stalls exceeding a number to be prescribed by the Corporation,

which is declared and licensed by the Corporation as a market.

### **To Market, to Market**

Markets may be of two kinds, municipal and private. Municipal markets are licensed and regulated in a certain manner, under several sections of the Calcutta Municipal Act, namely sections 446-449 and 456-458. Private markets are also to be brought into being, declared and licensed whereupon fees are to be collected. All these are done according to certain other sections of the Calcutta Municipal Act, namely sections 445 and 450-455. Both are also subject to marketing regulations framed under section 527. There are also some special provisions for regulating business for special items e.g. section 442 for tea shops, eating houses etc, section 451(1) for slaughter houses and stock-yard for the supply of meat for human consumption, section 460 for meat shops and section 469 for the sale of drugs. Business in

\* Paper presented at International Seminar on Hawkers and Vendors at Kuala Lumpur, 24-26 September 1973.

## MARKETS & HAWKERS IN CALCUTTA

sweets, milk products, spices, oils, pulses, coconut etc. have now also come under the purview of the Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules 1955, for there is adequate penal provision only in these Rules for malpractices and infringements.

According to clause (b) of section 5(42), the Corporation has to prescribe what minimum collection of shops, warehouses etc. in a spot will render it liable to be declared as a market. Accordingly the Corporation fixed on 16 December 1955 the number to be 30 when the place would be declared as a market and undergo the procedure relating to licence fees, scavenging taxes etc. Some prior administrative arrangements are of course envisaged e.g. passing of the plan as per building regulations, and arrangements for valuation, drainage, scavenging etc. as per health regulations. It is only then that a private collection of shops can be declared a private market as per municipal law. Recently there was a case where the owners of shops said that it was appropriation of property and the Corporation had to give proper hearing to all concerned before the declaration of a market. The High Court of Calcutta upheld the position and we are now obliged to arrange quasi-judicial hearings before any declaration of a market.

### **To Buy a fat Hog**

The question of having good market centres in the city of Calcutta engaged the attention of the British rulers for more than a century. Looking back in history, it was in 1863 that the Municipal Government was vested in a body composed of all Justices of the Town together with Justices of the Province resident in Calcutta. It was during their regime that on the 1st day of January 1874 the first municipal market in the European area of Chowringhee was established. It was and is still called New Market and became a show piece not merely for Calcutta or India, but for the whole of Asia upto Japan. It was on 2 December 1903 that the market was named after Sir Stuart Hogg who was Chairman of the Municipal Body of Justices from 5 April 1866 to 12 November 1876 and during whose time the market came into being. On August 4, 1909 the Hogg market was substantially extended. Last year was the centenary of this premier market in Asia but unfortunately, as we were situated financially and as there was little enthusiasm from the shopkeepers, no celebration marked the event.

Nine other municipal markets came to be established in the city, seven during the British regime and two thereafter. Lansdowne Market (named after Marquess of Lansdowne, Governor-General and Viceroy of India from December 1838 to January

1894 and British Foreign Secretary at the time of opening the market) in the south was opened on 15 October 1903, and Sir Charles Allen Market (named after the immediate past Chairman of the Corporation from 16 October 1905 to 14 July 1909) in north Calcutta on 26 August 1919. Then came the College Street Market in central Calcutta on 1 March 1917, Entally Market near Sealdah station on 12 December 1923, Lake Road Market in the south on 1 March 1930, Gariahat Market again in the south on 1 January 1938 and Park Circus Market on 9 June 1940. The country became independent and Bengal partitioned, leaving Calcutta in West Bengal on 15 August 1947. The other markets come to be established thereafter: New Alipore Market in the southern extension of the city on 3 January 1963 and Maniktala Market in the north on 16 June 1972, the latter after the suppression and Government control of the Corporation which took place on 22 March 1972.

#### Mathematics of Market Management

The capital outlay for these markets in Rs. lakhs is shown in their order of establishment: Hogg (59,61), Lansdowne (3,05), Allen (0,94), College Street (30,03), Entally (8,16), Lake Road (2,26) Park Circus (1,62) and New Alipore (1,40). The authenticated figure for the latest market, namely Maniktala could not yet be obtained from CIT which built it. The growth of the older nine markets may be seen from the following table showing income and expenditure over the past decade:

TABLE I—Total Income & Expenditure of Nine Municipal Markets (Rs. lakhs)

Year	Income	Direct expenditure	Overhead & other costs	Total cost	Profit or loss
1965-66	30,45	13,22	9,64	22,86	7,59
1967-68	32,95	18,22	8,33	26,54	6,41
1968-69	32,70	18,83	10,72	29,55	3,15
1971-72	31,22	22,11	13,15	35,26	- 4,04
1972-73	34,88	27,93	14,13	42,06	- 7,18
1973-74	37,21	29,11	15,20	44,31	- 7,10
1974-75	36,55	31,11	16,33	47,44	- 11,89
1975-76	45,00	35,40	17,69	53,09	- 8,09

N.B.—Figures from 1971-72 onwards are approximate except for incomes and subject to variation on compilation of final accounts.

The profitability of markets has been steadily worsening. Whereas in 1965-66, they yielded an income of Rs. 30,45 lakhs, the direct expenditure was Rs. 13,22 lakhs. With the addition of Rs. 9,64

## MARKETS &amp; HAWKERS IN CALCUTTA

lakhs as indirect cost there was still a net profit of Rs. 7.59 lakhs. In 1975-76 however we collected Rs. 45 lakhs only, against the direct expenditure of Rs. 35.40 lakhs and indirect Rs. 17.69 lakhs, thus incurring a net loss of Rs. 8.09 lakhs. The earnings are mostly on account of rent from shops and stalls, followed by rent from temporary vendors, additional rent for electricity consumed, initial rent at the time of settlement or transfer and miscellaneous receipts for licence fees, fines, portage etc. Apart from the direct expenditure on the running and maintenance of markets, we have to add the cost on administrative overhead, interest on capital outlay and notional property tax. The break-up of earnings and costs may be seen for the two largest markets, Hogg and College Street, in Table II below :

TABLE II—Details of Receipts &amp; Costs for Two Selected Markets (Rs. lakhs)

	Hogg		College Street	
	1965-66	1975-76	1965-66	1975-76
Rent from shops & stalls	8.88	13.53	3.21	3.45
Rent from temporary vendors	3.65	4.11	1.39	1.54
Additional rent for electricity	3.13	3.38	0.72	1.48
Initial rent	1.40	2.87	0.17	0.41
Miscellaneous receipts	0.44	1.22	0.07	0.21
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>17.50</b>	<b>25.11</b>	<b>5.57</b>	<b>7.08</b>
Direct expenditure	7.04	18.09	2.12	5.86
Administrative overhead	0.99	2.57	0.30	0.89
Interest on capital outlay	2.35	5.38	1.19	2.33
Notional property tax	2.32	2.32	0.59	0.59
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>12.70</b>	<b>28.35</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>9.68</b>
Surplus or deficit	4.79	-3.24	1.37	-2.60

The Hogg Market accounts for about half of our income from markets and the College Street Market about one-sixth, as will be seen from the above two tables. Even they are in the red now. Allen Market, the smallest earner, around Rs. 20,000 per year, is mostly a cattle mart and not for general merchandise. The comparative financial position for the older nine markets may be seen from Table III below. Maniktala which could not be shown here for want of capital cost and valuation figures has made rapid strides, and from a start-up of Rs. 15,000 in 1972-73 has already reached Rs. 1.37 lakhs in 1975-76. One thing which is glaring from the table is that as many as four markets, namely Entally, Lansdowne, New Alipore and Allen do not even earn their keep, even as far as direct expenditure is concerned, Gariahat is the

READY TO SERVE—LOVE ALL

only market contributing to the Corporation coffers—a lakh of rupees a year.

TABLE III—Profit & Loss of Individual Markets for Two Selected Years  
(Rs. lakhs)

Market	Year	Receipt	Direct expenditure	Total cost	Profit or loss
Hogg	1965-66	17,50	7,04	12,70	4,70
	1975-76	25,11	18,09	28,35	-3,24
College Street	1965-66	5,57	2,12	4,20	1,37
	1975-76	7,08	5,86	9,68	-2,60
Gariahat	1965-66	1,59	0,83	1,10	0,49
	1975-76	3,73	2,15	2,75	0,98
Entally	1965-66	1,30	0,83	1,45	-0,15
	1975-76	2,34	2,37	3,38	-1,04
Lake Road	1965-66	1,56	0,66	0,90	0,66
	1975-76	2,17	1,70	2,14	0,03
Park Circus	1965-66	0,92	0,53	0,70	0,22
	1975-76	1,48	1,26	1,61	-0,13
Lansdowne	1965-66	1,25	0,70	1,13	0,12
	1975-76	1,84	2,16	2,86	-1,02
New Alipore	1965-66	0,58	0,41	0,53	0,06
	1975-76	1,03	1,55	1,91	-0,88
Allen	1965-66	0,19	0,10	0,17	0,02
	1975-76	0,21	0,26	0,41	-0,20
Total	1965-66	30,45	13,22	22,86	7,59
	1975-76	45,00	35,40	53,09	-8,09

**A-marketing We will go**

It is interesting to quote from an article published in 1932 in the Calcutta Municipal Gazette under the title 'Calcutta 1900-1932, A Retrospect':

"The largest market in the northern quarter of the town, the College Street Market was opened only in 1917 and prior to that our needs as to daily bazar, vegetables, fish or flesh were obtained from Madhab Babu's Bazar which occupied the site at the junction of College Square and Mirzapur Street where the Ashutosh Building now stands.

## MARKETS & HAWKERS IN CALCUTTA

The long range of cloth, tailoring and shoe shops in front of the College Street Market has made it very easy for us to purchase dress and footwear, but in former days we had to go, to Chinese shoe makers in Bentinck Street or Chandni Bazar."

We have not progressed much in the matter of having adequate marketing facilities in Calcutta. The population of Calcutta proper i.e., the 37 sq. miles or so under the Corporation has gone up from 6 lakhs in 1881 to 9 lakhs in 1911, 21 lakhs in 1941, 25.5 lakhs in 1951 and 33 lakhs now. As against this, one should consider the floating population or commuters numbering 10 lakhs or one million who come into the city every day for livelihood and various civic amenities including marketing. The population of greater Calcutta including the suburban municipalities (about 60 sq. miles) will easily be 60 lakhs. Compared to this we have done very little for the expansion of marketing facilities. The ten municipal markets are buttressed by 155 private markets, some of them being good and well known. The Corporation area is divided into 100 wards, out of which 73 have got these private markets, two wards in Central Commercial area alone housing 31 and seven markets respectively.

This shows the need for larger, better and modern places for buying and selling, and naturally the expansion of municipal markets has been engaging the attention of the authorities for quite some time. The Corporation had proposed, before the supersession, that the Hogg Market should be re-developed in phases as a market-cum-city centre. In July 1974, a scheme was prepared on the basis of a loan of about Rs. 2 crores from the Life Insurance Corporation of India on an interest of  $7\frac{1}{2}\%$  and a repayment period of 20 years. As the question of back-up guarantee by Government was raised, a lot of other agencies had to be brought into the picture like the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation, the State Housing Department and P.W.D. This entailed much delay and the position as of today is that the interest rate of L.I.C. has gone up to  $7\frac{3}{4}\%$  or the prevalent rate at the time of disbursement of the first instalment whichever is higher and we are asked to complete the project in 2 to 3 years and to pay another  $1\frac{1}{2}\%$  to Government as guarantee fee. We are pursuing the matter, but for a project of this magnitude there is no short cut, as we have to operate on some one else's money and with least disturbance to the existing stall holders.

### **Building Castles in the Air**

In the meanwhile, certain ideas are being worked out between us and the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority in

regard, to the expansion of other municipal markets. CMDA asks us to give it the air right on top of whatever have been there—existing stalls and the existing licensed holders—so that it can build with the least disturbance to them. Most of our municipal markets are single storeyed, with tile or asbestos roofing and quite often leaking very badly. The markets, by virtue of their position, the good will and the catering pattern established over the years, are however the most precious property going in the city. If we could build upon them we could mint money. But being a public organisation we cannot ensure compensation or reimbursement to ourselves as a matter of right. After all these improvements, the existing holders of the stall when rehoused in an equivalent and improved area will still pay the same rent or an enhancement up to 12½% as per the rent rules. There has since been some correspondence between the Municipal Services Minister and the PWD Minister who is the Chairman, CMDA on this idea of vertical extension. CMDA's idea is to take over the top area from the Corporation, work out some financing arrangement, build and administer them. Our view is that, having regard to the existing infrastructure for market management, the Corporation could at best engage CMDA as the development agency who, after having built, will settle new people on the expanded area on realisation of selami or initial rent to the extent possible to get reimbursement of the capital cost, and then hand over the assets to us for management and the collection of periodical revenue. CMDA could however go ahead with its original scheme for the expansion of private markets by acquisition, requisition or lease of air right.

Leaving aside Hogg Market which is a class by itself, our markets where such expansion is most needed and profitable are College Street, the second largest municipal market, Gariahat and Lake Road, the two growing markets of the south and Maniktala, the latest market with a lot of empty space. There are many more people today in and around Calcutta and more and more have to buy and sell things, while very little could yet be done. In this context came the phenomenon of encroachment on footpaths. To identify and quantify the various reasons, some economic studies have been made. How many of them are genuine hawkers? How many are pseudonymous or anonymous agents or servants of the established stall holders or the big owners? How many of them are refugees, middlemen or sons of the soil? How many operate on some political or police strings, invisible though? Whether any relief at all is passed on to the consumers, or the benefit of escape from taxes, duties etc. are all gobbled up by these illegal operators? All such issues have been framed and answered time and again and I do not propose to go into that question.



### A NEW GHERAO

For its Administrator and senior officers to gherao Calcutta Corporation's own premises is indeed an unusual event. More customarily they are on the receiving end of demonstrations by dissatisfied, though useless staff. Yet there probably will be, and certainly should be, a good deal more public sympathy for Wednesday's developments in front of the Hoog Market than for what more frequently goes on in Surendranath Banerjea Road. It was high time that somebody in authority took a strong line about the disgraceful manner in which every open space in the city, and many not so open, is flagrantly encroached upon by unauthorised pedlars and other obstructions . . .

. . . no administrator combining competence with self-respect will consent to work for it long. As to open spaces, it will probably be the equivalent of "Goodbye Picadilly, farewell Leicester Square". (The Statesman, 21 March 1975—the third leader).

## MARKETS & HAWKERS IN CALCUTTA

The point however emerges that there is a need—large and growing all the time—for more buying and selling. But as opposed to that is the need of the traffic, of the pedestrian, of the people to move about in reasonable safety and comfort. How to balance the two trends, particularly in recent times, has become an enigma. In April 1972 i.e. within a month of the super-session, the Corporation started a drive in earnest in Sealdah and Howrah areas abutting on the two points of rail ingress to the city, as well as in Shyambazar area in the north and Gariahat and Kidderpore areas in the south. Sealdah is one of the hardest areas mostly peopled by refugees. Even then at least one side of the footpaths and roads there was cleared of hawkers. But as subsequent events proved it had the effect of pruning, and literally with the first flush of rains stalls sprouted with renewed vigour and larger growth.

Keeping that lesson in mind we undertook this summer another well-planned drive to clear roads and footpaths of unauthorised stalls, but we deliberately kept out the two hard areas of Sealdah and Shyambazar. We hoped to take them up in the second instalment, depending on the result of our first drive. We started evicting hawkers in three or four areas. One was rather quiet, in the Brabourne Road area (the approach to Howrah Bridge). Then came the Esplanade-Chowringhee and Chittaranjan Avenue-Dharamtalla areas, the former being the area of PWD and the latter ours. The drive, started on 24 March 1975, was no doubt taken up after a lot of thought, particularly after our wisdom of 1972 results. Frankly speaking we were forced into it, because a few days before the drive, on 19 March, there was a drama or melodrama at New Market in which I got personally involved. It was physical resistance that the Commissioner, the Market Superintendent, some officials of the Corporation and I had to offer at Hogg Market to stop daylight encroachment at the covered entrance to the market.

### **The Hawks & the Doves**

Before the Christmas of 1973 a disabled person, not ex-Army, was given a space for putting up a cold drink kiosk for a month for the festive period of Christmas and New Year. One naturally looks at such a person with sympathy. The holder of the temporary stall could therefore get temporary extension of the permission from time to time on the plea that he was searching for an alternative permanent site and would shift there shortly. The whole of 1974 went on that way, particularly because my predecessor who gave the permission fell seriously ill since May 1974 and, although I carried on routinely in his place, I could not give attention to this small matter, nor did I want to be harsh on him all on a sudden. Then, at the beginning of 1975 we found some

alternative place for him at the back of the Hogg Market, but he refused to move from the front position. I need not go into details, but only mention that the man then managed some High Court injunction when his kiosk had already been removed by us some 15 days ago. The High Court injunction was naturally read by us in the light of status quo, but in another manner by the police. Then on the morning of 19 March I was told that the police were giving so'id help to the ousted person and trying to bring back and implant the kiosk, even on the threat of beating up our market staff. This I saw as the point of no return, and decided that I should go and plant myself on the spot. So that was the beginning of the famous satyagraha or sit-in by Administrator, as the news papers splashed in headlines. It was courageous of us to sit on the spot from 10-30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. in the face of a court injunction and police hostility, but ultimately we won hands down and the police removed the offending kiosk from the drive-way upto which it could progress.

This event electrified Government in such a manner that in five days they started a campaign for the eviction of hawkers. It was done well in the Central Calcutta area, and then on 16 April extended to the Gariahat and Kidderpore areas in south and south-west respectively. The unauthorised stalls were removed by holders themselves. We got the best support of the people as they were roused by an appeal in news-papers entitled "Who Owns You, oh Road?" issued a week earlier, and we overcame the resistance of the encroachers, as there was some political dialogue with them about the inevitability of the event and the honest intention of the authorities to create some alternative facilities for them.

When the Operation Hawkers was first thrashed out between the Ministers of Municipal Services and CMDA it was agreed that those people had come to the footpaths not at our bidding, but as they pleased, depending on some other methods or arrangements (invisible as I mentioned) and we were therefore not obliged to make alternative or economic arrangements, far less full fledged rehabilitation. We should however see what can be done by expanding the Municipal markets or by some special hawking arrangements. Shortly before the 16th April, i.e. the second phase of the operation, there was a conference in the Chief Minister's room when he also endorsed the idea, but he desired the eviction to be followed by some alternative arrangements for hawkers in a limited manner, both for the need of the people and on humanitarian grounds for those evicted. Thus came the idea of Meena Bazar, or marketing facilities for four to six hours in the evening in the open, whether on the road by temporary closure of traffic or on Corporation parks, boulevards or

roadside lands, the area being vacated and left clean every night after the bazar.

We chose two places, one the boulevard on Southern Avenue and the other Russell Street of Chowringhee. One is a green area in the south and the other a stony area in the heart of the city. On Southern Avenue we started Meena Bazar on 28 April with 52 hawkers, spreading their wares on tarpaulin or cloth sheets over the grass. Russell Street was scheduled to go on stream in the beginning of May on our Minister's return from tour abroad. But before that on April 22 a case was filed against us in the High Court brought by the wine, boutique and other big shops on the street, and next day they obtained an injunction restraining us from proceeding with any arrangements for Meena Bazar. We fought the case on the line that as the Corporation had the right to regulate traffic over a road for part of the day, it could induct people there for some other limited period and purpose; it did not amount to any right over the road as a piece of property over which the public continues to have the right of easement or enjoyment. The legal battle was naturally joined at a very high level: to whom the road belongs, whether the Corporation's ownership is real or only for a limited purpose or on trusteeship basis, whether any temporary interference with the road will hinder the total enjoyment of the road by citizens etc.

**SMILE A DAY**



The Amrita Bazar Patrika  
dated 30 April 1975

**Grand Solution !**

Anyway we lost the case and the Meena Bazar become a non-starter so far as Russell Street is concerned. As the news of injunction there spread in the city, the morale of the licensees in the south sagged too. The Meena Bazar there started with 52, the next day there were 25, the third day 10 and then there were none. These people came back to the most favoured Gariahat-Rashbehari areas, first standing, then squatting and spreading a cloth to hold the goods. Then the rains came and the Rathajatra or Car Festival, when it is customary to allow road side fares and stalls. The hawkers provided shelter over their heads by building kiosks as before and trade followed the old pattern. If today one goes to Gariahat, one will find the place as crowded with stalls as before and the pavements and roads as full of buyers and sellers as before.

### Only Words Remain

To come to the end of the story I would present two of our advertisements. One was addressed to the pedestrians "Who owns you, oh Road?" and the other to the hawkers to be rehabilitated in Meena Bazars entitled "Plus Minus Into Divide." In the latter advertisement we talked about the Meena Bazars of Mughal days but invited people to come to the plain ones of overburdened Calcutta. Let me introduce the second one first:

$$+ \quad - \quad \times \quad \div$$

$$\text{Beauty} + \text{Utility} = \text{Beautility}$$

"We know there is no such compounding of words in English. But in Calcutta we have to settle for the same so that there is utility to the citizens and the least damage to the city's beauty. We have to ponder and ensure the real beauty, for on the path of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division we shall reach.

$$\text{Life} + \text{Livelihood} = \text{Green}$$

$$\text{Life} - \text{Livelihood} = 0$$

"If utility is under subtraction, there will be division between life and livelihood. What quality can then the green of boulevard add to life without livelihood?

"Travellers were displaced from much of the 510 miles of Calcutta's roads and footpaths by hawkers who settled there. The lost right has to be restored for larger good to larger people. But how can we forget that the hawkers have also to look after their families? What will happen to them if we push them out completely for the sole objective of civic beauty? That is why we are thinking of first lessons in the new book of Calcutta:

Mina Bazar

"It is the array of merchandise in the open, arranged every afternoon and dissolved every night. We do not refer to the jingling of anklets or the tingling or bangles as in the days of Emperor Akbar, but of a mere clerk Haripada who on his way back from office has to carry household goods in a polythene or jute bag. This is a call from the Corporation of Calcutta to such people who had so long responded to the wares so displayed on the fringe of the road or on unauthorised stalls in the middle of the footpath.

"On portions of the roads, footpaths and boulevards will now be given places for buying and selling from 4 to 9 o'clock in the evening. Half an hour extra would be given at the start to bring things and again at the end to wind up. There will be arrangement for water, lighting and garbage removal. Each hawker will be given 40 sq. ft. for Rs. 30/- per month, half the rent being charged for the first month. Efforts will be made for the permanent solution of the problem by the construction of new markets and expansion of existing ones. For immediate attention to the people's life and livelihood we hereby propose :

Mina Bazar  $\approx$  Mini Bazar,

for those who come with handcarts, trays or trolleys will come for the limited period only. They will sit, sell and separate without leaving a trace behind. They will unite on the eve and depart long before the morrow."

Although Meena Bazar could not be resuscitated, it evoked a lot of enthusiasm and genuine interest. A letter bearing multiple signatures came, congratulating us for the concept of Meena bazar, but registering protest against the name. Their contention is that Meena bazar is a hangover of the pomp and lust of the Mughal days. In those days the buyer was the Emperor himself and catering to his caprice were women sellers competing in their finest dresses. The signatories who included an equal number of women suggested that we could pick up a name from among: Market for All, People's Market, Evening Fair, Bazar under the Blue, Wayside Marketing and Wares on the Path. Before I pass on to my earlier advertisement addressed to the pedestrian, I propose to present two editorials from two leading papers of Calcutta, both in English. One says :

"Words, Words

Did you know that the Corporation of Calcutta numbers a bard among its members? A bard who has studied his Shakespeare so carefully that the mantle of Pyramus, 'deserted in "A Midsummer Night's Dream", has descended upon him?

"Who owns you, Oh Road?" he cries in capital letters in all the newspapers. Oh Road, mindful of the neglect it has received up to now, does not answer. So the new bard calls on Dear Pedestrian in much smaller print, assuring him that "it was not due to negligence of indifference" that his earlier letters and telephonic calls remained unanswered.

"Miracles never cease in our city. Dear Pedestrian is told that "images of gods and goddesses are manifesting themselves on the break of the dawn". Could that be the reason why "there is no end of raiders on the footpath"?

"The now overwrought poet needs a deep breath to describe how "a bud of a baby" as well as "the only earning father and husband of a family gets overrun by a speeding vehicle" and a past participle. He continues without punctuating stops to "the end is written in letters of blood because of the victim taking to the stony roads for want of a foot path to walk upon whom should we pronounce guilty?" he questions. Whom indeed? Especially for those dangerously broken pavements and stony uncleaned roads.

"And finally, the bard, on behalf of the Corporation of Calcutta, sincerely adds love and expects "blessings and co-operation" now that the battle lines have been drawn in its "war of liberation for the footpaths".

"We, on behalf of Dear Pedestrian thank the bard for the letter and points out that a road is a prepared surface for vehicles (it becomes a street when houses or shops are built beside it), and respectfully suggests that the bard should now read Shakespeare's "Hamlet" to continue his studies on "murder most foul" of the English language."

The other is "A marvellous Romance"

"Calcuttans are going through a marvellous romance; they are experiencing a reunion with their long-estranged Corporation. In fact, after years of silence, Calcutta Corporation has reopened its dialogue with the citizens with a series of "Dear Pedestrian" letters in the newspapers. From the elegant language of these love letters, it is clear that it may have declined in efficiency as Calcutta's housekeeper since Chittaranjan Das was Mayor and Subhas Chandra Bose was Alderman, that the aging lady may no longer be any good at sweeping the streets and looking after the trees in the parks, but she surely retains her earlier literary flair. It was this Corporation which published a Municipal Gazette Extraordinary to commemorate the death of a poet. It was this Corporation which accorded a civic reception to the same

writer on his fiftieth birthday. Had the present series of letters signed "Calcutta Corporation", been written in a barbaric style it would have been a grave disappointment indeed. That it reads not like the advertisement of a government agency but like a love letter lifted from a popular novel is no surprise.

"What was pleasantly surprising, however, was to receive a letter from the Corporation at all. Like a widower who learns through the years to cook his own meals and make his bed, till it becomes a habit with him, but is too disinterested in keeping the garden clean or throwing out the durwan's relatives from the outhouse, we too had learned to make do without an active Corporation. The lady is back to a visit and she has started by throwing out the excess population living on the premises. The citizens have started dreaming of the time when the garden paths were not grown over with dandelions, when there was always clean linen to spread over the table, when cigarette-ends did not litter the floor. But is the lady going to stay?"

Now to come to the advertisement which received bouquets and brickbats, let me quote from it copiously :

"Who owns you, Oh Road ?

"Thank you for your several letters. On the telephone also you enquired a number of times whether the road belonged to hawkers or pedestrians.

"Every matter has two aspects. Before taking a decision—specially if it is a major one—it should be carefully weighed which way the scale tilts and what gives greatest good to the greatest number. . . .

"Day by day, hawkers are establishing themselves on the footpaths of Calcutta ; unauthorised stalls are getting erected. . . . The hawker who used to disturb the housewives in their mid-day sleep by peddling his ware of lac-dye, vermilion and ribbons in a musical tune or the milkman who used to come in the morning to the chosen localities crying the quality of his curd and sweets is found in today's Calcutta to have shunned his mobility and struck root at one place. Many others have taken undue advantage of the situation and built homes on the footpaths, having enclosed and erected at their will. . . . Many who earn enough and can take houses on rent have made rooms on footpaths for living—completely in its gamut from calls of nature in the morning to cooking, eating, running the household and multiplying.

"This not only leads to stink and refuse, but also creates a hotbed for disease and epidemic. And then would it stop merely at an ugly and repulsive Calcutta? ...

"There is however no denying that hawkers and stall holders are poor and have to earn for their families. If they are suddenly ousted to liberate the roads, what will happen to them? What will befall their dependants who cannot fend for themselves? Genuine hawkers should be given all encouragement for moving from place to place and hawking.

"There are also Meenabazars to be established by enclosing for a fixed time portions of roads or roadside lands where the sellers can bring their wares in trays or wheelcarts and sit down, sell and return home. Government and Calcutta Corporation have to arrange extra space temporarily at existing markets and settle small stallholders thereupon. They have to accelerate the projects in hand for multi-storied shopping centres at New Market, Gariahat and similar other markets with the help of the Life Insurance Corporation and the CMDA.

"The path is long and obstacles are many. Nevertheless one has to begin at a point. The war of liberation for the foot-paths has to be taken up, here and now. Further delay may lead to their obliteration. In the interest of the people work has therefore been started ..."

## SPARE THE ROAD OR SPOIL THE CITY

A question often asked of me is why the condition of the roads of Calcutta goes from bad to worse, and why they cannot be maintained properly. For any Calcuttan or for the Administrator of the Corporation of Calcutta it is a pertinent question to ask and be asked. On my part I should say that there are real reasons for the poor maintenance of the city roads. Before we go into that it is necessary to give some basic information. We are not responsible for all the roads of this city as you see. Many of the roads are under the P.W.D., the Calcutta Port, CIT, other municipalities or even a Zilla Parishad, and then under the C.M.D.A. This is however an elucidation and not explanation. The basic fact is that we do not have the money for roads.

### Footprints on the Sand of Time

If you go back in history, you will find that funds for roads had always been a large question. I was thinking of the year 1757, when the battle of Plassey was won and Calcutta recaptured by Clive. After that the East India Company extracted Rs. 1.75 crores from Mirjafar as reparations. The money was well spent in laying new roads and maintaining the roads already built. It was in the rough and tumble of the new activities that many of the meandering roads got graphic names like Zigzag, Crooked, Surpentine and Corkscrew. For large improvement and maintenance of roads which become necessary early next century the Corporation could not make any headway out of its routine funds and raised money through public lotteries. That was the beginning of the Lottery Committee in 1814.

More than 200 years and the rise and fall of an empire away we have today, for the annual repairs of roads, a captive fund of Rs. 10 lakhs and no more, while the cost of men and materials have gone up how many hundreds of per cent more it is for God and statisticians to comprehend and compile. Against such a paltry sum our roads have to take now the heaviest duty or should one say the most merciless beating. Of the city's total area, roads comprise only 9%, as against about 20% in the metropolitan cities of Delhi and Madras. Then it is only in Calcutta that we are still struggling with the tramways which cause a large load on the roads, whether they are on a reserved

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Based on a programme in Calcutta T.V. on 12 November 1975 and published in Calcutta Canvas, June 1976.

track or flush with the road. In the former case the available area for other traffic gets reduced. In the latter the tram tracks built on lighter specifications get undermined and damaged when heavy trucks and double decker buses ply on them. In any analysis there is less area in Calcutta for the same quantum of traffic duty and roads get deteriorated faster.

It is a common grievance made to us that the motorists who pay road tax expecting the roads to be in a good shape, are getting a raw deal from year to year. In fact one pneumatic tyre Company recently put up a large hoarding near a blue blooded club :'

"Bumpity bumpity bumpity bum  
Is how the roads move a Calcuttan ;  
If however you want to survive  
Join the C-49 Club"

Obviously a chorus raised in praise of the particular brand of tyre it manufactures. One cannot blame the motorists, nor the company which trades on their need. But the fact once again is -that we get very little from the Government collections of road tax. Annually from the road tax, Government nets an income of Rs. 9 crores out of which half comes from Calcutta. Out of the Rs. 4.5 crores, we get only Rs. 10 lakhs !

#### Resources for Roads

It is necessary to recount in this connection what we spend every year on road repairs and what we get from the State Government. We spend much more than what we get. I have already mentioned Rs. 10 lakhs as captive funds, being our share of the Motor Vehicles Tax. People, however, ask us quite frequently what we do with the crores of rupees we collect as house tax or consolidated rate, as it is termed in the Calcutta Municipal Act, or what we earn by way of various fees and licences including car parking fee. In 1974-75 our collection from the consolidated rate was Rs. 7.02 crores, from car parking fee Rs. 11 lakhs, and from various fees and licences which come under our Licensing department Rs. 93 lakhs. Out of these, car parking fee which has been an imposition from April 1970 only can, with some justification, be tagged to the need for road repairs, although not exclusively. By concept and general practice it is a general augmentation of our revenue in the same manner as from various other sources like markets, amusement, hotels, exhibitions etc., none of which are allocated for the improvement or maintenance of the item which yields the revenue. The analysis of the consolidated rate which is our biggest source of revenue gives an interesting conclusion.

## SPARE THE ROAD OR SPOIL THE CITY

According to the financial scheme of the Corporation and the basis on which rates were imposed, it is supposed to have four components, nameiy, water, sewerage, lighting and general services with some notional allocation of shares for each, say 25%, 10%, 9% and 56% respectively. In this scheme of things, road construction and maintenance do not feature by themselves, unless they are supposed to be included in the component of general services. On general services, there are many demands viz, schools, health, hygiene, parks, environmental matters etc.

Coming back to the question of how much we ear-mark for roads and how much we actually spend, let me state that we have tried to set apart as much as we can for road repairs. For the six years from 1966-67 to 1971-72, our annual budget for road repairs was, on an average, Rs. 25 lakhs including Rs. 5.50 lakhs received as Government grant from the year 1968-69. From 1972-73, that is to say after the supersession of the Corporation, the amount came down to an average of Rs. 15.5 lakhs including the Government grant. This shows the marked deterioration in the fund position for road repairs. In 1966-67, the Corporation spent on its own Rs. 27 lakhs, there being no Government grant then. It came down to Rs. 20 lakhs or less from 1968-69, when Government started giving a special grant and to Rs. 10 lakhs from 1972-73 when the Corporation came directly under Government. This is, as I said, apart from Rs. 10 lakhs which we get from the Motor Vehicles tax. The tax, it may be recalled, was earlier a direct collection by the Calcutta Corporation but during the British days in the beginning of forties, was taken over by Government and the Corporation was compensated by Rs. 5 lakhs per annum which was not unreasonable, considering the amount of collection then. Then the amount was increased in the middle of the fifties to Rs. 10 lakhs per annum when the collection went up many many times and the Corporation became vociferous about its share. The amount unfortunately stays put at Rs. 10 lakhs as 20 years ago.

For the few years before the supersession, the Corporation was fortunate enough to get several grants from Government for capital repairs to roads. In 1967 it got Rs. 24 lakhs on two-third one-third basis; in 1970-71 through CMDA Rs. 80 lakhs, and thereafter nothing, CMDA has however taken upon itself the responsibility of direct repairs to important and arterial roads. In 1975-76, faced with the very sorry state of affairs, we budgeted Rs. 30.5 lakhs for repairs to bituminous roads, against the provision of Rs. 10 lakhs for the past several years. To this should be added another Rs. 30 lakhs for staff salary and other elements which go for overhead and supervision. We may,

therefore, sum up by saying that the availability of funds for repairs to roads in 1975-76 came to Rs. 76 lakhs (Rs. 30.5 lakhs + Rs. 30 lakhs + Rs. 5.5 lakhs grant + Rs. 10 lakhs from M.V. tax).

### **Borrow to Build**

West Bengal Government have however given us recently financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 1.35 crores for road repairs. This is by an order dated 24.9.75 sanctioning the amount as a loan for urgent and thorough road repairs after the Pujahs. This is a timely assistance although we would like it to be converted into a grant. Nevertheless Government have become alive to the problem of road maintenance—the problem of finance, the problem of larger pressure on the tracks and so on and so forth. Frankly speaking it is, in the circumstances, beyond our financial competence to maintain the roads in good shape. But apart from Government assistance we also get help in kind from CMDA inasmuch as they have taken from us for repairs some 45 roads—the arterial and VIP roads or the main roads. These 45 roads run to about 100 miles out of the 510 miles of roads and lanes in the Corporation area. Now we want to make good use of the loan in repairing the balance 400 miles selectively. We have got a good infra-structure for road maintenance including our district engineering staff, the Asphaltum department and patch repairing gangs. So, we believe, by spending carefully the amount of Rs. 1.35 crores in the procurement of road materials and by doing the repair work through our own organisation to the extent possible, we shall easily get Rs. 2.5 crores worth of job because of the facility of departmental labour, supervision, and other things which we can organise from within.

The roads which we took up for heavy repairs have been judiciously spread in all the four districts. The repair works were taken up in two ways. Firstly, through our own organisation, i.e. departmental labour and secondly through the contractors. Major roads which we have taken up through departmental labour are Chittaranjan Avenue and Vivekananda, Narkeldanga Main, Manicktola Main and Beliaghata Main roads. In fact for Manicktola Road we got a good chit from the Governor and the President when they travelled along it several times during November. We want to do the repairs in a methodical manner, because repairs done in patches, some times leaving behind the leakages from water connexions and some times without consolidation, not only deteriorate quickly but also damage nearby good areas. In any sound and methodical repair of roads, proper attention has to be given to the sub-grade i.e. what is

below the surface. In South Calcutta we have selected for repairs among others Wood, Short, Hungerford, Harrington Pretoria and Little Russel streets, on to Judges Court Road and then one or two main roads in the Tollygunge Area; this we are doing by our own labour, Through contractors we want to take up Aurobindo Sarani, B. K. Pal Avenue, Ahmerst, Surya Sen, Free School and Colootola Streets, and Acharya Prafulla Chandra, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Beltala, Bakul Bagan, Deshapran Sasmal, Jadavpur Central and Picnic Garden Roads. In fact, the repair works are being spread all over the city. Obviously with the limited money we cannot do full justice to roads, but we are keen to go as far as we can. If we make a good job of it, Government which is now conscious about the needs of the roads will not demur giving us more money.

In the beginning of October 1975 a team of experts comprising the Chief Engineers of Delhi, Bombay and Madras Corporations and representatives of the Ministry of Transport and the Central Road Research Institute came to survey our roads. It transpired in course of the study that for the annual maintenance of roads, the Madras Corporation spends Rs. 1.5 crores, Delhi 1.6 crores and Bombay Rs. 2.5 crores. Apart from this they spend annually on works of capital nature including special repairs and re-surfacing, average amounts of Rs. 1.10 crores, Rs. 1.5 crores and Rs. 3.5 crores respectively. Their capital works are entirely mechanised and annual maintenance partly mechanised and partly manual. We have to go a long way in this respect too, as our works are almost all manual, being cheaper to start with. But we lose the counterveiling advantage of guaranteed maintenance from contractors running to five years, as against our only six months. The maintenance cost per lane mile per year for our city comes to something like Rs. 1500 only as against Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000 for these three cities. As proper maintenance of our roads has not been done for several years for want of funds, they will require renewal on an extensive scale and the fund requirement should be raised to that level, if not more. Chief Minister desires that we should have Rs. 5000 as the maintenance amount per lane mile per year. We cannot agree with him more.

#### **Underground Underlined**

The team of experts made several other useful suggestions for better repairs and maintenance of roads. One of them is that underground conduits and ducts should be provided for all new roads and, if possible, for old ones, specially at important street crossings and that these should carry the utility services like telephones, gas, power and those of the Calcutta Corporation.

This is the way to ensure minimum disturbance to vehicular traffic during the period of repairs or replacement of the utilities. We have already accepted the suggestion in principle. For new roads CMDA has to take care of the matter. For old roads also a beginning has to be made. The difficulty with them is that the service lines including wires and connexions are very often scattered or under concrete footpaths and any attention to them needs opening up the roads. That is why the roads are so often disturbed and so much deterioration sets in. The idea of conduits or ducts through which all utility lines pass is therefore an excellent one. This is what obtains in developed countries, so that one uncovers only at the nearest junction, pulls out wires and other things and replaces them by new ones. One does not have to cut here and there. After having accepted the principle, other agencies and we have to work out how and when to implement it in practice.



Jugantar dated 10 January 1975. The notice board announcing 'Road closed, Work in Progress' serves as the net for table tennis between CMDA and Calcutta Corporation while the Old Man Calcutta is the ping pong ball

One main source of disturbance to roads is the water pipes and the connexions to individual houses. From the water pipes or mains are taken house connexions which require, from time to time, to be opened up for cleaning or repairs, particularly in South Calcutta where water supply is mostly from big diameter

tubewells. Such water carries a lot of iron particles or salt content, unlike water from the Ganga which we get from Palta and Talla. So the ferrules for house connexions in this area get choked more often. When the people go without water, we have to come forthwith to their succour by opening the roads for replacing the ferrule or cleaning the pipes by the 'cut and flush' method or making new connexions. The ideal arrangement for the water line should be having pipes on both sides of the road and not on one side which makes the house connexions more liable to disturbance or damage because of the traffic load on top.

Suggestions are often made that road repairs should be carried on before monsoon and not after, because Calcutta suffers much from water-logging and unless a strong and sturdy road faces the rains it goes to pieces. This appears to be a sensible suggestion. But one has to remember that repairs have to be done in stages. When a place is cut, it has to be given a rough filling; then filling material or soil subsides and a secondary filling is needed and ultimately a finishing touch. If there is a cut on the road beyond certain size, it cannot be repaired fully in one season only. After the first and rough filling with earth, one monsoon has to pass so that rain water seeps in and gets the material seasoned and in proper shape. Some times however we cannot afford such a leisurely treatment, because of the heavy traffic or the obligation to the contractors. Generally speaking, to close the ends in a hurry means caving in of the road or re-doing the whole thing the next season.

When we were given the Government loan of Rs. 1.35 crores the Governor also gave two timely suggestions. One was the assembly of a body of technical officers who could oversee the work on roads including materials used and conformation to the prescribed standards and specifications. The other was the need for the creation of a special fund for road repairs and maintenance. According to him, the owners of motor vehicles would be quite willing to pay a special levy of Rs. 25 to Rs. 50 per year and the buses a higher amount. A separate fund may then be created out of the levy, an earmarked portion of the motor vehicles tax and special grants from Government. This would be the captive fund for the maintenance of roads, no portion being capable of diversion to any other civic purposes, including the payment of salary. This is an excellent suggestion and underlines the point which we have been trying to make. We in the Calcutta Corporation cannot however alter things as suggested, because we are a creature of the statute and bound by the Calcutta Municipal Act, the Motor Vehicles Act etc. So, this is a matter which Government should take up for legislation and

implementation. On our side we say God speed and go ahead, and we are grateful for the suggestion.

### Programme & Progress

My account will not be complete unless I append on upto date progress report on the programme of special road repairs undertaken with the loan of Rs. 1.35 lakhs. Out of this about Rs. 70 lakhs was earmarked for the purchase of road materials, 10 lakhs for operation and maintenance charges of our Asphaltum Plants, 16 lakhs for the purchase of equipment and Rs. 40 lakhs for repairs to roads through contractors. A programme of repairing 50 roads by the departmental staff of the Corporation of Calcutta was taken up from the third week of October, 1975 and substantial progress achieved. The programme included repairs to some of the arterial and approach roads from the airport and the railway stations. We took up the improvement of VIP road from the junction of Narkeldanga Main Road and then to Beliaghata Road, Sundari Mohan Avenue, up to Beckbagan junction. The work has been completed 95%. Work has now been started on Sarat Bose Road from its junction of Hazra Road (southern section) and on Amherst Street from the junction of Bechulal Chatterjee Street (southern section). Through our District repairing gangs, repairs of some B-Class roads have been completed e.g. Dover Lane, Ramani Chatterjee Lane, Congress Exhibition Road, College Row, Grant Street, and Humayun Place. Works on Judges Court Road, Kalighat Road, Middleton Row, Circular Gadren Reach Road, Hindusthan Road, Hungerford Street, Christopher Road and Zakaria Street have been completed 60% to 80%. Approximately 1,60,000 square metre of the bituminous surface has been improved upto the third week of December, 1975. For work through contractors, a programme has been made for some 40 roads and work started on five roads each in Tollygunge, Manicktolla and Cossipore areas. The whole programme is planned to be completed by 29 February 1976.

I am not sure whether I have been able to give a pen picture of the roads of Calcutta and a correct impression of our projects to make them a little better and improved. But one thing is certain. The responsibility for road maintenance is large and does not lie with the authorities alone. The people will also have to play their part. There should not be any encroachment on the pavements which are part of roads. If pavements are under encroachment, the activities thereupon and the pedestrian traffic are diverted to the middle of the road and naturally create more pressure on the roads and more maintenance problems. People still put up shacks and stalls on the pavements. Some

READY TO SERVE—LOVE ALL

- (ii) segregation of non-compositing matter and preparation of salvable material for sale, if any;
- (iii) preparation of compost, i.e. shredding, pulverising and screening to facilitate decomposition;
- (iv) decomposition or stabilisation to reduce C/N ratio, to destroy pathogens, parasites and seeds and to control fly breeding; and
- (v) preparation for the market, i.e. screening or final grinding, addition of chemical nutrients, packaging etc.

**Some useful Data**

As already mentioned the city is divided into seven units—four districts and three sub-districts for the purpose of garbage collection and disposal. The area and average daily collection of garbage and silt in tonne for each of these seven units (district figures excluding those of the sub-districts) are shown in the Table below :

	Sq. miles	Garbage	Silt	Total
District I	2.95	720	50	770
Cossipore	3.30	200	30	230
District II	2.43	570	100	670
Manicktala	3.56	100	20	120
District III	6.70	460	70	530
Tollygunge	7.44	100	20	120
District IV	10.54	450	100	550
<b>Total</b>	<b>36.92</b>	<b>2600</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>2990</b>

The disposal of the 2600 tonnes of daily garbage is made on the three regular of Nawapara, Dhapa and Bantala and the local dumping areas including Salt Lake. The dumping of garbage and silt in tonnes from seven collection areas to the five disposal areas is shown :

	Nawapara	Salt Lake	Dhapa	Bantala	Local	Total
	— Garbage —					
District I	40	550	50	80	—	720
Cossipore	200	—	—	—	—	200
District II	—	—	145	425	—	570
Maniktala	—	100	—	—	—	100
District III	—	—	—	460	—	460
Tollygunge	—	—	—	—	100	100
District IV	—	—	—	270	180	450
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>1235</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>2600</b>

## GARBAGE—WHAT THE CITY CAN RECYCLE

that required for converting available nitrogen into protein, organisms get rid of the excess nitrogen as ammonia. Such loss of nitrogen the valuable nutrient should of course be kept to a minimum.

It is desirable to keep the C/N ration above 30 when composting night soil, so that there is adequate heating for the destruction of pathogens. Aerobic decomposition can proceed at any moisture content between 30% and 100%, but the optimum range is 40-60%. When the refuse contains excessive moisture, additives like straw and fibrous materials are the most affective. When it is below 40%, correction may be made by adding water initially and spraying the material when it is turned. In the NEERI, Nagpur report of 1970 C/N ratio and other chemical constituents as obtained from samples of refuse drawn from the major dumping sites of Calcutta were found as follows :

Dumping sites	Dhapa	Bantala	Kadapara	Nawapara
C%	18.89	18.38	19.77	20.10
N%	0.55	0.54	0.54	0.62
C/N	35.90	33.85	36.34	32.62
P%	0.57	0.62	0.55	0.63
K%	0.38	0.42	0.41	0.49

(P = Phosphorus as  $P_2O_5$ ; K = Potash as  $K_2O$ ).

The placement of materials for composting may be in an open pile or on a windrow directly on the ground or pavement, or in a shallow pit. If it is desired to proceed in an aerobic manner by relatively frequent turning of the pile, windrows or stacks on the surface are more suitable than uits, and the material should be loosely stacked. The suitable height of piles is 3½ to 4 ft. for most of municipal refuse fed fresh and shredded. The optimum temperature in an aerobic composting process is 50-70°C. The frequency and quantum of aeration and turning are governed by the moisture content and the type of material. If the initial moisture content is below 70%, the first turning should be made about the third day and then until the 10th or the 12th day, turnings at two day intervals for moisture content above 60% and at three day intervals below 60%. Flies should be controlled by spraying crude naphthalene or spreading a layer of finished compost or residue from a previous batch.

The time required for composting depends upon (i) the initial C/N ratio, (ii) the particle size (iii) the maintenance of aerobic decomposition and (iv) the moisture content. The unit operations in mechanical composting plants are :

- (i) reception of refuse ;

## SPARE THE ROAD OR SPOIL THE CITY

are found living there and cooking food. Earlier in the year we undertook a drive to clear some important footpaths and roadside lands of the encroachers and met with a limited success. Hawkers and stall holders have since come back in some areas but one should not despair. If we want to make Calcutta beautiful, the drive has to be continued and the roads as well as the pavements have to be cleared from all unnecessary encroachments. A start has again been made, by way of cleaning the road side walls, wall-writings and posters. There has also been a very good work in the removal of hawkers and the widening of roads in the districts, in PWD areas and in fact right up to the limits of the Corporation. We do hope that soon the drive will be taken up in the city itself, so as to synchronise with our efforts in road improvement. With better finances and organization it is surely not beyond us to reach a state when we need not be apologetic of our roads or the city itself.

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When in olden days a traveller used to get in or out of a Chinese village he was greeted with sign boards on trench latrines "Oh ye traveller, in token of your good stay in our midst, whether short or long, will you please use this receptacle? Our fields can then be manured for a better crop when you come next". More recently our own humorist Parashuram penned the doggerel verse "O ye Harirath, if you die we shall not burn you, but take to Dhapa where your remains shall enrich the dust and you shall grow longer lady's fingers".

### **Nature, Man & Machine**

The question remains the same—how to give back to nature what we take from it. Man in his journey to higher productivity and higher civilisation has to draw from, improve upon or simply spoil the nature. The forests and marshes under the human hand yield place to agricultural lands and human habitation, and the flat villages in the lap of nature are faster and faster turned into urban settlements which grow upward and side ways. In such a process man has deliberately to destroy the equilibrium condition, but he should readjust it at a higher level so that he can give back to the eco-system what he takes away. He has to put back in circulation the breakdown or byproducts to his living and growing process so that the symbiotic interplay between man and nature can generate an ecosystem which can sustain a large load of human activity rather than foul up the environment and the riches of nature.

Any large scale human settlement is a double-edged weapon. While it humanizes the earth in an increasing crescendo, it also has a latent death wish by choking the water course with effluents, depleting the water table of the subsoil and impoverishing the fields of the nutrients for plant growth. The by-products of human settlements have therefore to be disposed of in a harmless as well as a productive manner.

I have chosen as the theme of today's talk the problems and prospects of garbage in the city of Calcutta. As you are all aware, garbage looms large and conservancy is the most conspicuous among civic services. If one day it is not carted away there will be 2600 tonnes more of it, creating health hazard.

\* Sixth B. N. Dey Memorial lecture at India Society of Engineers on 5 April 1975.

As some body defined, dirt is material where it should not be. Conversely dirt if taken away and placed in a suitable place, can be useful and valuable. We shall briefly go over the quantum and characteristics of garbage, how the work for its removal or conservancy service is organised, what are the bottle-necks, in improving the conservancy service, how they are being tackled, what are the different methods to dispose of garbage and then the main point I want to make, viz the role of composting as an ideal solution of the garbage problem. Composting has in fact to serve the dual purpose of beautification of city and nourishment to the country side. Regular movement of the bowel is a surer wherewithal to rosy cheeks than the best foundation cream in the market. Regular removal of garbage is also a surer way of beautification of the city then putting up painted parks and catchy slogans on the city walls exhorting cleanliness. Then, what is beautification to the city may also give us the much needed nutrients in the field to feed the hungry millions.

The problem of conservancy can be epitomised by saying that man still plays the main role. And what man—an army of them spread from house fronts and lanes where they sweep, to broad streets and vats where they load the lorries and to the dumping grounds where they unload and spread the city refuse. Machines are literally dwarfed by men, for with all our efforts not even one fifth of the vehicles on roll can be put to the job and then the deficiency has to be made up in other ways. The problem from house fronts to the selected collection centres or vats is no doubt one of proper utilisation of the vast army of sweepers and giving them arms for the purpose, viz brushes, horse-dropping pans, bamboo poles and hand carts. But our general apathy to communal cleanliness and dignity of labour is an a priori factor for slovenliness we had better admit.

#### **The Material—how it comes & goes**

As already indicated garbage collection up to the vats is carried out by the Corporation labourers. They are supervised by block sarkars and conservancy overseers, and the work is organised in four districts, I (North), II (Central), III (South-East) and IV (South-West) and three semi-independent sub-districts, Cossipore, Maniktala and Tollygunge attached respectively to Districts I, II and III. Transportation of garbage from vats to the dumping grounds is carried out by departmental lorries augmented by contractors' lorries engaged either on trip basis or daily rates for total removal of garbage from allotted areas or vats. There are four districts garages from where the garage foremen supply the departmental as well as hired lorries as per route and number of trips pre-determined by the controlling officer for conservancy. Previously the controlling officer was

Chief Engineer. But garbage removal had ever been the heel of Achilles and the Corporation tried various permutations and combinations for superior supervision of the department ranging from Dy. Chief Engineer, Officer on Special duty, Dy. Commissioner and lastly Special Deputy Commissioner as per the Chopra Committee report. We shall come to that part of the story a little later.

There are three regular dumping grounds—Nawapara, Dhapa and Bantala, from the north of the town to the centre. All of them receive garbage from District I, while in addition the former receives from Cossipore, the other two from District II and Bantala from Districts III and IV. There is an exhausted dumping ground at Kadapara on the north-east of Calcutta, where accumulation for more than 15 years has turned into good natural compost, 30-35 feet in height and where fresh dumping had to be abandoned. We shall discuss later the promotional use we could make of the natural compost in the summer of 1974 in collaboration with the West Bengal Agro Industries Corporation. There are two more outlets for garbage, one the improvised dumping ground at Salt Lake and the other scattered lowlying pockets in the south of the city catering mostly during the fair weather and to Tollygunge exclusively. Salt Lake is a new residential area developed from marshy tracts in the north by the Irrigation Dept. with Yugoslav collaboration. When there was an unbearable congestion in dumping grounds in January 1973, permission was given by Government purely on a temporary basis for limited dumping in portion which were yet to develop. But there had been some indiscriminate dumping, sometimes on road alignments, building sites and water and sewer mains. Since July 1974 however dumping has been much restricted there, and as and when Kadapara is cleared of natural compost, and dumping facilities at Dhapa and Bantala including approach roads are augmented, we shall totally pull out of Salt Lake.

While the garbage foreman is responsible for loading into lorries, transportation to dumping yards and unloading, either on the ground, or as at Dhapa and Bantala into railway wagons, further movement in the interior is the job of Traffic Manager, Calcutta Corporation Railway Department. To ensure that trucks are filled up to the capacity, there are trip cards and check posts en-route for certification on cards.

The main factors impeding timely and proper removal of garbage may be listed as follows:

- (i) Irregular and inadequate supply of tools and equipment to the sweepers.

- (ii) Lack of maintenance of the fleet and poor breakdown services.
- (iii) Paucity of vehicles on the road, and particularly runner vehicles which could be pressed in the larger number of trips, a direct consequence of (ii).
- (iv) Inadequate trips by the vehicles which are available, the number per shift of 6 hours averaging at 1.5 for over a decade, although 3 to 5 trips would have been easily achievable.
- (v) Inadequate loading of vehicles and connivance at check posts, resulting very often in loading, say 150 cft. in a vehicle registered and paid for at the rate of 200 cft. This can, at least for our own vehicles, be attributed partly to (ii) above, as vehicles had often to ply with missing side boards and tail board, big holes on the floor board and worn out main springs.
- (vi) Sharp practices all round whether by cunning contractors or our own men who engineer accumulation of garbage to convert it into extra wages or overtime payment.

#### Previous Studies

The Corporation's traditional inefficiency, the Union leaders and clients fending for themselves alone and the crafty contractors cheating the Corporation on the daily haul of garbage to the dumping grounds—this has been the general picture, and this has made the people feel that they have to live with garbage everafter. Many committees were appointed by Government to tackle the problem, those in the last decade being of Jean L. Vincenz, Director of Public Works, California in June 1963, revised next year, of the Central Public Health Engineering Research Institute, Nagpur (Now National Environmental Engineering Research Institute) in 1970 and of the Committee headed by R. N. Chopra in December 1972. Mr. Vincenz came on behalf of the Ford Foundation and submitted the report to the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization on the existing system of refuse collection and suggestions for improvement, backed up by comprehensive data of garbage volume, vehicles, disposal sites, roads thereto etc. The NEERI brought out a report on "Feasibility Studies for Alternate Methods of Garbage Disposal for Calcutta City" which includes "Short term Characterisation of Refuse from Calcutta City". This was as a result of the meeting convened by the Corporation of Calcutta inviting NEERI as well as

Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute, Durgapur (CMERI) and All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health. The Chopra Committee (Calcutta Garbage collection, Transportation and Disposal Committee) was appointed by the Government of India on 19-7-72 under the Chairmanship of Shri Chopra, ex-Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and then Additional Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs to go into the question of insanitary conditions prevailing in Calcutta and suggest measures how garbage collection, transportation and disposal could be substantively improved within a short period.

Another report, although not on comprehensive garbage disposal, but on composting—the most important aspect of it, generally and for our subject matter to-day—is that of the Gujarat Agro-Industries Corporation Ltd., Ahmedabad. It was prepared as a 'Feasibility Report on Compost Manure Plant for the City of Calcutta in June '74 for the West Bengal Agro Industries Corporation Ltd., Calcutta. In my talk there will be copious reference to the NEERI and the Compost Plant reports.

The Chopra Committee submitted its report on 5-12-72 recommending that the conservancy wing should be separated from the District Engineers' and the Chief Engineer's establishment and placed under a Director of Conservancy of the rank of a Deputy Commissioner. A subsidiary recommendation was that the motor, transport wing i.e. the Entally workshop and other garages concerned with the upkeep of conservancy vehicles should be placed under the Conservancy Department. The basic approach, is that the collection, transportation and disposal of garbage should be brought under a unified command and all associated facilities in this connection like decentralisation of garages, special setup for bulldozers and pay loaders, repairs and purchase of railway wagons and maintenance of tracks at the dumping grounds should be fully integrated with the conservancy set up. The recommendation were accepted by the Corporation in principle but there was no move for actual implementation.

In the meantime, in the negotiations between the World Bank and the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority, the former agree to include in its credit of Rs. 25 crores, the amount necessary for garbage collection and disposal services viz Rs. 2 crores, provided the Corporation undertakes the reorganization of conservancy services into a single unit under a Director or Deputy Commissioner. In June '74 we could convince Government in giving us a Special Deputy Commissioner with the powers of Commissioner and under him the separate directorate of conservancy was formed. There have been further forward steps by way of vigorous repairs and maintenance drive in garages, pay-

## GARBAGE—WHAT THE CITY CAN RECYCLE

ment of incentive allowance to drivers and mazdoors for more than three trips in a shift to the dumping ground and on 27-1-75 the appointment of a Union leader as a Dy. Director of Operation in the conservancy directorate.

### How to dispose of Garbage

While the ground for conservancy services was thus being cleared, the question of ultimate disposal of garbage was getting serious attention of the Corporation as well as the Government. In a meeting in the State Planning Board on 14-1-74 to which officials of the Agriculture Department and the West Bengal Agro-Industries Corporation were also invited it was settled that the setting up of compost plants around Calcutta should be examined quickly. It was also brought out that the Gujrat Agro-Industries Corporation which had taken up the erection of a 150 tonne per day plant at the cost of Rs. 41 lakhs at Ahmedabad for the production of compost, initially at Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per tonne but later on at a lower cost, should be asked to prepare a feasibility study for compost plants. Tentative sites were mentioned as Nawapara and Bantala. The meeting also suggested the recommissioning of the Corporation's incinerator at Goragacha for burning of garbage with the help of CMERI, Durgapur. Studies have since been made by CMERI but no progress could yet be made essentially because incineration has become a costly proposition today for the high cost of power and petroleum fuel.

In a subsequent meeting taken by the Planning Board on 30-3-74 under the chairmanship of Finance and Planning Minister, discussion on compost was channelised to a timely and very useful subject, viz utilisation of accumulated garbage as compost. It was stressed that the natural compost so available at Dhapa and Kadapara should be immediately utilised in agriculture in view of the acute shortage of chemical fertilisers. It was decided to explore Kadapara first where dumping was discontinued for more than two years and where 2 lakh tonnes of composted material would be easily available valued at Rs. 6 crores. It was further decided that the co-operative societies of 24 Parganas, Nadia and Howrah should be allowed to remove compost from Kadapara on payment of transport cost and Rs. 3 per tonne for cutting and selving only. The Agro-Industries Corporation undertook to arrange manual cutting and sieving through contractors, while we from the Corporation side agreed to make the material available without any payment of price or royalty with a view to promote the venture. The arrangement worked well and substantial quantity of natural compost was removed and put to agriculture till the rains came in the middle of June.

Small or kitchen garbage is being disposed of by throwing or putting it away in one way or the other. This may be in the solid state as we are doing or gushing down the gutter as they do in the western countries after pulverisation. Both are wasteful, theirs more than ours. There are three basic ways of garbage disposal, namely sanitary landfill, incineration and composting. Sanitary landfill is an improved and hygienic version of dumping the city refuse on land. It was systematised and mechanised in the U.S.A. in the 1930s and essentially the method involves dumping refuse on low lying land, spreading and compacting it and then covering it with earth  $1\frac{1}{2}$  ft. thick. Depending on the terrain, sanitary land filling can be (i) trench type for flat terrain, (ii) area type for irregular, gullied or marshy lands and (iii) ramp type for flat or gently rolling areas.

Incineration is a refuse reduction process wherein the organic part and moisture are converted by enclosed and controlled combustion to carbon dioxide, water vapour and nitrogen as gases, leaving behind a solid residue or glass, ceramics, metals and mineral ash. The capital and operating costs are however much higher than other methods, and refuse which in other methods is put to use in conservation of natural resources is lost. For us there is the added disadvantage, viz low calorific value of refuse which will not give a self-sustained combustion but require the addition of auxiliary fuel, whether electric or petroleum based. We can not burn good matter by expending energy which is getting scarcer day by day unless it is for small incinerators spread all over the town, in large blocks of apartment houses, hospitals and markets, which may offset to a large extent the cost of transportation to large disposal centres out of town.

#### **Composting—the Tool of Choice**

That leaves us with composting. The feasibility report by Gujarat Agro-Industries Corporation brought out that a plant with a daily intake of 126-150 tonnes would process about 40,000 tonnes of garbage into 16,550 tonnes of compost per year. Thus output would be around 42% of the input. The rate of output, the report recommended, can be doubled in the third year by adding one more line and trebled by adding the third line in the sixth year. The capital investment in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd units will be Rs. 60 lakhs, Rs. 48 lakhs and Rs. 55 lakhs respectively. The pattern of price visualised in the Project Report is Rs. 80 per tonne in the first year, Rs. 90 in the 2nd year, Rs. 110 in the 3rd year, Rs. 125 in the 4th year and Rs. 140 in the 5th year. The location of plants would be primarily depend on the garbage dumps and the fruit and vegetable growing areas. That

way Nawapara, followed by Dhapa and Bantala and lastly Tollygunge should be the choice, the last unit catering to city gardens. In 10 years, a total of 10 units can be set up, no location having more than three units, and the 10 processing around 1400 tonnes of garbage per day.

Compost can not be said to be in substitution of inorganic manure but as complimentary thereto, because the intensive use of chemical fertilisers would lead to deterioration in soil conditions unless it is balanced by the use of organic materials as compost. Perhaps more important than the nutrient contribution of compost are its physical effects on soil. If soil is deprived of organic matter or humus, it loses coherence and is eroded by wind and rain, that is to say, its finer portion and soluble fertilising elements are taken away. Compost can restore the balance. Composting has an added advantage as it helps check health hazards to the city.

As already discussed compost is a stabilised organic manure and soil conditioner which may be produced from city and town refuse, night soil, sewage sludge etc. as raw materials. The daily output of such raw materials within the Corporation limits is 2600 tonne of garbage, 6000 cft. of gullypit silt and sludge, 18,000 cft. of drain sweepings and 13,500 gallons of night soil.

#### Indore or Bangalore ?

Broadly speaking there are two ways of making compost: non-mechanical and mechanical. In non-mechanical or traditional methods of composing in our country, two need special mention: Indore and Bangalore methods. Sir Albert Howard did the pioneering work in our country in the practice of composing and developed it at Indore. It involved stacking on open ground alternate layers of readily compostable materials, e.g. night-soil, animal manure, sewage sludge and garbage, and relatively stable matter e.g. straw, leaves and municipal refuse. The material is stacked in pits 10'×100' and 2 to 5 ft. deep. It is placed in alternate layers of refuse and night soil each 3" thick and stacked to a height of 5 ft. It is filled up only for half the width of the pit so that it can be turned regularly for 6 to 8 times in about 4 months when the composting is complete. This process is primarily aerobic in nature. As there is adequate air to oxidise waste materials and generate sufficiently high temperatures, there is no stink, and pathogenic organisms are also destroyed.

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research at Bangalore developed the Bangalore method. In this, earthen trenches 4'×36' and 3 ft. deep are dug. Alternate layers of refuse and night soil

are laid, upto about 2 ft. above the ground. The material is then covered with 6 inches of earth and left to decompose in 4-5 months, and turn into compost. The process is primarily anaerobic in nature. Carbon of the refuse is mostly transformed into methane and organic nitrogen into organic acid and ammonia which give rise to stink. It is a slower process requiring several months and generate too low a temperature for the destruction of pathogenic organisms. For these reasons the process is not very desirable in tropical environments.

Both the methods are simple, not requiring sophisticated equipment, but they are dependent on extensive areas, a large labour force and a long period of composting—parameters which a manufacturer would like to avoid. The period of decomposition is long, for the refuse is fed as it is, not after preconditioning or pulverisation. The final product also contains undigestible materials like metals, glass and ceramic pieces and hard to digest materials like wood and cloth which the farmers have to remove before applying the compost to the field. In NEERI report of 1970 the refuse sampled from 154 sampling points of Calcutta showed a large percentage of green coconut shells (10.69), as also 3.6% rags, 3.2% paper and 0.66 metals, all on wet weight basis.

#### Mechanical Method

Such disadvantages of unwanted materials are done away with in the mechanical method of composting. The undesirable materials are mechanically or manually segregated and the refuse, free from such items, is pulverised so that its decomposition is uniform and quicker. Segregation and shredding are therefore essential operation prior to composting proper and can be achieved in many ways. In addition to pulverisation, special methods of windrow arrangement and turning process have been evolved in which freshly pulverised refuse is mixed with bacterially active partially composted material to accelerate the process of composting. Digestion in a closed vessel is another such process for acceleration.

Composting or the decomposition of organic matter is brought about by micro-organisms which utilise about two-third of carbon in the refuse as a source of energy, burning the same to carbondioxide and absorb the remaining carbon in combination with nitrogen in building cell protoplasm. If carbon content in relation to nitrogen is greater, decomposition decreases when the nitrogen is used up and some of the organisms die leaving their stored nitrogen to be used up by the living. Thus more time is required for the process when the initial carbon-nitrogen ratio is much above 30. If on the other hand carbon is less than

GARBAGE—WHAT THE CITY CAN RECYCLE

	Nawapara	Salt Lake	Dhapa	Bantala	Local	-Total
	— Silt —					
District I	—	50	—	—	—	50
Cossipore	30	—	—	—	—	30
District II	—	—	25	75	—	100
Maniktala	—	20	—	—	—	20
District III	—	—	—	70	—	70
Tollygunge	—	—	—	—	20	20
District IV	—	—	—	60	40	100
Total	30	70	25	205	60	390
Grand Total	270	720	220	1440	340	2990

In March-April 1970 NEERI, Nagpur carried out an analysis of city garbage for physical and chemical characteristics, by drawing 308 samples from 154 dumping points. The average values (percentages) worked out for each of the four districts are given in the Table below and are found to be more or less the same :

	Dist. I	Dist. II	Dist. III	Dist. IV	City average
1. Moisture	41.76	41.22	36.00	45.32	41.06
2. C/N ratio	38.77	38.82	36.31	35.76	37.41
3. Garbage	16.43	15.59	14.24	14.32	16.05
4. Leaves	12.70	13.36	13.18	15.54	13.05
5. Hay & straw	6.04	6.74	7.11	5.02	6.31
6. Paper	3.77	2.87	3.00	3.06	3.18
7. Rags	3.12	3.64	4.35	3.36	3.60
8. Total compostable material, 3-7	42.06	42.20	41.88	41.30	42.19
9. Ash & earth	33.27	33.04	32.17	31.65	33.59
10. Ignited coal	8.07	8.79	7.17	8.13	8.08
11. Earthen wares	7.44	7.18	6.20	4.50	6.65
12. Coconut shell	3.80	4.73	5.31	5.00	4.96
13. Stone	1.68	1.35	2.21	1.71	1.84
14. Leather	1.26	0.88	1.52	0.43	0.86
15. Iron & Steel	0.53	0.43	1.11	0.92	0.66
16. Bones	0.27	0.42	0.40	0.53	0.42
17. Polythene	0.53	0.75	0.43	0.80	0.65
18. Glass	0.25	0.49	0.33	0.61	0.58
19. Total non-compos- table material, 9-18	57.10	58.06	56.85	54.28	58.29

Garbage characteristics do not differ much from winter to summer, while in the rainy season, the moisture percentage goes

up from 40% to 60%. Coconut shells in the season were around 5% which should be the peak, as one third of the annual production comes to the market during March-May. NEERI analysis gave NPK value in coconut shell to be 1.25 : 0.48 : 1.55 and organic matter 95.72%. If coconut shell could be composted, it would enrich the product in NPK content. But it is not a feasible proposition inasmuch as a powerful hammer mill would be required for pulverisation, but even then the fibrous nature would require shells to take much longer to compost. The best course therefore is to leave the coconut shells alone by picking them out by hand. The carbon-nitrogen ratio is around 37% but due to the practice of heavy rag picking in the city on the trucks and at the dumping ground, percentage of paper and rags would surely come down to 30% when the refuse would reach the composting site.

A small composting plant can handle 8 to 10 tonnes refuse per hour which comes to 125 tonnes of refuse per day in winter and 150 tonnes of refuse in the monsoons, as for the same volume handled the wet material will give more weight. On an average 42% of the refuse processed in the plant would turn into compost. The NPK value of the product would be higher than in the input garbage. The NEERI report of 1970 estimated that the NPK content of compost would be in the range 1.16 : 1.21 : 0.87, derived from the initial values of 0.55 : 0.58 : 0.41 in the garbage.

#### Looking into the Future

The proposals for compost plants are welcome from whatever sources they come. Regardless of the agency investing capital poration of Calcutta and the West Bengal Agro-Industries Corporation. The Calcutta Corporation has to supply the required quantity of garbage without interruption for the contracted period and periodical renewals thereafter. The Agro-Industries Corporation has to undertake marketing of the manure through its agro-service centres. Then there is the distinct possibility of one Corporation or the other to take up a few plants in the joint sector, participating in equity capital. The Government of India have an incentive scheme for setting up compost plants from garbage in urban areas having a population of 3 lakhs or more. It might bear 33% of the total capital out lay for such plants. We in the Corporation of Calcutta have signified our willingness to the Agro-Industries Corporation for participation in a joint venture, as also for giving land in our dumping grounds on lease and for the supply of garbage for the contracted period free of cost.

Simultaneously by newspaper insertion we invited offers from pri-

## GARBAGE—WHAT THE CITY CAN RECYCLE

vate parties for setting up compost plants. To one such offer we responded on 8.1.75 on the line that the Corporation would make over a piece of land, 10-15 areas at Dhapa or another dumping ground, on a lease for 10 years on reasonable rent. It would be renewable after the expiry of the initial lease on rent to be assessed by the Corporation. The land should of course be used exclusively for manufacturing compost mechanically. Garbage will be supplied by the Corporation on terms as may be fixed for other private parties.

Looking into the future we feel that composing has to be encouraged in all possible manner. It has surely an edge over the equally desirable method of sanitary land filling, for in the form of compost we turn to nature what we took from it and a little more. That is what the city owes to the country.

## CALCUTTA'S WATER—MANAGEMENT & MISMANAGEMENT

The bank of the Ganga is equated with Varanasi. Calcutta, like Varanasi being on the left bank of the Ganga, may therefore claim the same sanctity. Delhi, a much older town, is however on the shallower river Jamuna. When Calcutta-Delhi line was being laid in the nineteenth century, it stood still for many years at Shahdra-Ghaziabad on the eastern bank of the Jamuna. But the river with its knee-deep water was not much of a water course, nor a physical barrier to passengers and animals for the larger part of the year. That is why Vasudev had no difficulty in carrying the infant Krishna across the river even in the lower reaches of Mathura and in the fury of monsoon.

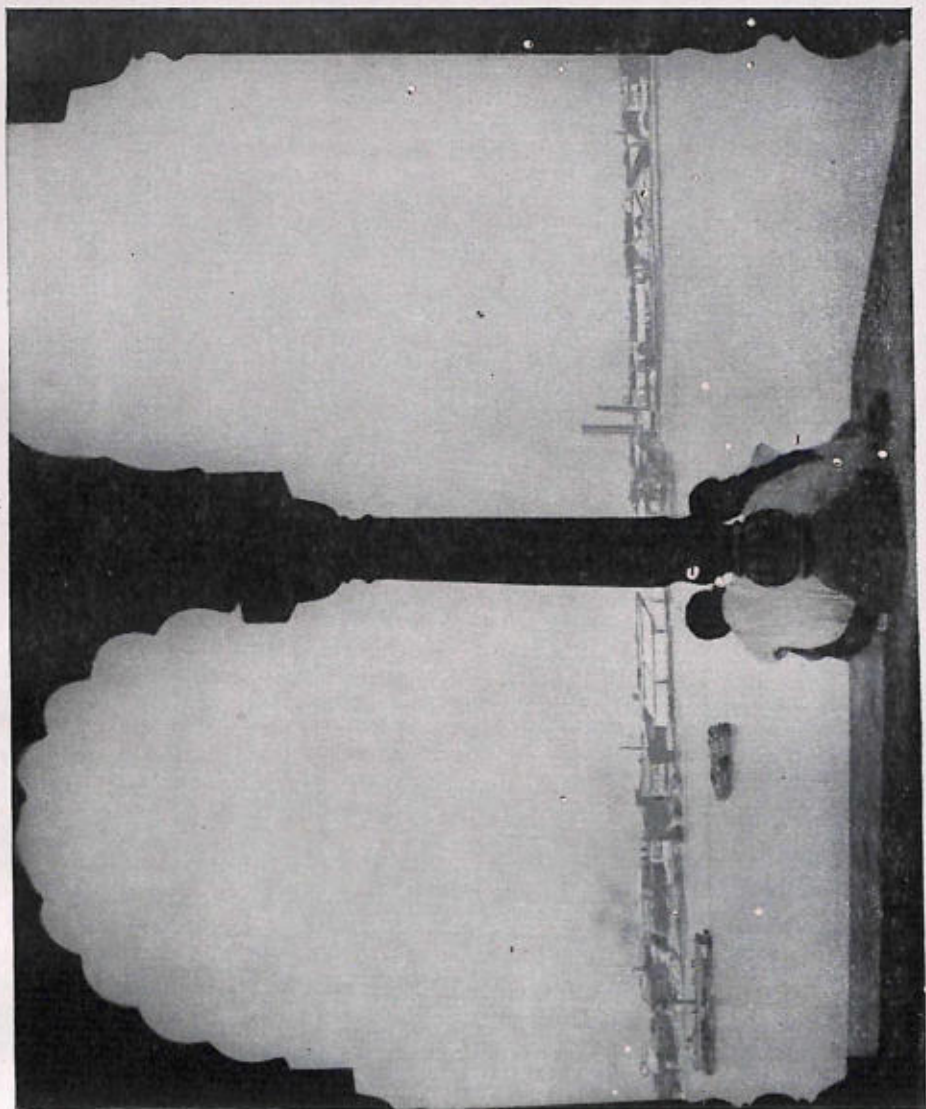
### Gujarata Maratha Dravida Utkala Banga

The Coom, on the north of Madras and the Adyar on the south hardly provide waterways to the city, as it is right on the ocean and the two are no better than nullahs. Similarly for Bombay the Panvel creek or further up the Mahim creek are merely two small fingers of the Arabian Sea extended inland, not even like the backwaters of Kerala which run parallel to the Arabian Sea, deep inside the mainland. Bombay is therefore a sea-city too.

Leaving aside the Capital and the two old Presidency towns, let us take a look at some growing towns like Hyderabad and Ahmedabad. When the Adilshahi chieftain established Hyderabad 400 years ago on the bank of the Musi, he prayed for Allah's bounty so that the town could, in the fullness of time, abound with more men than fish in the Musi. Hyderabad has today grown astride the river. It overflowed its banks and worked havoc on the town at the beginning of the century. The Musi is today a trickling water course jacketted between two embankments and pouring its water into the artificial lakes of Osman Sagar and Himayat Sagar. Ahmedabad is also astride a river—the Sabarmati of international fame—which for long was the permanent address of Mahatma Gandhi. Despite five bridges over the river joining the two parts of the town, the Sabarmati is for most part of the year a dry bed.

The Bhagirathi, or the Hooghly as the Sahibs were fond of calling it, is to us nothing but the sacred Ganga. Its character and mood is altogether different. Eighty miles up of the Bay of Bengal, this river brought Job Charnock in 1692 sailing from Hijli, a port

\* Journal of the India Society of Engineers, December 1976.



## INTO THE FRAGRANT ISLAND

In the murmur of the river I heard a lot. 'Where are you coming from?' I asked it and got the reply, 'From the locks of Siva'. I recalled the story of Bhagirath arranging the descent of the Ganga. The stream journeys to the sea through villages and busy towns alike. The water drops have however no respite on falling into the sea. They rise high heated by the sun and again find their way on the mountain top inside its mighty locks.

This is how Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, in his 'Bhagirathir Utsa Sandhane' (1921) explained in a nutshell the water cycle in nature as well as the role of the Ganga which is more than a river to us. In later life he repaired to Sijberia near Uluberia on the right bank of the river (which could have been Charnock's choice in place of Calcutta) whenever he could. To commemorate the favourite spot of, the scientist the Irrigation Department put up in 1971 a platform and a plaque round the peepul tree at its rest house.

The picture overleaf catches Calcutta's Ganga in a more romantic mood on Strand between Outram Ghat and Takhta Ghat, the opposite bank showing the Shalimar area of Howrah. We see the spot through the Gwalior Monument, sense the bliss brought by a cool breeze and love to be lost for a while in the slow murmuring flow of the river. Since October 1971 when the picture was taken the Monument has lost to vandals all marble pieces as well as many of the ornamental metallic arches as seen in the photo. This is despite the call of the Calcutta Port Trust: 'This garden and the promenade . . . have been provided . . . so that the people . . . can get an idea of the beauties of the river, . . . a view of the existing movement of the ships and vessels . . . which is still the heart of the economic life of this metropolis and an opportunity to share optimism . . . in the future of this Port and of this city with a great past'.

midway from the Bay and sowed the seed of the great city.

This river joined us to the world, took our golden cargo to other ports and habitations, acted as the seed bed of India's industry, education and administration and has ever been quenching our thirst of water. To us it is the real Ganga or Bhagirathi. Thousands of years ago, for some geographical reason, the main water of the Ganga started flowing through the Padma. That did not make the Padma the Ganges, nor the Ganga a refugee river or an international waterway. The Ganga is intimately ours and we the Calcuttans are the sentinels at the last step of its thousand-mile journey to the sea via Ganga Sagar.

That is why the early completion of the Farakka Barrage was a matter of our life and livelihood, as is today the question of getting fresh upland water from there for the expansion of our Palta Water Works and for the start up of new water works at Garden Reach on our bank of the river and at Uluberia for those on the other bank. We have to be self-sufficient in potable water from the river. Subterranean water, whether pumped out by giant tubewells or lifted up by shallow hand sets, can only be a temporary, if not ephemeral affair. These can never be the substitute of adequate and strong arrangement for the treatment and supply of surface water. The Ganga has therefore to continue as our life-giver.

The head-works for the production of potable water out of the raw Ganga water are located at Palta, about 30 km north of the city and 5 km north of Barrackpore. Palta has an area of 480 acres and a river frontage of about a mile. Water is then pumped to Talla at the northern end of the city. The pumping is done by four trunk mains or large pipes, running along the Barrackpore Trunk Road and being 72", 60", 48" and 42" in diameter. The first three serve the pressure mains at Talla.

Talla is the bulk pumping station for the city. It was conceived in 1890 and its capacity augmented in stages—to 60 million gallons a day in 1910 and 80 mgd in 1930. It has three underground reservoirs of 7, 8 and 10 million gallons capacity and one overhead reservoir of 9 mg. There are three pumping stations with turbine pumps operated by boilers and electrically driven motors and pumps. The distribution of water from Talla to the city is through four zonal mains at heads varying between 70 ft. and 88 ft. according to the size of the main and the hours of supply. The Talla-Palta system comprises a big and unified unit. The running and maintenance of such a system needs constant renewal and renovation of the component units, even to maintain supply at a steady level. But this is not sufficient, for the growing demand of water needs added installation too.

**Give Us this day Our daily Need**

In assessing the need for supply of per capita potable water, the Master Plan took into account: (i) substantial loss in the very old and extensive distribution system as it exists today, (ii) the presence of more than a million commuters daily into the city and (iii) the existence of homeless people like pavement dwellers, beggars and street vendors. Though a consumption of 40 gallons per capita per day is considered adequate to meet the basic need of water, an allocation of 60 g.c.d. was recommended for the Calcutta Municipal Area, taking into account the above points as well as the necessity of water for municipal purpose. On the basis of the present city population of 3.3 millions, the daily requirement figure works out to 200 million gallons per day. The average supply from the Talla Palta complex is now 120 million gallons per day to which may be added 25 m.g.d. from deep tubewells (200 Nos. of which 50 are in Tollygunge) and 5 million gallons from hand tubewells, making a total supply of 150 m.g.d. There is thus a shortage of about 50 million gallons. At the tap end the actual will however be substantially less due to avoidable and unavoidable wastages.

According to the programme outlined by the Master Plan to meet the requirement, the supply from Palta was envisaged to be 160 m.g.d. and from the new Garden Reach Water Works in the south of the city to be 60 m.g.d. making a total of 220 m.g.d. in the interim phase to be in full operation by 1981. To attain the above objectives, large scale capital works comprising 50 items have been taken up by CMDA at Palta and Talla.

By 1981, however, the population of the city of Calcutta including the commuters may be of the order of 4.5 millions, and to supply water @ 60 gallons per capita per day, we should require to produce about 270 m.g.d. It is therefore, clear that even if deep tubewells are continued (despite the attendant problems of high salinity and iron content) which should only be viewed as stop-gap arrangement, early completion and commissioning of Garden Reach Water Works is of prime importance to the City, particularly for the southern extremities including Tiljala, Kasba and Tollygunge which are today entirely dependent on subterranean water. Somehow, this work has not received so far the urgent priority it deserves, and, despite CMDA's earnest pleadings, it might not even be posed for World Bank assistance.

**To purify & pipe the Ganga**

To meet the growing demand of water two major works were taken up by the Corporation about seven years back. These are constructions of a 100 million gallon a day clariflocculator at

Palta and a 7 mgd reservoir at Talla along with a new pumping station with 3 Nos. 54" diameter main connecting the pumping station with the reservoir. Unfortunately, for lack of funds and for other reasons, these could not be completed by the Corporation. With the passage of time, the efficiency of the running units at Palta and Talla came down and needed overhauling, renovation and the provision of stand-by pumps. A high powered Committee set up at the instance of the Central Government went deep into the matter and identified various items of works needed to be executed. Such works are broadly of five categories, (i) completion of earlier works, (ii) renovation and renewal of the existing installation, (iii) new items, (iv) work aimed to achieve flexibility in operation between the new and the old systems and (v) new equipment for running and maintenance.

As the supply of potable water forms the stem of civic services or improvement thereto, CMDA took up the implementation of these schemes at an estimated cost of Rs. 3.80 crores from April 1975. It became apparent however after a few months' working that the proper devetailing and co-ordination of original work with the running and maintenance work of the installations is essential. Calcutta Corporation and CMDA therefore agreed to place the Talla Palta System under the charge of Senior Director, CMDA, giving him an ex-officio status of Special Dy. Commissioner in the Calcutta Corporation with head quarters at Palta. All the Corporation staff at Talla and Palta headed by one Executive Engineer works under this unified administration which is equipped with power and funds to carry out all original and maintenance works and has the usual civic, mechanical and electrical wings.

That this arrangement has succeeded can be best judged from the achievement. How the supply of filtered water from Talla Palta has gone up over the last two years and a half may be seen from the following table where the figures are the daily averages in million gallons:

Month	1975	1976	1977
January	92.44	110.07	122.55
February	89.66	113.19	125.93
March	100.20	117.35	131.80
April	114.19	119.94	134.11
May	106.30	126.31	137.32
June	104.29	120.86	133.84
July	112.53	118.51	125.58
August	107.87	123.18	
September	99.90	120.01	
October	118.04	131.10	
November	115.59	123.73	
December	113.55	123.98	

Along with maintaining this increased daily supply, many important original works are being implemented that has given stability to the system. During the last financial year a sum of Rs. 1.34 crores was spent from the CMDA side and this year it is planned to execute works costing Rs. 2.27 crores.

#### **Progress Report for Palta Headworks**

At Palta, there are two systems of filtration—the slow sand and the rapid gravity. The rated capacity of the two may be taken as 70 mgd and 60 mgd. The backbone of the first system is the pre-settling tanks, the sedimentation basin and the filtration beds. The de-silting of pre-settling tanks was so long limited to the removal of the silt that deposits in about two years. There are four tanks, and not more than one could be done in one year. As a result one tank (No: 4) was completely filled up while Nos. 2 and 3 reached a reduced capacity of 15 to 20%. It is gratifying to report that tank No. 4 has been completely desilted to a depth of about 14 ft, no tanks having been re-excavated to its designed capacity during the past two decades. Further, mechanised de-silting using suction dredger is going to be installed very soon for de-silting the sedimentation basin. This will have the benefit of carrying on the clearance work without disturbing or suspending the operation of the sedimentation or final settling tank. The filtering media of slow sand beds are changed and along with that under-drains are being cleansed. As a result, the beds are now regaining new life and reaching the desired limit of yield.

As for the 60 mgd plant i.e. the new system using rapid gravity method all the component units are being repaired and overhauled. The filtering media of R.G. beds are being changed and the inlet system is being improved. The two large pumps in the old Pressure Station are new in a reasonably dependable standard, on execution of some important items of works. Two motors are being imported at a cost of about Rs. 30 lakhs to be installed there, replacing the defunct steam turbines. On the installation of these two units, the old system will have the requisite stand-by pumps. To achieve flexibility in operation between the two systems, three major works are under execution—one 48" diameter interplant connection, one 54" diameter raw water interplant connection and the third 72" diameter gravity main, connecting the clear water sumps of the two systems. The completion of 100 mgd clariflocculators is being materialised in a progressive manner from July onwards. The Palta laboratory, a vital unit for qualitative control on production is being renovated and equipped with modern instruments and equipment.

**Attention to Talla & the Transmission System**

At Aalla, commissioning of the new pumping unit, comprising 7 mg. reservoir, 3 Nos. 54" dia main lines and the Pumping Station equipped with two 1.75 mgh capacity pumps, running with two as stand-by, has greatly improved the running capacity of the Station. The 9 mg capacity steel elevated reservoir—a unique construction completed more than 60 years ago for which any city may be proud—has been taken up for renovation. Major repairs and rectification are necessary to extend to this construction a new lease of life and these have been entrusted to a specialised firm on which the total expenditure may be around Rs. 40 lakhs. Two motors are being imported for Talla also at a cost about Rs. 30 lakhs, to be installed at the Pumping Station in replacement of the existing steam turbines. Besides, a number of important items of work are under execution with a view to give these installations a new lease of life, a reasonable standard of reliability and the requisite stand-by capacity.

As I have mentioned, the last zonal main was laid in 1930. Since then the supply from Talla has been raised to 120 m.g.d. but without any addition to the zonal mains, though some reserve mains have been laid in different parts of the city. Due to the eccentric situation of the Talla Pumping Station, on the northern fringe of the city, the distribution problems have long been felt, and schemes were envisaged from time to time for boosting the supply in southern parts.

Subsequently, the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority took up schemes to construct two boosting stations at Subodh Mullick and Auckland Squares. When completed these stations will give considerable relief to the central and southern parts of the city by increasing the terminal pressure. The problem of distribution will not be wholly solved even after the two boosting stations are completed. It has been our experience that demand for water reaches a high peak during the early morning and the evening hours, and unless additional zonal mains are laid, it will not be possible to meet the peak demand. During the last few months the city was supplied with about 120 m.g.d. from Talla. Still there has been scarcity in the eastern and southern parts and out of the 120 m.g.d., 60% is required to be supplied during the five hours in the morning. Keeping this in view, there is an urgent necessity of laying a fifth zonal main to carry water from Talla to the eastern and southern parts of the city. This will also act as an alternative to the corroded zone IV main and augment supplies to the newly developed areas in the eastern fringe.

### Corrosion & Damage to Pipes

Calcutta's steel mains are in badly corroded condition in many places. The same is the position of the 60" steel main from Palta to Talla. When a part of the latter is being renewed by the Calcutta Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority under the CMDA programme, the rest—in better condition—will have to be maintained like the steel mains within the city area. Following the request of the Corporation to Government, the CMDA has set up an Expert Committee for the examination of the position as to how these steel mains (filtered and unfiltered water mains) may be protected against corrosion and where renewal of the pipe line may be necessary and at what stage.

The high-powered Expert Committee's recommendations are awaited. It is estimated that about Rs. 20 crores will be required for renovating, laying, extending and replacing old zonal mains in sections. This is apart from Rs. 1 crore to be spent by the Calcutta Metropolitan Water & Sanitation Authority for cathodic protection of unprotected steel mains. Apart from the steel mains and other reserve mains, about 200 km. of service mains are required to be replaced and renewed. CMDA has already started a computer study of the service mains and it is understood that a comprehensive programme for their strengthening will be taken up, the cost for which may be in the region of Rs. 50 crores for the entire city.

In most of the city roads, the service mains are on one side of the road which necessitates the laying of underground G.I. pipes across the roads leading to individual consumers. Frequent leaks in these pipes damage the carriageway and in view of the high cost of maintenance of the roads it is felt that at least in 'A' class roads of the city the service mains should be laid on either side of the carriageway. This will involve laying about 50 kms. of pipeline.

### Waste not Want not

Considerable quantity of water supplied from the city mains are wasted due to leakages of steel mains, zonal and reserve mains and house connections, as well through 8000 and odd stand posts, indiscriminately granted during the Councillors' regime. In order to prevent the wastage, steps have been taken in regard to (i) scientific study, (ii) house connexions and (iii) stand posts. A waste prevention study is being conducted with the assistance of the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, Nagpur. They have taken up the work in three of the 260 sub-districts of water at an approximate cost of Rs. 60,000/-. When

the survey is completed and staff trained, it will be necessary to install waste meters in the sub-districts and purchase modern instruments, special gadgets etc. The work in all the sub-districts will cost about Rs. 65 lakhs.

Then there is considerable waste through house connections and standposts. As already decided by Government and envisaged in the recent Amendment Act, the supply of water to houses will be metered. Approximately Rs. 3.5 crores will be needed to provide meters in 1,20,000 city houses with filter water connections. The work may be spread over a period of five years. Initially, 2000 meters have been proposed to be installed in the houses of large customers, having 1" or larger ferrule connections which will cost about Rs. 12 lakhs. The work is being held up for want of funds.

Although a substantial number of the 8000 standposts relate to bustee areas, these are a source of serious wastage up to about 60% of the water flowing through them. In view of the special circumstances prevailing in the city, it may not be possible for all the bustee dwellers to have their individual house connections. The efforts made so far by the Corporation as well as welfare organisations like Bharat Sevak Samaj for fitting plastic, wooden or other inexpensive plugs or stop cocks to the taps have proved a failure, for the plugs are still damaged or removed. It is reported that CMDA have devised some stopcocks which if damaged or pilfered would stop the flow of water altogether. The efficacy of this gadget remains to be seen. Another solution may be to cut down the number of standposts by one third which are in any case superfluous and wasteful, and then in stages replace half of the balance standposts by say 1500 hand tubewells. Wastage can be minimised by such sinking of hand tubewells where the local negligence is most conspicuous. The approximate cost of sinking a hand-tubewell is Rs. 5000/- and in such a programme of action we would require Rs. 75 lakhs for 1500 tubewells.

#### **Giant Tubewells**

The Corporation resorted to water supply through big diameter tubewells for boosting pressure in central and southern parts of the city in 1956 as an interim arrangement. This has continued for the last 20 years due to delay in the augmentation of water supply from the river. Out of about 200 big dia. tubewells in the city, Tollygunge area alone has 50. Entire water supply there is from these tubewells sunk by C.I.T. and the Corporation. The Tollygunge Emergency Water Supply Scheme was originally sanctioned as an interim arrangement for five years at a cost of

about Rs. 3.5 crores, but it is now expected to continue upto 1982 i.e. till the Garden Reach Water Works come into operation. Many of these tubewells become inefficient or defunct after three or four years and throw a large burden on the Corporation finance. A programme for sinking 40 tubewells per year is imperative for the next five years of which 20 alone should be in Tollygunge. The cost per annum would come to about Rs. 60 lakhs.

The water from these tubewells on storing and piping is found to contain bacteria. Government in the Health Department have suggested chlorination of water as a health measure, particularly against cholera. Twelve chlorinators are being supplied by the CMDA, against the total need of 100. The approximate capital cost will be Rs. 20 lakhs and the operational cost Rs. 1.5 lakhs per annum.

#### **Unfiltered Water supply**

The city is being supplied with about 90 million gallons of unfiltered water through two stations at Mullickghat and Watgunj for fire-fighting, street-watering, washing stands, flushing gullies etc. For the first 60 years of existence, water supplied from those stations used to be without chlorine. But after an outbreak of cholera in the city in 1962 the Health Directorate of Government suggested chlorination in unfiltered water which is being done from 1963 at an annual cost of about Rs. 3 lakhs.

The future of the supply is not very certain and in a report prepared by the W.H.O. in 1965 and approved by Government, it was stipulated that the supply would be replaced with clarified water to be available from Garden Reach Water Works. The matter has not been pursued in serious detail by the authorities in later years, presumably because the make-up supply, whether from Palta or the proposed plant at Garden Reach, was not there and secondly underground reservoirs or alternative sources of water for fire fighting could not also be arranged so far. In a review meeting of CMDA two months ago, it was however decided to make a fresh study of the matter in depth. The Works and Housing Ministry of the Government of India have accordingly taken-up the study.

In view of the chronic financial stringency of the Corporation and also the prevailing uncertainty about unfiltered water no fund has been provided for the proper upkeep of the pumping machinery and pipelines. There are about 400 miles of pipe lines and 16,000 ground hydrants in the city. It is a matter of decision if the supply of unfiltered water is to be maintained.

If so, a programme is required to be drawn up for the rehabilitation of the pumping stations either for raw water pumping which would be adequate for fire fighting or as boosting stations for clarified water from Garden Reach Water Works when it comes into being. This will comprise relaying or renovation of the steel mains and laying of service lines in areas where the old service pipe lines (4", 6" & 9") are rotten.

#### **Water Expenses & Receipts**

The Corporation is spending on an average Rs. 5½ crores for water supply and is realising hardly Rs. 50 lakhs by selling water. The Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 provided for a free supply of 750 gallons (3,400 litres) of filtered water for every rupee of consolidated rate so long as the water supplied was not separately charged. This has been omitted by the Calcutta Municipal (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 1976. The Ordinance has also enjoined that in the budget, the estimate of receipts from water rate and that of expenditure should be shown separately and a separate account maintained, prohibiting receipts on water being diverted for any other purpose. The Ordinance has since been converted into an Act.

Government have accepted in principle that water supply is a specific, identifiable utility service for which the consumers should pay in proportion to its use and that such service should be made financially viable. To give effect to the principle of water supply financing for itself, a programme for introducing meters for water supply has to be implemented within the next five years and an immediate beginning be made by establishing metered supply for large consumers, both for domestic and other uses. Eventually collection through the water rate is to be replaced by the sale of water through meters.

In the context of the above direction, a proposal for the installation of meters in individual premises has been worked out and the estimated cost will be Rs. 3.5 crores. As a first phase of the work, 2000 meters in large premises having 1" or larger ferrule connections could be installed. But even for this the Corporation can ill afford to set apart the cost of Rs. 12 lakhs and require financial assistance.

#### **An Oasis, not a Mirage**

Some sure steps have been taken in tackling the water problem of Calcutta. The sustained interest taken by the World Bank has been instrumental not only in the statutory allocation from the consolidated rate to water and sewerage charges, as a pre-

READY TO SERVE—LOVE ALL

requisite to the supply of water having regard to the production cost and measurement by meters, but also for a deep study for the distribution system in the city. This study has just been undertaken by a Calcutta firm of consultants in collaboration with an American firm and will go a long way towards the renovation of our underground pipe lines to be fed by the second nodal point of Garden Reach in the south, instead of only Palta at the north as was true for a century. The NEERI study of leaking pipe lines and wastage of water will no doubt be suitably linked to it.

We therefore feel that the time is not far off when we will start receiving a few bouquets instead of brickbats, as had been our fate for the last few years. We imagine that epithets and advice as per specimen below would be fewer then:

"We have a water tower constructed in 1972-73 ... a monument in honour of donkeys who live in this area—a carrot dangling all the time but we the thirsty do not know why on earth was this constructed, who will operate it and where from will the water come ...

"We should be grateful if you apply the famous theory of Newton in this matter—the theory of inertia. Matter continues in its existing state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line unless that state is changed by external force. The water works department is in a state of rest! Why not apply external force?"

We daresay we are applying ourselves! And we intend to proceed on a straight line so that the supply of water keeps up with the rising need.

## OF SEWERS & DRAINS

The insanitary and unhealthy condition of Calcutta first drew the attention of Lord Wellesley, the Governor General. His Minute of 1803 was a terse but comprehensive document: 'The construction of public drains and water-courses of the town is extremely defective. They neither answer the purpose of cleansing the town, nor of discharging the annual inundations occasioned by the rise of the river, or by the excessive fall of rain during the south-west monsoon. . . The defects of the climate of Calcutta during the latter part of the rainy season may indeed be ascribed . . . to the state of the drains and water courses, and to the stagnate water remaining in the town and its vicinity. The health of the town would certainly be . . . improved by an improvement of . . . drainage and cleansing the streets . . . (Perhaps) an original error has been committed in draining the town towards the river Hooghly . . . the level of the country inclines towards the salt-water lake and . . . principal channels of the public drain and water-courses ought to be conducted in that direction.'

The Governor-General proceeded to appoint a Committee to consider and report the means of improving the town with the following instructions among others :

- (1) To make a survey of levels and to ascertain what alteration might be necessary in the direction of the public drains.
- (2) To examine the relative level of the river in the rains, as compared with the level of the drains.
- (3) To suggest what description of drains or water courses would prove most efficient (a) to prevent rain water stagnating in Calcutta and its vicinity and (b) to cleanse the town.
- (4) To report what establishment seemed necessary for cleansing and maintaining in repair the drains and waer-courses.

### **Improvement to Lottery to Fever Hospital**

The Improvement Committee was accordingly appointed in 1809, but before it could tackle the problem the works were apparently transferred to the Lottery Committee in 1817. Apart from the construction of the Beliaghata Canal in 1810 and Lieutenant Schalch's Survey of the town in 1821, the special problem of

drainage had barely been touched when in 1840 the Fever Hospital Committee took over the task. It is interesting to note that Schalch proposed to construct large masonry sewers from the Hooghly to the proposed circular canal to carry all refuse and filth to the Salt Lakes.

We get descriptions of the 'abominable drains' in the northern parts of the town in the municipal papers of those days. The drains were unpaved and coolies had to be continually employed in digging out the black mud and filth, but in the absence of any fall or constant flow the relief was temporary. The bottom of the drain was often two feet below the supposed outlet and its deposit of filth comprising the content of privies in different stages of decomposition gave off, a stench so disagreeable that it was prudent not to disturb it.

The abomination of abominations was called kennels, mostly abounding in north Calcutta. Deep drains, with brick walls and a heavy deposit of filth and stagnant water, were covered a couple of feet apart with stalls on platforms and the only means of cleansing the 'sloughs of despond' (as Lieut Abercrombie, Superintendent of Conservancy, Calcutta Corporation describes them) was through small gaps at distances of ten feet or so. After even a light fall of rain the 'kennels', having no outlet, overflowed and the streets were covered with a foot of water which took 8 to 24 hours to run off.

There were several schemes mooted by the Fever Hospital Committee for the drainage of the city, the cardinal principles being an elaborate system of large underground drains or sewers, to be flushed by river water and taken away by surface reservoirs and channels. The scheme requiring special mention is that of Captain Forges, Royal Engineers, who thought that the site of Calcutta whether chosen originally by accident or design, was chosen well from the drainage point of view, for the lowest part was, according to Schalch's Survey 8.5 feet above the highest level of the Salt Lakes. Briefly, he proposed to construct a large masonry aqueduct complete with sluice gates from the river at the old Chitpore bridge to the old Park Street Cemetery, and connecting it to the Salt Lakes by a wide open canal parallel to the Entally Canal.

#### Laying of Modern Sewerage

The industry and zeal of the Fever Hospital Committee, lamented S. W. Goode ICS, Deputy Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation in his book 'Municipal Calcutta, 1916', 'secured no practical results . . . and . . . the non possumus of finance proved a sufficient bar to all such reform.' In 1855 the sewerage scheme had

however been given the first shape through Clark, an experienced engineer brought over from UK. On November 20, 1855 he submitted a scheme of drainage to Municipal Commissioners, for an estimated cost of Rs. 26.5 lakhs. The scheme as finally approved comprised five main sewers with branches, accessories and outfall works and provided pumping power at Palmer's Bridge sufficient to lift sewage 14 feet into a high level sewer. It took 16 years to complete the main sewers of the scheme. By 1875 about 38 miles of brick and 37 miles of stoneware pipe sewers were constructed. By 1890 when there were 37 miles of main or brick sewers and 147 miles of pipe sewers, the total expenditure on the underground drainage system came to about Rs. 110 lakhs .

In 1889, 8188 acres of the added and fringe areas were incorporated in the original area of 3766 acres. The new areas fell into three blocks: (i) west and south of Tolly's Nulla, draining towards the south and south west, (ii) east of Tolly's Nullah including Ballygunge and Entally draining towards the Bidyadhari, and (iii) between the Circular Canal and Road and the Eastern Bengal Railway depending on the drains of old areas.

The sewers and drains of the city we see today were essentially completed in three stages. First under 'Clark's Sewerage Scheme', then in the second stage between 1891 and 1906 under 'Suburban Sewerage' and 'Bantala Outfall' schemes and lastly between 1935 and 1943 under 'Dr. Dey's Outfall and Internal Drainage Scheme'. Clark's scheme comprising the Town or Central area of 7.5 sq. miles, was completed in 1896 after several modifications. It entailed the installation of a small pumping station of 18.5 cusecs capacity at Palmer's Bridge to pump the discharge to Raja Khal, an offshoot of the river Bidyadhari. With the southward expansion of the town, Baldwin Latham of London Country Council was commissioned to work out a scheme for about 12.5 sq. miles on the south. When completed it enlarged the Palmer's Bridge Station, installed a new pumping station at Ballygunge, laid high level sewers from there to Topsisia and excavated town and suburban storm water channels upto Bantala on the Bidyadhari.

By 1928 the Bidyadhari which had its spill area adjoining Manik-tala and been receiving raw sewage year after year became dead and there was a deadlock in the drainage system of the city. Dr. B. N. Dey, a practising Engineer in UK, was brought over to work out a resuscitation programme. He had two channels—one for dry weather and the other for storm water—constructed upto Kulti 17 miles down of Bantala to the river Kultigong to discharge the sewage after sedimentation in two tanks. The Kultigong empties into the Matla estuary.

**Liquid Waste Disposal**

The sewerage and drainage of Calcutta suffers from three basic deficiencies, (i) the saucer shaped surface of the city, (ii) mix-up of sewerage and drainage systems and (iii) existence of large unsewered areas and congested pockets comprising almost 40% of the total area. The city, having been reclaimed prematurely from swamps and low lying areas, has large parts lower than the high tide level and in drainage, has to be assisted by pumping in a large manner. Then the drainage is channelised through a combined sewer carrying sewage and sullage too. The third factor relates to fringe areas of the city which drain out through surface drains either by gravity or through small pumping stations. Thus Cossipore discharges into Bagjola and Krishtopor canals, Maniktala into New Cut Canal and Southern Salt Lake, Topsia-Tangra-Tiljala into Town or Suburban storm water channels and Tollygunge into Tolly's Nulla.

The problem of the city's drainage may be looked into from two aspects—the internal arrangement and the outfall disposal into a river or water-course. The efficiency of the system depends, on, the one hand, on properly sectioned conduits and pipes so that there is an even flow within the city and, on the other, the suitability of the water-course for receiving the flow without being blocked up. An even flow of the liquid waste, whether of excess water or of sewage, is not possible by gravity alone in the topography of Calcutta. The sewers are sloped from the west to the east, following the natural slope of the ground. The drainage has however to be pumped at selected localities to give it the necessary head for onward flow till final disposal through the outfall channel into the tidal rivers further east.

As has been mentioned, drains in the city of Calcutta have not only to carry night-soil and other liquid wastes, but also rain water during the monsoons. In other words they are largely of the combined type carrying both sewage and storm water through the same conduits. For heavy rainfall therefore the drainage is not adequate and occasional flooding is the outcome. The combined system is designed on the basis of running off  $\frac{1}{4}$ " rainfall per hour for the northern part or the town system and on the basis of  $\frac{1}{6}$ " rainfall for the southern part or the suburban system. Flooding results also from an insufficient number of street inlets, congested condition in lateral sewers and substantial hydraulic inadequacy in trunk sewers. As regards the unsewered areas on the fringe, they have again been much built up over the years. Previously water could run off to open grounds lowlying areas and tanks. Now water stands much longer during a heavy rainfall and causes flooding.

Collected drainage and sewage from under the streets flow down to the pumping stations located on the eastern side where the lifting takes place. In some cases for the flow to these stations, intermediate boosting is necessary. Smaller stations perform this by creating even flow at syphons crossing under canals or for dealing with sullage collected from open drains. Let us now take an account of these big and small pumping stations.

#### Quiet Flow & Smart Pumping

The total area served by Calcutta's conduit drainage is about 22 sq. miles out of which 7.5 sq. miles of the northern areas are drained through the Palmer's Bridge Pumping Station, 12.5 sq. miles of the southern area through the Ballygunge Pumping Station and the eastern areas through the Dhapa Lock Pumping Station. There are also three smaller stations, namely, Topsia, Maniktala and Mominpur. The remaining areas including Maniktala and Tollygunge are generally drained by gravity, particularly through open drains, although Government set up at Chowbhaga a pumping station on the Panchannagram Drainage Channel serving some areas of Tollygunge. The open channels, viz., the Maniktala and the Bainchitala khals, the Tolly's Nulla, the Tollygunge-Panchannagram canal and the Calcutta canals comprising Circular, Beliaghata and Krishtopur canals have sluices at their outfalls where necessary.

The outfall system consists of a storm water and a parallel dry weather flow channels with connexions from Palmer's Bridge, Ballygunge and Dhapa Lock Pumping Stations. It provides a sedimentation tank mechanism at Bantala with a by-pass arrangement. The system being a combined one, sewage is diluted during the monsoon months when both channels are used. During the dry weather, the smaller flow is principally sewage, flowing through the DWF channel. The channel was designed to be pucca i.e., lined, but was constructed only in part. For all practical purposes, therefore, the storm water channel with its earthen bed and sides has been carrying both sewage and storm water throughout the year.

As a result considerable silting took place and the bed level rose in the channel, raising the water level too. This strained the pumping operation at the three stations, particularly during heavy rains. Government decided in the late 50s to take over outfall system as proper maintenance could no longer be avoided. There were however some complications and the actual take-over by the Irrigation Department took place in 1968. Since then a greater part of the storm water channel was silt cleared bringing down the water level and reducing the strain on the pumps. The sedi-

mentation tanks have also been renovated. When the remaining part of the DWF channel is constructed and additional sedimentation tanks are installed, the capacity of the drainage system would further improve.

The maximum capacity of the Palmer's Bridge Pumping Station is 34.77 million gallon per hour, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch run off per hour, and of the Ballygunge Station 25.77 mgh of  $\frac{1}{6}$ th inch run off per hour. That explains why for the heavier precipitations of the season the pumps take time to clear the rain water and to that extent there will be a standing sheet of water on the streets. The capacity of the smaller pumping stations are Dhapa Lock 6.78 mgh. Topsia 3.12 mgh, Manicktala 0.54 mgh and Mominpur 3.50 mgh. For unsewered areas, there are 11 pumping stations with the following capacities in mgh: Birpara (1.13), Belgachia (0.18), Narkeldanga (0.54), Ultadanga (0.92), Beliaghata (0.68), Kulia Tangra (0.53), Pagladanga (0.60), Jodhpur Park (0.12 for DWF and 0.48 for storm water), Chetla Lock (0.54) and Nimak Mahal (0.10). These make a total of 17 pumping stations.

#### Draining out—Above and Under

At this stage we may give some more statistics about sewers and drains in the city. The area covered by the underground drainage system is 21.08 sq. miles out of 29.5 sq. miles of Calcutta proper and another one sq. mile out of 7.4 sq. miles of Tollygunge. In Calcutta proper, bustees and private roads are largely outside the sewers. The quantity of domestic sewage is 120 million gallons per day and of industrial sewage 50 mgd. The

#### SMILE A DAY



Based on two cartoons: in Jugantar dated 29 April, 1973 and in Amrita Bazar Patrika dated 26 September, 1973. The reference is to the claim by a nationalised bank to make Calcutta 'a bewitching opulent beauty', while the water logged street covers up all garbage and potheles.

OF SEWERS & DRAINS

average day water discharge is 160 mgd and the maximum storm water discharge 858 mgd. Over 80% of Calcutta the annual average of rainfall is 64" which occurs during the three or four monsoon months. On an average the city gets flooded 12 times a year.

There are about 653 kilometres of surface and nikashi drains and 777 km of brick and pipe sewers, making a total of 1412 km. The added areas account for most of the former category, namely 534 km. The original areas of the city under the four districts, on the other hand, account for most of the latter category, namely 637 km. The break-up of all types of drains and sewers and the geographical distribution may be seen from the following table :

LENGTH OF DRAINS AND SEWERS (KM)

	Surface drains		Nikashi		Pipe sewer	Brick sewer	Total
	Pucca	Cutchra	Pucca	Cutchra			
Dist. I.	0.25	—	—	—	163.03	38.29	201.57
Cossipore	100.95	43.95	36.47	29.54	0.81	—	211.72
Dist. II.	1.00	—	—	—	95.18	40.25	134.43
Maniktala	61.08	4.40	60.96	—	21.96	—	148.40
Dist. III.	—	20.58	—	9.15	120.64	39.09	189.43
Tollygunge	49.92	98.08	48.50	—	16.80	—	213.30
Dist. IV	21.83	14.02	23.38	10.74	191.40	51.42	312.79
Total	235.03	181.03	169.31	49.43	607.05	169.05	1,411.67

A surface drain is generally U or V shaped and open (rarely covered) and caters to a small area by covering all types of drainage discharge except night soil. A nikashi caters to a bigger area, carries the combined discharge from the surface drains and ultimately leads to the point of pumping. These are naturally bigger drains with a smaller proportion of cutcha variety, cutcha drains being mostly outside the city limits. Both surface drains and nikashis are looked after and desilted by the Conservancy Department as a part of scavenging.

In sewerage area, both dry weather flow and storm water discharge are through pipe sewers, discharging into brick or mother sewers of bigger size, and ultimately through the pumping station into the drainage channel away from the city. Pipe sewers are circular, ranging from 6" to 18" in diameter and mainly made of stoneware. Those laid now are however of concrete. Mother sewers are usually of brick and are either circular or U shaped. The District Engineers maintain pipe sewers including drainage adjuncts, and the centrally located Drainage Department maintains brick and trunk sewers and the drainage pumping stations.

**Master Plan Schemes**

To improve the drainage system in the sewered area, the Corporation prepared some schemes as per Master Plan and started executing them which have since 1974 been transferred to CMDA for completion. For the unsewered area and low lying pockets schemes were prepared by CMDA. Some of these in Cossipore, Manicktala, Topsia-Tangra and Tollygunge areas are being executed by CMWSA, in Cossipore-Belgachia areas by CMDA and in Manicktala by CIT, At the present rate of progress it will take years to yield the benefit. The schemes require to be expedited.

In the 17 drainage pumping stations there are 75 pumping units of different capacities, but not always adequate. The Corporation had some pumps replaced at Ballygunge, Mominpur and Manicktala stations CMWSA and itself and some newly installed at Topsia, Kulia-Tangra, Pagladanga and Mominpur by CMWSA. Five pumps are on order for Palmer's Bridge and Ballygunge stations which will require new pump houses there.

We may go into the two major systems of Town and Suburban in some more details. The Town system in the north comprises trunk sewers discharging in an easterly direction from the relatively high ground near the Hooghly, by gravity, to a system of intercepting trunks east of Upper and Lower Circular Roads. Palmer's Bridge Pumping Station receives the sewage, and pumps it to the high level sewers at Topsia Point and thence to the Calcutte Corporation storm water channel leading to the Kulti river. The Suburban system comprises trunks discharging in easterly and southeasterly directions to Ballygunge Pumping station from where sewage is lifted to Topsia Point and thence to the Kulti in the same manner.

The physical condition of the Town system is less satisfactory than that of the Suburban system and extensive renovation is necessary for minor or secondary sewers to raise the hydraulic capacity. Palmer's Bridge has two pumping stations, one for dry weather flow and the other for sewage water. Its existing equipment has to be urgently replaced. The Ballygunge station also needs an overhaul of the existing pumps. Detailed analyses of each major trunk sewer show that the system is inadequate under heavy rainfall and storm water relief measures have to be undertaken by building overflow structures, separate relief drains and pumping stations.

With this end in view both stations had been taken up for the augmentation of pumping capacity by the Corporation with assistance from CMDA. It was however found as a result of

critical appraisal a few months ago that pumps already ordered for Palmer's Bridge would not meet the requirements, as they were also to work during the lean hours of midday when the water level requires to be lowered sufficiently to prevent silting in the incoming sewers and to enable clearance work to be carried out properly. The order therefore required to be cancelled and proper pumps to be brought and installed. For Ballygunge station also some readjustment of the pumps was found necessary, but there the main problem was that sufficient water was not reaching the station. Attention has since been given to trunk sewers leading to the station, including one to be connected from Rifle Road and it is expected that the station would take the proper load in the next rainy season.

#### **Silt is Artery-Hardener**

The accumulation of silt in the sewers is a large problem, currently the total accumulation being estimated at 140 lakh cubic feet. Such a backlog has occurred due to inadequate removal. For the past decade 6 to 7 lakh cubic feet was being removed annually, whereas new deposits amounted to 10 lakh cft per year. From 1973 however removal has been stepped up to 9 lakh cft per year. The fact is that manual removal can no longer cope with the problem, particularly in surcharged sewers. Since 1974, sewer cleansing equipment have been introduced and CMDA is now working with them. For total removal of the accumulated silt CMDA has prepared a scheme requiring Rs. 1.5 crores and three years. Unless the bulk of accumulated silt is removed, the sewers cannot function properly and water logging cannot be prevented.

The capacity of sewers has by now been reduced by 30% and we have to programme and execute a vigorous drive for silt removal. An essential prerequisite is the strengthening of pumping stations. Unless they maintain a low level of flow, adequate de-silting is not possible. For the last 20 years this did not happen. The last renovation of pumps was in 1937-38 when in our large stations a few DWF pumps were installed. According to the Master Plan prepared by the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization, a thorough renovation of the city's sewerage system, including resuscitation of the outfall channels and installation of new pumps would require a colossal sum of Rs. 600 crores. for laying additional sewers for the essential areas as are un-sewered and poorly sewered will alone come to Rs. 100 crores. out of which Rs. 25 crores may be needed for the removal of bottlenecks or taking up the worst affected sections only.

There is immense load placed on the system by licensed as well

as unlicensed khatalas. Straw, dung, rubbish and—unbelievable though it may seem—even a dead calf might be pushed down the manhole and the underground system choked. Unless washed down with adequate water, such solid matter forms hard crusts inside the sewers and reduce the carrying capacity in alarming proportions. Khatalas are however being removed from the city by the Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services department of the Government and a source of nuisance will shortly be abated.

It is getting increasingly difficult to arrange the cleaning of brick and pipe sewers as well as of gully-pits and nikashi drains, for there is general aversion to such 'dirty' work and over the years the special category of workers for the job, namely gully-pit boys, became unavailable for the work. They grew into adults but were still carried on our rolls as boys and paid the salary, although they could no longer go down the manholes and bail out the accumulated silt. The difficulty has also been aggravated by the negligence and misuse of the people. There is surreptitious removal of gully-pit and man-hole covers leading ultimately to chokage in the underground system and on the other the indiscriminate throwing of garbage, kitchen waste, ashes etc. down the drains and gullypits by the much larger number of population today.

Taking 1876 as the commencement of the city's sewer system, it is just a hundred years old. That it is still serving the city, although originally planned for a million people, surely speaks well of the system. A team of Russian engineers visiting the city a few years ago was favourably impressed with the performance against heavy odds, for they had sewer systems in their country to last for 40-50 years. We have discussed the heavy odds. On the other hand CMDA and others have, as per the Master Plan, laid many sewers during the past few years. There is as yet no arrangement or regular staff for their maintenance either by any of these agencies or the Corporation. This has to be done early. In the recent amendment of the Calcutta Municipal Act 5 per cent of the consolidated rate has been earmarked for sewer expenditure. But this is not enough, particularly if sewerage is to be made a self-paying service.

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\* Address Before Institute of Engineers, 8 December 1976.

## THAT WHICH WE CALL A ROAD

Many say that the planned widening of roads in the Behala or South Suburban Municipality has been well executed. From both sides of the 30 ft. road the illegal stall holders, and hawker's shanties have been removed and today the width of the Diamond Harbour Road is 120 ft. This could be possible with public co-operation alone. The stall holders themselves vacated all the obstacles and temporary constructions on the road. The PWD, the District authorities of 24 Parganas and the Behala Municipality may have reasons to appropriate the credit, but I would praise the shopkeepers and the wayside stall-holders who exhibited their merchandise on the roadside. Their exemplary attitude, even at the cost of their daily bread, is a matter for which the citizen will ever remain grateful.

In the beginning of November 1976 when we set out with Robert McNamara the President of the World Bank on a tour of the city, Bholanath Sen the Chairman of CMDA escorted him to the Diamond Harbour Road. McNamara last visited Calcutta in 1968. After a lapse of six years what he saw with his own eyes pleased him greatly and doubtless the improvement of the Diamond Harbour Road played an important role. On behalf of the Corporation of Calcutta I thought of sending fraternal greetings to Dakshin Sahartali Paurabarta, the mouth piece of the South Suburban Municipality, since its first publication on 26 January '76. Though I failed to respond to its invitation so far, let me claim success now and send this article, conveying sincere greetings to the local body as well as its newsletter.

When the subject of roads has been broached, I should write about the roads of Calcutta. From the beginning of the year till October 1976 there has been much talk and some work about the repair and maintenance of roads. Keeping in mind CMDA which is the friend of both Calcutta Corporation and Behala Municipality, this report is drawn up in the hope that it would be of some use for the people and the roads of both local bodies.

### A Census of Roads

At the first instance let me tell you that this Corporation can

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\* Bengali version 'Pather Paricharya' in Dakshin Shahartali Paura Barta, January 1977.

not to be blamed for all the problems concerning all the roads within the Calcutta area. In fact about a year ago the Chairman of the Calcutta State Transport Corporation Enquiry Commission gave us a list of 122 roads over which C.S.T.C. buses ply and pointed out the need for immediate repairs, falling which the buses would be hard put to it in maintaining the scheduled services and the State Transport Organization in keeping up the running and maintenance of its fleet.

We had to tell the Enquiry Commission that as many as 48 of them or more than one third are not within our ambit. Many of the important roads, particularly the arterial ones going out of the town are owned by the Public Works Department of Government e.g. VIP or Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue and Jessore, Dumdum and Barrackpore Trunk Roads on the north; Jadavpur Station, Bangur, Budge Budge, Raja Subodh Mallik and Deshapran Shasmal or Russa Road South in the south as well as some roads in the centre of the town like Rani Rasmani, Dufferin and Red Roads. Within the Corporation limits there are roads owned and maintained by other bodies like Hide and Paharpur Roads of Calcutta Port and Belegkata CIT Road of the Calcutta Improvement Trust. Outside our limits there are important traffic bearing roads pertaining to other local bodies, e.g. Biren Roy West, B. L. Saha, Sarsuna Main and Ray Bahadur Roads of South Suburban Municipality, Tabin and Gopal Lal roads of Baranagar Municipality and Santoshpur and Garfa roads of 24 Parganas Zilla Parishad. Last but not the least is the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority which has come to the help of the Calcutta Corporation in repairing and maintaining as many as 70 of the latter's important roads out of which 22 featured in the CSTC Enquiry Commission's list. Some of these I mention: Rabindra Sarani, Strand, Nimitala Ghat, Vivekananda, Raja Dinendra and Manicktala Main Roads in the north; Raja Rammohun Roy Road (Amherst Street), Mahatma Gandhi (Harrison), B. B. Ganguli (Baubazar), Mission Row Extension, Bidhan Sarani, Dalhousie Square West, Netaji Subhas, Bentinck, Old Court House and Kalighat Roads in the centre; and Rashbehari Avenue, Hazra, Pramathes Barua Sarani (Ballygunge Circular), Harish Mukherjee, Lala Lajpat Rai (Elgin) and Bondel Roads in the south.

#### **The Name to Call**

I have noted these less as an excuse than as a clarification. The crux of the matter is our financial inadequacy. To elucidate our shortfall in financial resources, the extent and root causes of our problems and lastly our endeavour, I shall place before you our recent advertisement under the caption 'Will you Improve

## THAT WHICH WE CALL A ROAD

or Spoil the City?' We published this on the eve of McNamara's visit to Calcutta:

"In how many ways can you call a road in Calcutta?

- : Road, Street, Avenue, Row, Lane, Square & Place
- : Saranee, Gali & Bag (their counterparts in Bengali)

"If you ask us to differentiate one from the other we should, to be truthful, give up. But 'impossible' is a word found in the dictionary of a particular category of human beings. To dissociate ourselves from them, let us turn to the dictionaries of the wise:

Road : Line of communication between places for use of foot passengers, riders and vehicles.

Street : A public road in a city or town especially a paved thoroughfare with sidewalks and buildings along the sides.

Avenue : Wide street or roadway marked by trees or other objects at regular intervals.

Row : Street with row of houses on one or each side.

Lane : Narrow road between hedges, walls etc.

Square : One or more of the four streets bounding an area planted with trees etc. or ornamentally laid out and surrounded with buildings.

Place : Particular part of space; residence, houses etc. with surroundings.

Saranee : Road, the vernacular equivalents of path, rasta, bithi, marg and sarak, not in use here, but much outside Bengal.

Bag : Square or garden, the Bengali equivalents being bagan, path and dik (way).

Gali : Lane.

What's in a name? That which we call a road  
By any other name would cost as much.

(With apologies to Shakespeare)

They spend per Year : (Rs.)	Maintenance	Per Lane Mile	Capital Works
At Bombay	2.5 crores	5,000	3.5 crores
At Delhi	1.6 crores	4,000	1.5 crores
At Madras	1.5 crores	3,000	1.1 crores

**The Job to do**

"We annually spend only Rs. 75 lakhs on maintenance, including the establishment charges, which comes to about Rs. 1,500 per lane mile per year, and for decades no amount worth the name has been spent for capital works or the upgradation of roads.

"The reason is simple: We do not have the money. Our collection of houstax is about Rs. 8 crores per year, of which 25% should be spent on water supply, 10% on sewerage, 9% on street lighting and the balance 56% on general services from maternity homes to the cremation ground, but the lion's share has to go to conservancy.

"Road maintenance has therefore no earmarked or captive fund. Government took away from us in 1940s the collection of motor vehicles tax. To-day we get only Rs. 10 lakhs as our share of the Government collection of more than nine crores and Rs. 5.5 lakhs as road repair grant. We stretch this to Rs. 75 lakhs by adding from general fund whatever we can.

"With this meagre fund our roads are neglected year after year, particularly the poor cousins in the family of 510 miles:

District	Proper	Miles	Added areas	Miles	Total miles
I	North	83.41	Cossipore	31.84	115.25
II	Central	58.52	Maniktala	35.85	94.37
III	South East	94.52	Tollygunge	70.62	165.14
IV	South West	132.01	Dock area	3.47	135.48
Total		368.46		141.78	510.24

"That is why in the City's TWENTY POINT PROGRAMME we formulated PRO to be:

- P avements are for pedestrians—encroachment is a non-bailable offence now
- R oads are arteries of city: their maintenance is a must
- O ur city—don't treat it as a spittoon or urinal.

"The Government have just decided to strengthen our hands structurally and financially.

: There would be a separate road repairs & maintenance wing under a Chief Engineer.

## THAT WHICH WE CALL A ROAD

- : There would be a separate fund with Government grants and repair charges from Electric Supply, Gas Company, Calcutta Telephones etc. for whom digging is done, no moneys from such fund being allowed to be diverted
- : For all such digging by public utilities, repairs to be done by the Corporation
- : Contractors effecting improvements or repairs on roads to give two years' guarantee
- : Institutions or commercial organisations be encouraged to adopt roads for upkeep.

"We respectfully remind the masters and pupils of today's Calcutta that if they abstain from hurting the roads by whatever names they go and see that they get money and attention in time, the city and city life would be much less repaired. In fine, spare the road or spoil the city."

### A Recce of the Route

The roads in Calcutta suffer from two basic deficiencies. One is the meagre surface area available for roads, much less than 10%, as against 25-30% available in western cities or even in our Delhi. The other is the heavy rainfall during the monsoons leading to waterlogging and a lot of damage on the surface from the standing water and the running vehicles. The average rainfall in Calcutta is 72" or 180 cm. per annum with most of the precipitation during the three months of monsoon when at times it may be as high as 7.5 cm. per hour. The drainage system is however designed to run off  $\frac{1}{4}$ " of 0.6 cm. per hours in the north and  $\frac{1}{4}$ " or 0.4 cm. in the south.

For repairs to cuts in roads and footpaths by different utility undertakings like Electricity, Gas, Telephone etc., the yearly deposit we get for restoration is about Rs. 50 lakhs, good enough for 80,000 sq.ft. only. Before the rains in 1976, we worked out a schedule of repairs in consultation with CMDA. It enjoins that small cuts or narrow trenches, i.e. those less than 1.2 metres or 4 ft. in width or depth, will be allowed to cut only upto 30 metres or 100 ft. at a stretch. Such small cuts can be restored by manual beating or ramming. This is why the cut portion is required to be restored in two days after which permission would be given for cutting the next section. For one month, the responsibility for the disturbed portion of the roads will remain with the utility or agency concerned after which the Corporation will take over for permanent restoration of the surface.

For large cuts, proper restoration cannot be done manually and a rampactor or shaking roller is needed. Such cuts are mostly required for laying water or sewer mains by agencies like CMDA, CIT and CMWSA besides the Corporation itself and have to be given special attention for restoration. Previously all restorations, whether small or large, were to be done in a 'workman like' manner and no specifications were enforced. Now these are to be followed so that there is proper consolidation, whether manually or by machines. It has also been laid down that from June to September, all disturbance on roads must be stopped, except for repairs, emergent work or attendance to accidents.



'Road map of Calcutta—  
You are now here !

A cartoon in the series  
'Infallible' in Jugantar  
dated 6 August 1976.

Coordination for road repairs is no less a problem in more affluent or better organized cities. More than a year ago I was in Singapore when there was a prominent editorial 'Mutilated Roads' in a local paper. To quote a few lines: 'The Singapore Motor Sports Club . . . says there is no coordination between the various departments in the digging of roads for the installation of cables, pipes, telephone lines and sewers, and that no sooner has one department patched up a road than very often another starts digging it up again. However . . . the Public Works Department . . . has a committee . . . Its Chairman Mr. Lim Leong Geok says "considerable effort" goes into coordinating the work of the departments, but it is sometimes impossible for different

## THAT WHICH WE CALL A ROAD

services to be laid at the same time and place due to technical reasons.

Our recent repairs show that the cost is 85 paise per sq. ft., if the work is done by our employees under our supervision and with our machineries, whereas under contractors it comes to As. 1.25. Hence repairs with the loan money were undertaken by ourselves to the extent possible. As per our programme in October-November 1975 the repair works of 90 congested roads, especially the exit and entry trunk roads in all the district areas which required immediate attention were started. Of these 40 were to be given to contractors, but ultimately they were brought in only in 15 roads, mostly in suburban or added areas, both in order to make a saving of the allotted funds and for want of experienced contractors. They were given three roads in Cossipore area, two in Maniktala, three in Tollygunge, three in Kidderpore, two adjoining Tiljala and three in Bhawanipur—a total of 15.

Working on as many as 75 of the 90 selected roads, we got, from the Government fund Rs. 1.35 crores, as much as 2 crores worth of work. Improvement was made to about 2,70,000 sq. metre or 26 lakhs sq. ft. pitched road. To give a progressive account of the departmental work, we completed 7,37,000 sq. ft. in November, 8,60,000 in December and 9,86,000 in January that is 9 lakh sq. ft. on average per month. In addition patch repair of about 3 lakh sq. ft. was done per month.

Besides giving an account of the old work we do not have much to proclaim at the moment. After spending Rs. 1.35 crores we further submitted to Government a programme of work to cost 3 crore of rupees—1 crore before the rains and 2 crores after. We have yet to receive anything on this score. From our own funds we have taken up work worth Rs. 50 lakhs. Incidentally at the meeting held on the 13th October, 1976 presided over by the Governor and attended by the Chief Minister (about which I have mentioned in the above advertisement) there is a ray of hope. We can now expect to get for road repairs 75% of the additional surcharge imposed on motor vehicle tax in the next budget. We are expected to look after the roads and are quite willing to do so. It is however necessary to take the people in confidence. It is with their understanding and Government support that we can be equal to the task ahead. Indications are that we are on the right path.

### Postscript

Acting on the Government decision in October 1976, the Engineer-in-Chief

## READY TO SERVE—LOVE ALL

and Secretary, PWD submitted a report how the Road Repairs and Maintenance wing should be set up in the Corporation and what its fund requirements would be. According to him the following amounts should be spent every year: Rs. 1.90 crores for maintenance repairs to roads and footpaths, Rs. 1 crore for improvement of road junctions, construction of traffic bays and renewal of footpaths and Rs. 1.83 crores for capital and major repairs of roads (spread over three years for a total outlay of Rs. 5 crores), besides immediate purchase of hot mix plants and accessories at a cost of Rs. 0.09 crores. In a meeting on January 10, 1977, the Government decided to give Rs. 1 crore to the Corporation as a grant out of the surcharge levied on motor vehicles and asked us to go ahead with the setting up of the separate wing and a survey on the condition of roads in Calcutta.

The grant came to us on the last day of the year, i.e. March 31, 1977. Immediately we formed the separate wing under a Chief Roads Engineer brought over on deputation from PWD and supported by a Deputy Chief Engineer, an Executive Engineer and several Assistant Engineers. In the integrated department we are placing road-roller gangs, asphaltum units, district path repairing wings etc. as were hitherto scattered in several departments. Corporation has been promised Rs. 1.20 crores out of the M.V. surcharge for 1977-78. Adding our own resources, we shall take up works for Rs. 2.5 crores. We insist that the Government amount comes by November 1977 and not like last year, so that the roads we take up can be disturbed and restored well before the next monsoon. We have also initiated action for procurement through CMDA of 10 road-rollers, 20 tar boilers and two asphalt mixing machines costing about Rs. 20 lakhs. We shall put them on the job after the monsoon.

Survey work of 18 roads was undertaken before the rains out of which 45 have been completed. Apart from patch repairing and crude filling of potholes, nothing much could be done for real repairs because of the unusual delay in the arrival of Government funds. For capital repairs, the schedule of work has to be carefully prepared over a number of years, and our intention is to get it approved at Government level in consultation with CMDA, PWD etc. In the meanwhile we are going ahead with preliminaries including the collection and contracting of stone materials, bitumen, brick bats etc. of a total up-to-date value of Rs. 85 lakhs.



**Preview,  
Review &  
Overview**

## AN INTERVIEW ON CALCUTTA

The erstwhile beacon to national struggles and aspirations, Calcutta has lately been an object of neglect. The pressure of the ever increasing population has not only begun to eat into its vitals, but also multiplied its problems in myriad forms. Lakhs of people have been concentrating here in pursuit of livelihood or shelter. But there is no appreciable plough-back from what they earn here. Consequently Calcutta's importance and internal difficulty have been vying with each other on a multiplying scale.

It should be borne in mind that the problems of Calcutta are not of Calcutta or of West Bengal alone, but are liable to pose blotches on the national backdrop. Being one of the most populated cities of the world, Calcutta is the cynosure of Eastern India's communication, trade and commerce, a meeting ground of civilizations, a seat of cultural exchanges and last but not the least a fertile ground for mooted varied schools of thought, both national and international. The economic structure of Eastern India has indeed a solid and stable foundation in this city itself. In a word no one can deny the uniqueness of Calcutta.

The gigantic task of upkeep for such a sprawling metropolis is entrusted to the Corporation of Calcutta. I feel that the solution to problems relating to Calcutta depends largely on the outlook of Government. For, it has to think out whether it wants to confine the Corporation to the existing areas only or, like the Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay, give it added areas within Greater Calcutta i.e. the Calcutta Metropolitan District. If the geographical pattern undergoes substantial change, a lot has to be done on the economics and engineering of the development of Calcutta.

Development entails money. Though grants have been received through Government and CMDA for the purpose, steps should be taken to augment the Corporation's own resources of revenue. Out of the present income of the civic body 72% goes towards meeting staff salaries and wages. Now to increase the revenue of the Corporation, the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1951 needs to be amended, keeping in view the changed situation. Government have to remember that, after the implementation of development projects by CMDA and its associates like CIT and CMWSA, the responsibility of their running and maintenance has

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\* Hindustan Samachar Silver Jubilee No., February—March 1975.

ultimately to fall on the shoulders of the Corporation. To elucidate the point: if CMDA executes a project of one crore of rupees, its maintenance and upkeep entails 10 per cent or ten lakhs annually.

If one looks through the budget estimate of the Corporation for 1975-76, two sets of figures would catch his attention: budget estimates and actuals for 1973-74. Although the expenditure authorised in the revised budget estimate was Rs. 25.01 crores, the actual expenditure was only Rs. 17.13 crores which was eventually much nearer the revenue receipt of Rs. 16.36 crores for the year. Cash flow, rather than authorisation has played a bigger role in controlling the expenditure. It goes without saying that without a cash flow budget, the other budgets may go out of gear and even bring chaos in the financial discipline. But the question that may be more pertinently asked and required to be answered is the budgeting on physical performance. What are the Corporation's definite objectives—immediate, intermediate or distant? What is the civic goal and how it is spelt out in terms of time?

The Corporation of Calcutta, a very large civic organization even by the world standard, just limps along from one short-term objective to another. In the meanwhile there is denigration of the Corporation's work by an angry rate-payer after angrier. But the denouncers are in no position to relate resources to priorities in terms of known facts or principles. During the period of supersession, the management of the Corporation has been taken over by Government and we civilians here cannot actually preside over the destiny of this civic body, but can only carry on the day-to-day functions. We can carry out a policy; we can hardly initiate one.

There is the ever-present constraint of finance. We move from one budget proposal to another asking Government to augment our resources. But, in the meantime, does the rate-payer get service according to his rising expectations? What are services he thinks his due and what are their priorities and standards? Who will really act the watchdog to ensure the quality and quantity of the service? These questions, fundamental though, cannot be clearly and categorically answered today in the constraints under which the civic body is functioning. I wish it were otherwise, for the principles on which we can budget and monitor our physical targets, if known to the people will surely help us in performance. The Corporation is keenly aware of the need for public education and willing public cooperation in this regard.

Apart from money, coordinated efforts are therefore needed in realising a better future for Calcutta. While different specialised

## AN INTERVIEW ON CALCUTTA

agencies might come, to the city's and in developing water supply, drainage, conservancy, roads, bustees and public health, co-ordination among them is a must and requires to be steered by a high power organisation. Political problems seem to have been outweighed now by the monetary. It is ultimately for the Government to see that no political pressures can be developed which constrains civic activities or makes it impossible to carry on the day-to-day work efficiently. It goes without saying that Calcutta's development projects have had to suffer reverses in the political whirlpool even in the recent past.

Large investments for drinking water supply, construction of living quarters and quick development in transport are the need of the hour. It should simultaneously be reviewed whether the investments so made are deployed for a healthier monetary pattern, greater employment facility and fuller utilisation of the existing industries. The investments have also to be progressively increased, and it is to be ensured that the money Government spends really goes to the Development of Calcutta and suburbs. There should be facilities for regular study, research and survey of the development work in progress so that the great task of beautifying and strengthening Calcutta proceeds on the correct line all the time.

To start this work, certain programmes could immediately be taken into hand; such as enlisting the social service organisations and Government agencies which are engaged in the city's development and to bring about a better co-ordination in their work. In the city as well as in Greater Calcutta we have to work hard to improve the environment, to inculcate a sense of cleanliness among the citizens, to bring about an urge among slum-dwellers for a better standard of living etc. Let certain developmental or public service work be given to students; let them volunteer their service regularly.

With the effective control of traffic, arrangement should go hand in hand to train the vast number of people in using roads. Doctors and teachers should be encouraged to devote a part of their time to the cause of the public. Encouragement should be given to lawyers to make people conscious of the significance of different common laws. The definitions and differences of personal property and social property should be made felt by the public. With the proper study of police laws, the criminal procedure and the system of investigation, the lacunae in them will be easier to sort out. If new measures necessary to change the complex character of Calcutta are constructively discussed, the task of the competent bodies will be easier and the Government will surely agree to execute the beneficial changes in the goodness of time.

## A MINI-REVIEW FOR TEN YEARS

I have been asked to talk briefly on the achievement of Calcutta during the past 10 years in relation to the civic amenities and civic services. It is a ticklish question because the period is roughly divided into two parts. By the act of supersession on the 22nd March 1972, the elected elements were sent home and the Corporation was taken under direct Government care. Starting from 1966-67 and coming to 1974-75, we may give a few indicators to show how we have been faring all these 10 years. For what we may look into some old figures.

The money that the Corporation collects from the citizens and the amount it spends on the civic services would be a reasonable indication of what the Corporation has been doing. In 1966-67 the income of the Calcutta Corporation was Rs. 11.76 crores and the expenditure 14.72 crores. In 1971-72, that is just before the supersession, the revenue of the Corporation was 12.47 crores and the expenditure 23.11 crores. In 1974-75, that is just a year ago, the figures were Rs. 17 crores for revenue and 24.12 crores for expenditure. This will show that we have perpetually been in debt.

I have laid my hand on a statement made by Prasanta Kumar Sur, the Mayor of Calcutta in 1969. He had been telling certain things which of course we know, that is to say, Calcutta is a problem city. But this problem has not come into existence overnight. The city was originally meant for about a million people as also its sewerage, water supply system etc. Thanks to the partition of the country and the influx from the villages and the eastern part of India, the city has grown to 6 or 7 millions. I am not confining myself to the hard core of Calcutta or Municipal Calcutta which has about 3.3 million people. But you must remember that every day people well over a million come here for livelihood and spend the best part of the day. So in that Mayor's statement the problem of repairs to roads, footpaths crowded with hawkers, wastage of filtered water through stand posts featured as also large financial difficulties standing in the way for proper civic services. In fact in that statement, the Mayor announced that the year's budget had a deficit of Rs. 8½ crores.

I do not claim that we have achieved a miracle or made a lot of

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\* Talk on All India Radio, 3 February 1976.

improvement since then. But this much is clear that from 1974, the personnel matters and union difficulties are much more on the quiet and under control. It is not merely because of the declaration of Emergency. Even earlier from October 1974 onwards comparatively peaceful conditions have been prevailing here. We have been getting good cooperation from the workers, the workers' unions and the representative bodies of the unions.

To highlight our services to the people we can choose the sector of water supply. In 1966-67 Palta water system used to give 84 million gallons per day. Now from the same system we are getting 110 million gallons. In fact we have already achieved the peak of 130 million gallons a day, and during this summer, taking advantage of certain repairs to the pumps, we shall achieve that figure as a steady one.

Coming to the question of city roads, their conditions have gone from bad to worse. Recently we took up repairs in right earnest, thanks to the timely support that we got from the Government of West Bengal in the form of a loan of Rs. 1.35 crores. You might be seeing for yourself the repair works that were undertaken throughout the city. The current programme was to conclude on the 29th February 1976 and depending on the performance we should be able to get more support and financial help from the State Government. We can then take up more repairs and give the roads a real new look.

In personnel and union matters, as I have mentioned earlier, we have done some rationalisation. There is more administrative sanctity now, and we have in fact appointed a high powered committee under a retired Secretary to the Government of India to study and report on surplus labour, ghost labour, the spurious employment which goes by the name of babu mazdoor etc. Thus we may be able to give some thought to administrative streamlining and offer a better vehicle for services to the people.

There is however a certain inherent difficulty in the Corporation's working, particularly in the financial and administrative aspects. It won't be wrong to say that the Calcutta Municipal Act has outlived its utility. It was promulgated in 1951, shortly after independence. Many things require change now. The Government is seriously considering overhauling the Act. With the amendment of the Act, we should be given the wherewithal for collecting more revenue. I think, if we can work out a system of spending the extra revenue mostly or to the extent possible on real civic amenities and do not divert the same to establishment charges or more wages to the employees, the demand for more revenue will become purposeful. In fact we have been able to

## PREVIEW, REVIEW & OVERVIEW

create an atmosphere against demand for demand's sake—merely for more wages and allowances, and things are better now. I think we shall be able to give more to the people in the form of services, and for that we require all the confidence and constructive criticism of the people of Calcutta.

## A FOUR YEAR CIVIC REVIEW

On the 20th March 1972 when the present Congress Government came to power, the age old department of Local Self Government got a new name—Municipal Service. The renaming itself shows that the present leaders put service above Government or administration. In fact today the entire country is self-governed and the spirit of service and actual strivings for serving the people should today sustain a local body—be it a corporation, a municipality or a village panchayet.

### **Incompetency & Default**

Within two days of its formation Government took over the administration of the Calcutta Corporation, the country's premier urban body in the country—a body which had a glorious heritage in organizing civic services in this erstwhile capital of India as well as in shaping the aspiration and articulation for the freedom struggle. The order of supersession dated 22 March 1972 declared the Corporation to be incompetent and in default and to have exceeded and abused its powers, and disbanded the entire elected paraphernalia including Mayor, Councillors and Aldermen. The order was first issued for a period of one year.

There were five counts of incompetency, namely non-utilisation of funds for capital works, diverting a portion to revenue expenditure; failure to keep a minimum opening balance of Rs. 12 lakhs for the year; failure to raise sufficient resources for the basic civic needs; failure to maintain streets in good repairs and failure to arrange the proper removal of garbage. Defaults were listed under four heads: non-payment of dues to CIT under the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 and to the Port Commissioners for the Rabindra Setu under the Howrah Bridge Act, 1926; and relating to proper action on old audit reports and performance of the statutory duties and functions.

### **Shantata, Court Chalu Ahe**

By successive extensions, the order of supersession has now been brought forward till 21 September 1977. The intention is to hold election to the civic body after an overhauling of the present law, viz the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 which is no longer able to cope with the new problems and new needs and

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\* Amrita Bazar Patrika, 31 March 1976.

then hand it over to the people's representatives, ensuring at the same time that many of the incompetencies and defaults are made good by that time. To man the Corporation, Government have sent seniormost officers as Administrator and Commissioner. The Administrator in the present setup combines in himself the deliberative powers of the Corporation as well as executive functions of greater importance or larger financial commitment. He discharges the powers and performs the duties of the Mayor, 100 Councillors, five Aldermen and five Standing Committees, viz. (i) Finance and Establishment, (ii) Education, (iii) Health and Bustee Improvement, (iv) Water Supply, Drainage and Sewage Disposal and, (v) Works and Town Planning.

The Commissioner is the top executive for the day-to-day running of the Corporation and is supreme in the execution of civic services within the sphere allotted to him financially and administratively. The Administrators have been the seniormost from IAS and the Commissioners, since the supersession, from IAS and IA & AS. The combination has proved helpful both for executive and financial management.

Many of the incompetencies and defaults have since been made good. For example, capital works are now done in close collaboration or active co-operation with CMDA, Government etc. and there is little frittering of resources for revenue expenditure. Again, improvement in repairs of streets or removal of garbage is noticeable and has earned appreciation of the people. We wish we could take up the former work earlier, but could not for want of money. We shall go in detail into these aspects of improvement a little later in this narration.

As regards other failings, we admit we still have miles to go. The minimum opening balance is no longer our statutory responsibility, for the law was amended in 1973. But we have not been able to make any improvement in our budgetary provision. The basic difficulty is not of collection, but of higher taxation for which the Government have first to give the clearance. After supersession we have not been able to make any payment whatsoever to CIT, and have been asking for an amendment of the Act relieving us of the burden in the changed circumstances. For the Rabindra Setu dues, we have made some payment, but the arrears have only become larger. The audit reports were in arrear since the 40's at the time of supersession, and although we have prepared replies for some of them, the number of defaulting years remains the same. What is needed is a radically new approach for dealing with such old reports going back to 30 years.

**A Year by Year Account**

The first year of supersession, 1972-73 was a period of clearing the deck for future action. Hundreds of files awaiting action by one or another Standing Committee or the Corporation had to be disposed of by the Administrator. This was also the period of restoration of minimum discipline in the Corporation and of several welfare steps taken by authorities, including the revision of pay structure and various facilities to workers. The next year was a period of rising expectations from the employees which unfortunately led to an exercise in economism by the 80 and odd unions of the Corporation. In vying with one another for the larger benefit to its own clientele the unions brought about some turmoil in the organization and occasional set back in the services.

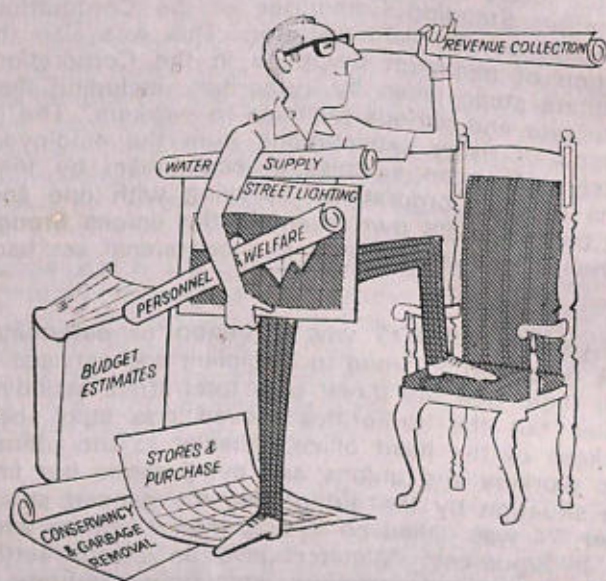
The third year of 1974-75 was a period of determined stand against the deteriorating trend in discipline and services. Midway in the year there was the threat of a total strike including essential services, but the authorities moved one step ahead by a partial lockout of the head office. Thanks to the ultimate good will of the workers and unions and sympathetic but firm handling of the situation by the authorities, the general strike on the 1st October '74 was called off in less than 12 hours without any condition or argument. Minister gave an award setting up a centralised personned department, sanctioning ex-gratia payment of one month's salary to every employee and agreeing to examine measures of staff benefit like pension, medical facilities, promotion scheme etc. The relation between the management and the unions then turned peaceful and conducive to good work. We were hardly in the fourth year of supersession when on the 26th June 1975 the Emergency was proclaimed. As we were already set on a path of constructive work, the period of Emergency saw a continuation of the exercise in sobriety and mutual trust in employer-employee relationship. During this year many of the work in hand got accelerated and started giving results.

**Road to Revenue & vice versa**

Coming now to a more detailed review of the progress made by the Corporation during the last four years let us choose a few selective parameters like revenue earnings, roads, water supply, conservancy, drainage, building regulations and general administration. As already mentioned, the collection of revenue improved substantially during the period of supersession. Between 1971-72 and 1974-75 consolidated rates or house taxes increased from Rs. 767 lakhs to 958 lakhs and licensing fees from Rs. 97 lakhs to 112 lakhs. This year the figures are likely to be Rs. 1050

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lakhs for house taxes and Rs. 118 lakhs for licensing fees. To a large extent the improvement is due to the mechanisation in 1974 of the preparation of rate bills by punch machines (IBM).



Thanks to the encouragement from the West Bengal Government the Corporation took a loan of Rs. 135 lakhs from it in November 75 and completed by February 76 special repairs to about 85 miles of roads, mainly the arterial ones from the airport to the centre of the city and then outwards to the south. Government and people have appreciated the work. We are now on the one hand asking for another Rs. 2 crores from Government for extending the work and on the other framing a scheme to raise a captive or earmarked fund for road repairs by special levy on vehicles. If we succeed, it will be a translation in practice, partially though, of our ideas on a separate wheel-tax on motor vehicles for the Corporation area.

### For Water & Sanitation

Multifarious improvement works have been taken up in the last one year in the Palta Water Works. Some of them are complete and some in full swing. Special mention may be made of the installation of new pumps for pumping of raw water, desilting of pre-settling tanks manually and of final settling tanks by hydraulic dredging, preventive repairs to clariflocculators and renovation of slow sand and rapid gravity filters. At Tala pumping

station too improvement has been effected to pumping units by the replacement of steam turbines by electric pumps and repairs to a large reservoir. During these four years the actual supply of water from the Palta-Tala complex has gone up from 80 million a day (mgd) to 110. Shortly we shall reach the 120 mgd mark. This supply is augmented by tube well water. Between 1971-72 and 1975-76, the giant tube-wells have gone up from 190 nos with 20 mgd delivery to 230 nos with 25 mgd; and the small tubewells have gone up by 300 in numbers.

Conservancy service in the city including timely and proper removal of garbage had ever been a headache. Thanks to better mobilisation of men and equipment, the service is more dependable now, although there are occasional lapses here and there and large difficulties in the rainy season. In 1973 we introduced the use of earth-moving machines like pay-loaders and bulldozers in garbage loading and disposal. Since 1974 the fleet of conservancy lorries has been augmented by better and quicker repairs. In 1975, 16 new lorries have been added to the fleet with funds from CMDA. Action is also on for the purchase of more sophisticated equipment like compactor lorries and gully-pit emptiers—20 each. Land has been allotted to the West Bengal Agro-industries Corporation at Bantala and a private party at Kadapara for processing garbage mechanically into compost.

For quicker disposal of storm water pumping capacity has been raised at our drainage pumping stations. Between 1972 and now the capacity of Ballygunge Station has been raised from 12.81 million gallons per hour (mgh) to 24.91 mgh, of Palmer Bazar Station by 4.4 mgh and of the stations at the outfall viz. Topsia, Kulia Tangra, Pagladanga and Mominpur taken together by 8.5 mgh.

#### **Of Buildings & Men**

A draft of new building regulations has been prepared by the Corporation to put a stop to ill-planned, unhygienic and hazardous types of building activity and is now under Government's consideration. A tall building Committee was set up in 1975 and its advice has helped the Corporation in ensuing that no such new building is sanctioned, unless there is adequate side space, parking area, fire fighting facilities, provision of emergency escape etc. Clearing of obstructions on pavements and roadside lands was taken up in a limited manner in 1975 and the tempo has been stepped up this year.

In man-management the Corporation has taken a few bold steps starting with the Minister's Award in 1974. Labour had no retiring age here. It was fixed last year at 60 and the super-

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annuated have been retired on payment of terminal benefits like provident fund. A Staff Reorganization Committee under the Chairmanship of a retired Secretary to the Government of India is working for locating surplus and fictitious staff and will shortly recommend on rationalisation. In fine, the Corporation is working in its limited and specialised domain for better service to citizens and at the same time with a view to rejuvenate and reform its working system. We trust and hope that a better Corporation—financially and administratively—is what will be handed back to the people's representatives when the elections take place.

## CIVIC SERVICES & FINANCE

It is calculated that to cope with the larger demand on the civic services the budget has to grow at the rate of 10 per cent annually, but the actual revenue growth has never been more than 5 per cent. Then, about 1.5 million refugees poured into Calcutta from East Pakistan since 1948 i.e. shortly after the partition of Bengal. Recently, during the Bangladesh struggle of 1970-71, Calcutta and suburbs were the mainstay for the incoming stream of uprooted humanity. For law and order and various other reasons a flight of capital and industrial establishments from the city occurred in a large measure from 1967 to 1971.

In the circumstances the tax structure of the Corporation also remained static, leading to an imbalance in the city budget, which has normally to be balanced. In actual practice balancing may be only a myth, as more and more money is needed for the existing services as well as for increased welfare measures. We had to liberalise the old concept of balancing, because of the dire reality. When the Corporation of Calcutta was superseded by Government in 1972 there was a provision that every year should open with hard cash of specific amount in hand, that is to say, the opening balance should be real and positive. We have, however, deleted this provision as such restriction was found neither practicable nor essential in the matter of budgeting. We have also the same problem of the annual growth of cost for services and overheads outstripping the annual growth of tax revenue.

### **Weakening of Finance**

In the process of the weakening of the finance base three things might happen. One is the clamour among the area representatives (previously elected elements, now MLAs' nominees) to appropriate as much as possible of the dwindling cake to their own constituencies and clients. This leads to some sort of political fracas, on to a deterioration in the deliberative capacity of the municipal body. The second thing is the gap between the rising expectation of the employees and, whatever they actually manage to get from the employer, leading to an erosion in discipline and an exercise in economism among the rival trade unions of the workers. The third, of course, is the deterioration in civic services and the suffering the citizens are subjected to.

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\* Amrita Bazar Patrika, 6 November 1976.

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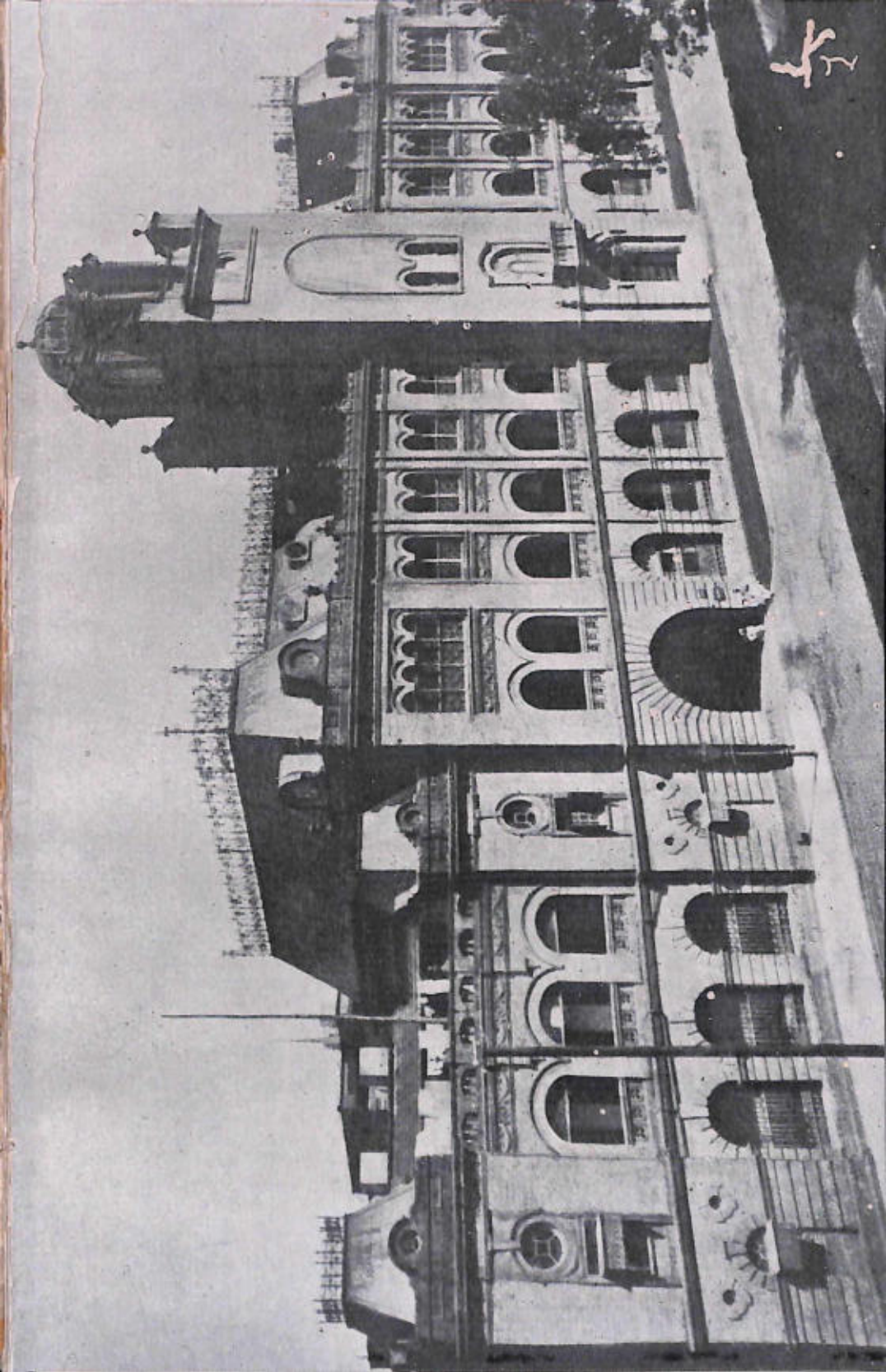
The cumulative effect of all three is a damage to the smooth working of the civic institution as well as in its workworthy character and credibility.

To ensure the availability of adequate fund to the local bodies, particularly the municipal services which have to cater to the urban population in a more sophisticated manner now-a-days, is a big question. In olden days the cost of men and material was much less and the collections from house tax and license fees, augmented quite often by the commercial activities of the municipal bodies, yielded enough revenue to keep them going and also to set apart something for lean days as well as for capital works. In the British days the Corporation of Calcutta, which is the premier such institution in our country, had an annual revenue of Rs. 5 crores—more than the neighbouring State of Assam which is now split into five states—Nagaland, Arunachal, Meghalaya, Mizoram and residuary Assam.

It is apparent from a study of different Municipal Corporations throughout the world that finance poses the biggest problem to most of them, big or small. The Calcutta Corporation is no exception. It is one of the largest city Corporations in the world with an area of about 104 sq. km. and a population of about 3.2 million as per Census Report of 1971. It has people of various faiths, creeds and castes. It is an international city in the true sense of the term. People from all states of India and all nations of the world have their place in the city. Over and above the huge number of permanent citizens, there are about 1.2 million commuters every day from suburbs. The Calcutta Corporation has to main civic services for this big population including the daily visitors.

### **Development versus Maintenance**

Because of the chronic financial difficulty of the Calcutta Corporation or for that matter the 34 municipalities in the Calcutta Metropolitan District, the developmental and capital works have since 1970 been taken over by the specialised agency Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority, and the urban bodies are mainly doing the operation, maintenance and repairs part of job, that is to say, day to day running. Much can be said for and against the total separation between the capital works and maintenance. Crux of the problem is how to raise enough resources for the renewal of assets or development programme and how again to have a corresponding amount for operation, maintenance and repairs. CMDA operates partly on the proceeds of octroi duty, partly by raising debentures and partly by allocation of loan from State and Central Governments. While



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### CALCUTTA 1916

A photo of the Central Municipal Building by M/s. Bourne & Shepherd and reprinted from 'Municipal Calcutta (1916)' by S. W. Goode ICS

About 1848 the offices of the Commissioners of Calcutta Corporation were in rented premises at 11 Esplanade Row and 3 Chowringhee Road, each at Rs. 300 per month. In 1860 was added the commodious premises at 1 Chowringhee Road with out-offices for a monthly rent of Rs. 500. In 1872 when the Justices of Peace decided to construct a municipal office, the present site at 5 Surendra Nath Banerjee Road comprising 6 bighas 16 kathas and 4 chhataks (2.27 acres) was acquired at Rs. 65,000 and a building, as designed by M/s. Mackintosh, Burn & Co., was constructed for Rs. 1,26,000. In 1885-86, the building was enlarged at a cost of Rs. 22,000 and in 1901 remodelled and extended.

The photo shows the building front on the Market Square facing New Market on the south. S. N. Banerjee Road is on its north, Hogg Street on the east and Corporation Place on the west. In 1920, a wing was added on the east to house the Councillors' Club Room. On the north there was a spacious garden comprising 0.59 acres, but in August 1937 it was built upon for accomodating the Corporation Press and several offices. Vertical extension for the fourth storey had to be made in 1958 on the southern wing, in 1961 on the eastern and in 1965 on western and northern wings. The space has again become inadequate.

its problem of repaying the debentures and loans assumes larger dimension by the passage of years, the associated problem of financing the day-to-day running and upkeep of the new assets operated by CMDA is there right from the beginning and perhaps requires to be settled even more peremptorily. Whether it is a big diameter tubewell, or a newly erected park, or a recently widened road, or a row of powerful mercury lamps in place of the general service lamps, or the establishment of a new sewerage pumping station with powerful pumps, the new works require a net addition to revenue expenditure, roughly at the rate of 10% of the capital outlay per annum for operation, maintenance and repairs. This becomes a large burden for the local bodies as soon as they are handed over the new capital works. Their revenues have to be raised substantially, if the benefit has to be passed on to the rate payers and their proper working has to be ensured.

For a local body the sources of revenue are rather inelastic. The major source is the house and property tax, or what is termed consolidated rate according to our Calcutta Municipal Act. This consolidated rate comprises about 2/3rd of the total revenue of the Corporation. About half of the balance is earned by the Corporation, by way of licence fees on professions, trades and callings by taxes on entertainments, shows etc. and by earnings from specific services or activities like markets, parking fees on cars and water supply beyond the normal scale. The remaining half of the income comes from Government in the shape of octroi or entry tax on goods in the metropolitan area and 80 per cent subvention on the cost of dearness allowance to employees. The entry tax, as already mentioned, is also the major source of revenue for CMDA. Between the municipal bodies and the CMDA it is shared in equal quantities. Out of the 50 per cent to municipal bodies, 25% goes to the Calcutta Corporation and the balance to other municipalities. This is a new source of revenue introduced with the formation of CMDA. The amount is admittedly inadequate for its capital works and also to provide to the institutions the cost of operation and maintenance for the new works, over and above what they need for the running of old assets.

#### **What we Net & how to Widen**

That the revenue of the Calcutta Corporation is absolutely inadequate will be evident from the fact that it has an income of Rupees 13 crores only from property tax, licence fees on trades and professions etc. In addition, the Corporation gets 25% share of the entry tax as above which comes to about Rs. 2.70 crores and Government subvention on dearness allowance

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to employees to the extent of Rs. 3 crores. The financial constraints of the Corporation would be clearer from the report of the Committee on "Budgetary Reforms in the Municipal Administration" formed by the Government of India. According to it a city with a population of over one million is required to spend (as per price level of 1974) Rs. 109 per capita to enable it to render proper civic services. The Corporation of Calcutta has not, even upto 1974-75, been able to spend more than Rs. 55 per capita per year which tells on its capacity to serve the citizens. Compared to this, Bombay is spending about Rs. 121, Delhi Rs. 82 and Ahmedabad Rs. 71.

The present budget estimates (1976-77) for the Corporation shows a total revenue income of Rs. 23.4 crores and total expenditure of Rs. 28 crores i.e. a deficit of about Rs. 4.5 crores. There is also a deficit of Rs. 19.52 crores from the previous years which means a total deficit of about Rs. 24 crores. The Corporation has been suggesting various measures to augment its resources two of which have been recently accepted by Government. One is to increase taxes and scales of fees on trades, professions and callings by amending the Calcutta Municipal Act. This will give us Rs. 55 lakhs extra this year. The other is 50% surcharge on the consolidated rate for commercial buildings. This will bring Rs. 50 lakhs during the financial year. Another and larger part of this proposal related to the refixation of slabs for the consolidated rate. It is now in five slabs, viz. 15, 18.5, 22.5, 27.5 and 33.5 percentages. We want the Act to be amended, fixing only four slabs at 15, 25, 35 and 50% and bringing in an additional revenue of Rs. 3 crores.

There were several other demands made by us, on which no views have yet been taken by Government. Some of them are with a view to get cuts on electricity duty, amusement and entertainment taxes and transfer of property tax from which we do not get anything today. If Government agrees to amend the Electricity Act and give us 10% of the duty realised by it, we shall get Rs. 90 lakhs per year. If we are given 25% of amusement and entertainment taxes, we shall have an additional annual revenue of Rs. 125 lakhs.

We also asked for a larger share of entry tax. Presently we get 25% of the net collection on the entry of goods amounting to about Rs. 2.7 crores. For the entry of people into the city we have proposed the imposition of a terminal tax, just as we want to introduce an employment tax on salaried people, in extension of the principle by which taxes are collected on trades, profession and callings. Employment tax, if approved by Government should bring in an additional revenue of Rs. 75 lakhs per

annum. We propose the terminal tax on those who arrive in the city by trains, air etc., as also on persons, numbering more than a million, who commute to the city every day and avail of the civic services, but do not pay anything for their maintenance. If accepted, this proposal will yield an additional revenue of Rs. 2 crores per year.

Then there is the question of a larger share of motor vehicles tax, or in the alternative, the permission to raise our own resources by a parallel levy to be called Wheel tax. The Corporation had been pressing for the imposition of wheel tax on motor vehicles since 1971. In the current year's budget provision, we reiterated the stand for imposition of wheel tax for the maintenance of roads which are being damaged by heavy vehicular traffic. For the present a levy at 50% of the motor vehicle tax realised by Government is proposed to give an additional revenue of Rs. 2.25 crores. Government have partly accepted our demand. The Corporation will be given a share of MV tax by way of what will be collected henceforth by way of surcharge.

#### **Who has Eaten my Porridge ?**

It may be pointed out that the wheel tax and such proposals may conflict directly or indirectly with the Government revenue. We do not think so. Wheel tax is to be imposed on vehicles running within the city jurisdiction, because our roads are damaged by heavier categories of vehicles viz. Leyland trucks, double decker buses, trailers, equipments for Metropolitan Transport Project (tube railway) etc. and those heavy vehicles put extra burden on municipal finance as the city remains responsible for the maintenance and repairing of the roads. We emphasise that the proceeds of this tax will be earmarked for the purpose for which it is proposed to be levied viz. the maintenance of roads and lighting and no amount would be diverted to other purpose. It may be argued by motor vehicle owners and operators that they and the business would groan under double taxation. It may however be remembered in this connection that in Bombay motor vehicles tax and wheel tax co-exist. Wheel tax levied by the Municipal Corporation of Bombay yielded Rs. 3.98 crores during 1972-73.

As regards the proposal for the imposition of employment tax on persons having income above Rs. 8,000 per year, this is receiving the serious attention of the State Government. The proposal of exempting people with annual income of Rs. 8,000 or less has been made in consonance with the exemption limit of income tax. Employment tax may create a sense of conflict with income

tax for the payer will feel doubly taxed. It may, however, be stated in favour of the imposition that the salaried people who earn within the jurisdiction of the City Corporation should spend something for the maintenance of the city which gives them the bread just as the self-employed income earners from trades, professions and callings do. Moreover, it is already in existence in some municipalities of India.

On the question of entry tax on goods it may be stated that other municipal corporations in India do not share entry tax with outside urban bodies as Calcutta does. The fund Bombay gets is about Rs 23 crores which is equal to our total revised budget estimate for 1975-76. Ahmedabad with less than 50% of Calcutta's population gets in entry tax Rs. 10 crores and Bangalore gets Rs. 7 to 8 crores per annum. Calcutta's share is only Rs. 2.70 crores. Entry tax may compete in a way with sales tax for both are levied on goods, the price rise for which is passed on to the consumers. Sales tax is one of the major revenue earning source of the State Government. If there is any large rise in sales tax, the prospects of more revenue from entry tax may diminish.

Government may be said to have encroached upon the jurisdiction of municipal finance by the recent imposition of a tax on multi-storeyed buildings above four storied. This will surely affect the house and property tax which forms the major source of revenue in the Corporation. In any case, this may limit the scope of municipal earnings on property tax. It may be stated in this connection, that in recent legislation on land ceiling the price for acquisition of excess land has been provided for. While this has no doubt a salutary social effect, its impact will be felt by the civic authorities inasmuch as the land value will have a tendency to go down, resulting in a decrease in the valuation of properties. On an analysis of the properties in various cities including the Calcutta Corporation it appears that there is always an upward curve of the total annual valuation of the property in the city and as such there is always a gradual increase of the property tax year to year. This may now show a downward trend on the present basis of assessment.

The Government has from time to time taken away some of the revenues which belonged to municipalities to start with. We could grunt or squeal against the so-called intruder who had eaten the porridge just as the three bears of the fairy tale did against the little Goldilocks. But we are only asking for a larger share of Government collections. For example, instead of Rs. 10 lakhs from Government's collection of Rs. 9 crores on account of motor vehicles, we ask for a little more; or a share of amusement tax on the analogy of the Corporation of Madras.

These are certain examples where municipal and Government finances conflict. But a way should be found by which conflict should give place to concord, for municipal corporations should also have a place in the sun, if they are to discharge the duties and functions properly and adequately.

#### **Management of Services**

It may also be stated in this connection that at present city services like water and sewerage are highly subsidised i.e. the amount of tax imposed for the purpose falls far short of the actual cost of maintenance and running. There was a proposition on the advice of the world Bank that the cost of the services should be ultimately recovered from the users. This has just been accepted by Government and 25% and 5% of the consolidated rate have been statutorily allotted to water supply and sewerage services respectively. Simultaneously the principle of measuring water for the recovery of cost has been accepted and would be gradually introduced. The installation of water meters for the purpose would be taken up gradually.

Recently the method of rating and valuation of property which forms the major source of revenue has also been examined and scrutinised at the Government level and by the World Bank representatives. The current thinking is that a central valuation board should be established which should be made responsible for the assessment of various taxable properties in Calcutta as well as in other municipalities. This will be an independent body. The question as to whether the cost of construction of land value i.e. the residential basis should be the ideal for assessment or whether the fair rent or the capitalised value should be better needs to be considered seriously. There is an idea afloat that assessment should be made on the basis of standard rate per square metre and the standard rate for different zones should be fixed by some expert body for the purpose of valuation. It is necessary that a convention of experts in the field of valuation, rating and survey be organised to find out a proper basis for the valuation of city properties. Whatever basis is adopted, the endeavour should be to raise the annual valuation of the properties from the existing level of Rs. 43 crores to that of Rs. 80 crores and to revise the tax structure in such a manner that, with the increase of annual valuation, we can possibly realise a total tax of Rs. 40 crores.

We believe that this and various other suggestions given by the Corporation are under the serious consideration of Government, and actions are already on the right line so that our tax shares or non-tax revenues would be raised and would afford us the sinews of service.

## FINANCES ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE CORPORATION

'The Corporation' we talk of is 'The Corporation of Calcutta', as constituted under the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1923 with all its rights deemed to be vested in the Corporation as constituted under the current C.M. Act of 1951. It is said so in Section 3 of the current Act, and further clarified in Section 7: '... by the name of the Corporation of Calcutta (it shall) be a body corporate and have perpetual succession and a common seal and may by such name and be sued.'

Corporation has also a colloquial meaning: 'abdomen, especially when prominent.' In the Calcuttan variety however we are starved of finances which we consider fundamental. (Note the meaning in C.O.D.: 'primary, original, from which others are derived.') We therefore feel that our fundament or buttocks are being shrivelled up and our 'Corporation' is losing its prominence over the years. Such depth of observation is difficult to match except in the Bengali adage which says 'pete khele pithe say', that is one can bear it on one's back provided one has something in the stomach. One cannot put it more succinctly in today's circumstances.

### Growth & Decay of Civic Bodies

The development and growth of municipal corporations manifest the highest form of urban government hierarchy. The first municipal corporation was established in India in Madras in 1687, followed closely by Calcutta in a rudimentary form in 1727. The regular municipal corporations of Bombay and Calcutta in the form as we understand today were, however, established in the next century in 1873 and 1876 respectively. At the time of Independence India had only the above three cities with Corporations. By 1960, the number rose to 20 and currently to 34, spread all over India excepting in the States of Jammu & Kashmir, Orissa, Punjab and Rajasthan. In Union Territories, there is no Corporation except in Delhi. The number of municipalities on the other hand runs to 1400 in this vast country of ours.

The local self-government bodies had a historical role to play in the struggle for Independence, particularly high-lighting swadeshi

\* Paper presented at Seminar on "Urban Complexities of Seventies" at Indian Institute of Social Welfare and Business Management, Calcutta, 16-19 December 1976 and published in Survey, January-March 1977.

## FINANCES ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE CORPORATION

or autarchic elements. After independence, on the one hand the problems have become quite complex and require close dovetailing with the activities of planning bodies and government agencies, and on the other finances have become rather inadequate. To tide over major difficulties of finance or discipline, Government have occasionally to resort to supersession by which elected elements are dismissed and the place of the Mayor-in-Council and the Standing Committees for finance, works, health etc. are taken by one or more individuals appointed by Government. At the present moment, 24 of our 34 corporations are under supersession. The ten not under supersession are confined to the western states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Kerala. Of the four biggest cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi and Madras, only the first one is still under elected regime.

### House-tax and Services

The consolidated rate or the tax on lands and buildings is the mainstay of our finances, being half of our total expenditure and two-third of our own income. It is totally inadequate for the purpose for which it is imposed and collected. We are at present charging consolidated rate in a graduated manner on the annual valuation for all lands and buildings in Calcutta including the Tollygunge area as per Section 165(1) of the C.M. Act, 1951. This is a consolidation of four rates: lighting, sewage, water and general, roughly comprising 9%, 10%, 25% and 56% for the respective components. I say roughly, because the percentages may vary alightly from one slab to the other, depending on the percentage at which the consolidated rate is imposed on the property as evaluated.

This may be illustrated by the following table :

TABLE I

Con. rate	General rate	Water rate	Lighting rate	Sewage rate
15%	8½%	4%	1½%	1½%
18%	10%	4½%	2%	1½%
22%	12½%	5½%	2½%	2%
27%	15%	7%	2½%	2½%
33%	18½%	8½%	3½%	3%

In the Table below are shown, on the basis of the budget

estimate for 1975-76, the split up amounts of the aforementioned service rates (all figures in Rs. 000) :

TABLE II

Con. rate	General rate	Water rate	Lighting rate	Sewage rate	Total
15%	27,48	13,78	5,06	8,50	54,83
18%	83,37	38,13	16,53	16,36	1,54,39
22%	1,17,38	53,38	21,60	23,49	2,15,85
27%	1,02,04	47,72	18,71	16,13	1,84,61
33%	2,65,77	1,24,23	47,35	46,93	4,84,28
	5,96,04	2,77,25	1,09,26	1,11,41	10,93,96

There has not been much improvement on the receipt side, as will be seen from a corresponding table for 1976-77 as per the budget estimate but for Calcutta proper, i.e., excluding the areas under Tollygunge and excluding receipts from Central Government, Calcutta Improvement Trust and Railway properties. The quarterly demand for Tollygunge is only Rs. 15 lakhs as against Rs 260 lakhs of Calcutta proper. The addition of Tollygunge will, therefore, inflate the total demand by 6% only showing how insignificant is the expected rise of our demand in a year. The total estimate receipt for 75-76 was Rs. 10.94 crores. For 76-77 it will be Rs. 10.52 crores +6% or Rs. 11.15 crores, vide table below (all figures in Rs. ,000).

TABLE III

Con. rate	General rate	Water rate	Lighting rate	Sewage rate	Total
15%	21,66	10,50	3,94	3,28	39,39
18%	80,40	36,18	16,08	12,06	2,44,71
22%	1,14,33	51,33	21,09	18,67	2,05,32
27%	1,02,30	47,74	18,75	15,34	1,84,13
35%	2,64,85	1,23,35	47,17	43,54	4,78,91
	5,83,53	2,69,10	1,06,94	92,89	10,52,46

The estimated expenditure for these two years against identifiable items are shown below, that for sewerage being inclusive of conservancy services, as the two are kept together. The receipt figures for 76-77 have been inflated by 6% to include Tollygunge :

## FINANCES ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE CORPORATION

TABLE IV

Year	(Rs. lakhs)	Lighting	Sewage	Water
75-76	Receipt	109	111	277
	Expenditure	118	936	561
76-77	Receipt	113	96	285
	Expenditure	141	965	727

In each category the rate of expenditure is far ahead of the corresponding rate of income. If, on the basis of the expenditure, the con. rates are re-constituted, the rates of levy should be as follows:—

TABLE V

Statutory con. rate	Reconstituted con. rate	Rounded off to lower multiple of five
15%	22%	20%
18%	26.25%	25%
22%	32%	30%
27%	39.50%	35%
33%	48%	40%

Any revision of rates requires, as per the C.M. Act, prior approval of Government. In our budget proposal of 1975-76 we asked for the upward revision of consolidated rates as shown above, so that we can keep pace with the increase in expenditure on various services. Government have not picked up our suggestions in right earnest yet, except that it amended the law so as to assign statutorily 25% of the consolidated rate to water charges and 5% to sewerage and drainage (excluding conservancy).

#### Strengthening of Finances

Any discussion on the principal problems now being faced by the Corporation of Calcutta leads us directly to the question of finance. The Corporation is quite conscious of its short-comings and has, in fact, a clear outline of the programme which can go a long way in solving the problems and giving better civic amenities. But all such schemes require, in implementation, adequate money. Unfortunately, the financial position of the Corporation is precarious. The basic imbalance between receipts and expenditure became conspicuous some 10 years back and the deficits went on increasing. Whereas the larger demand on civic

services and increasing cost could add up to more than 10 per cent annually, the actual revenue growth of municipalities could not even come halfway. In the result even the existing infra-structure of this Corporation could not be fully utilised arising out of the shortage or delayed supply of materials.

The estimated opening deficit for the year 1976-77 was of the order of Rs. 20 crores and at the year's end we could easily close with a minus balance of Rs. 24 crores. In point of fact, however, since there is no fund and we have already eaten into our debt deposit heads, there is no question of incurring any additional deficit, for we have to cut the coat according to the cloth and restrict the expenditure to the level of income leading to further curtailment in the civic services. This is a sorry state of affairs and to make it a stronger Corporation there has to be the infusion of blood not merely as one-time grant but as a recurring source of further revenue.

### **Twenty Crores should be Forty**

According to the report of the Committee on Budgetary Reforms in Municipal Administration issued by the Government of India, a Corporation with a population of more than 10 lakhs has to spend about Rs. 109 per capita per year at the price level of 1974 for giving necessary civic services. In the Calcutta Corporation with a population of 31 lakhs as per 1971 census and about 41 lakhs including the commuters from the mufassil areas, we should therefore spend about Rs. 45 crores per year. We actually spend about Rs. 20 crores, or Rs. 50 per capita per year! Compared to that, Bombay was spending Rs. 121, Delhi Rs. 82 and even Ahmedabad Rs. 71, as early as in 1971-72. Out of Rs. 20 crores that we are able to spend today, as much as Rs. 15 crores go towards gross establishment charges and another Rs. 1.5 crores for meeting the loan liabilities. We are, therefore, left with a paltry sum of Rs. 3.5 crores for spending on direct civic services. If the Calcutta Corporation is expected to render proper civic services, arrangements must immediately be made to augment the source of revenue so that its annual income is at least doubled. We hasten to assure that the infrastructures being already in existence, any additional revenue will go on direct civic services and not on establishment.

When we talk of Rs. 40 crores we think only in terms of the maintenance and improvement of the existing services. This is apart from the necessary capital investments on equipment, machineries, roads and other civic properties. In addition to that, we have to consider the fact that CMDA is creating various assets within the city limits of Calcutta. For the operation,

## FINANCES ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO THE CORPORATION

maintenance and repairs of such assets we should on a reasonable standard, be required to spend at least 10 per cent of the capital costs of the assets every year. Even with an investment of Rs. 100 crores in the city we should be requiring annually Rs. 10 crores for OMR. (CMDA has since its inception spent something like Rs. 150 crores, more than half of which will relate to the Corporation area). This is a very important issue which must be considered by the Government immediately. It is high time to lay down in concrete terms how the investments made in the city should be matched by the provision of fund for OMR.

There is a third point which should also be considered while discussing the financial requirement of the Corporation. We would be requiring something like Rs. 40 crores for the maintenance and improvement of the existing services; but there is a considerable scope for widening the area of operation of Corporation in matters relating to culture, relief, pollution control, repairs of capital and preventive nature and lastly some developmental work in the Corporation's own hands for which there is a Project and Development department. If we want to see Calcutta as a first class city, it will be necessary to expand in these directions. But this would again mean additional finance, say of the order of Rs. 5 crores. The actual requirement of funds for the Corporation should in that context be considered in the region of Rs. 55 crores to take care of these items for the wider area besides the maintenance and improvement of the existing services and the taking over and operation of new assets being created by CMDA.

### How to get the Extra Money

The Corporation has been making to Government from year to year various proposals for the augmentation of our revenue resources, the latest one being through the Administrator's budget proposal for 1976-77. A summary statement of the proposals bringing out some suggestion for grants and additional sources as well as quantifying the expected additional yield to be Rs. 13 crores per annum is given in the table below:

TABLE VI

Items of revenue sources	Rs. lakhs per annum
1. Revision of Schedule IV of the CM Act, 1951 : —Licence fees for professions, trades & callings	... 55
2. Employment tax.	... 75
3. Terminal tax	... 200

## PREVIEW, REVIEW &amp; OVERVIEW

TABLE VI (Contd.)

Items of revenue sources	Rs. lakhs per annum
4. Allocation of a share out of the proceeds of	
(a) Amusement entertainment tax : 25%	125
(b) Electricity duty or surcharge : 10%	90
5. Raising consolidated rate structure	300
6. 50% surcharge on non-residential buildings	50
7. Re-imbusement of expenditure on primary education : 90%	100
8. Wheel tax	200
9. Re-allocation of share of entry tax	100
Total	1295

N.B.: (a) Of the above proposals, items 1 and 6 have since been approved by the Government.

(b) Two other sources were suggested without quantification of the receipt (i) duty on transfer of property and (ii) 50% of wealth tax on tall buildings.

(c) Also suggested outright grant to meet immediate needs pending the augmentation of revenue as above—

(i) For improvement of roads and conservancy and also to wipe out part of revenue deficit, asked from State Govt. : Rs. 100 lakhs and

(ii) For the eradication of malaria, asked from Centre : Rs. 187 lakhs.

Even such demands for grants and newer sources of revenue would be very much on the low side, when we compare with other metropolitan cities. We may add that the total amount of tax revenue of the Municipal Corporation of Bombay is about Rs. 52 crores which constitutes 88.25 per cent of their total income. Delhi has tax revenue of the order of Rs. 17 crores which constitutes 63 per cent of their total income. In Calcutta the tax revenue is only Rs. 13.5 crores constituting 58 per cent of the total income. It can be said without any fear of contradiction that the tax structure of Calcutta is the most niggardly of the metropolitan cities in India and, even more, compared to other parts of the world. There is a critical need for restructuring taxes here and hunting for the resources of non-tax revenues.

## WE TOO ARE DEVOTED TO BOOKS

In talking of books, book-fairs and libraries, I am perhaps starting tangentially—talking of a record room. The reason will be clear as you go through this brief account of the Central Record Room of the Calcutta Corporation and its various treasures. Assessment, birth and death registers as are available from our Record Department are a gold mine for researchers. The assessment registers since 1806 will throw light on the growth of the city, its locality, dwellings, premises, population, trade assessment etc. as have entered into the socio-economic fabric of the city. Its reference to streets and lanes—many forgotten today—and the change of street names is fascinating, particularly for those named after the most ordinary people like khandama, goala, ostarar and dhobani as well as after the European elites and the native nouveau rich like Benians, Bysacks and Seths.

### Record Room

The birth registers since 1863 and death registers since 1878 are invaluable to study the growth of population as well as mortality by various diseases and according to age. Mention may also be made here of the reports of W. J. Simpson, Health officer of Calcutta since 1896, incorporating statistics on births, deaths and general health services.

We also have building sanction plans since 1866 and the Report of the Calcutta Building Commission, 1897-98 which give a clear picture of building activities in the city for the last hundred years. Similarly reports on the drainage and water fronts, W. Clark's report of 1855 with sketches on the drainage of Calcutta and of 1862 on the supply of water are the first such schemes for outlay on drainage & sewerage and water supply respectively. There are subsequent reports too on drainage and sewerage—by Baldwin Latham and James Kambel, as also of 1858 and thereafter.

Then there are the reports of the Commissioners of Calcutta of 1853 for the improvement of the Town of Calcutta and the General Report of 1857. These are very important for studying the entire municipal administration comprising income and expenditure under various heads, assessable premises, total income,

\* Hindi version 'Pustakon ke prati Nagar-nigam Samarjit' in Samang, 27 February 1977.

expenditure on drainage, lighting, roads, water-supply by tanks and No. of street lamps (prior to 1857 when gas light was contemplated). For the coming of tramways in the city, one may look to the Agreement with Tramways, 1896.

Coming to administrative and budget papers, one could mention the Administration Reports and the Budget Estimates, both of which since 1863 are very helpful for onward comparative study of municipal finances and administration. Along with them should be taken the proceedings—also from 1863—of the Justices of Peace, The General Committees, the General Meetings the Corporation, other committees and Special Committees. These are useful for any general study of municipal administration and for historical references and many speeches of national leaders that they contain. Then there are various reports on Calcutta and its institutions, also from 1863.

Voters lists since 1885, Census Reports of Calcutta since 1866 and the lists of Municipal officers since 1895 contain very useful information on the constitution and growth of Municipal Calcutta. The Corporation Almanac published since 1907 and changed to Year Book since 1917 gives handy information on municipal administration too. Some other outside reports and documents have much historical value to-day, e.g. administration reports of different municipal bodies of India and abroad, administration reports of Bengal since 1865, Calcutta Gazettes prior to 1900 and India Gazettes and Assembly reports since about 1850.

Coming to important maps and drawings, I should mention the following, all rare documents: City of Calcutta, 1847 to 1849 by Fredrick Walter Simms (republished in 1857), the same 1911 by Col S G Buriard; Drawings on Drainage, Sewerage, Sanitation, as parts of report on Suburbs of Calcutta by A J Hughes and on Salk Lake—both dated 1894; and then Drawings with brief history of large scale survey of Calcutta and its neighbourhood, 1903-04.

We would like to give a list of rare books and old documents handed over to Victoria Memorial Hall for museum and study purposes. The most valuable are the Lottery Committee Proceedings from 1817 to 1821, in three volumes which were handed over in original on 8.5.1914. Since 1975, in response to a request by the Memorial Hall which is being reorganized as a period museum till the 19th century, we gave them, on loan basis, copies of the following papers: Report on the Improvement of the Town of Calcutta submitted to the Hon'ble F. J. Halliday, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal (1857); Report on the Drainage and Sewerage of Calcutta (1858); Clark's report on water supply

(1862), Latham's report on drainage (1891); Simpson's report on health (1896); Report on the New Municipal Office Buildings by E. T. Plummer and John Scott of the Port of Calcutta (1906); Report on Improvement of Hackney Carriage Service in Calcutta (1911); Calcutta Drainage works and the Deterioration of the Bidyadhari compiled by C. C. Chatterjee, Deputy Chairman of the Corporation (1921) and A Brief History of Large-scale Survey of its Neighbourhood (1903-04 and 1926-27).

#### Reference Library

The Corporation of Calcutta has a reference library in the Central Municipal Building. It came into existence towards the end of the 19th century, and is primarily meant for Councillors and Aldermen as well as the senior officials of the Corporation. It will be a pleasant surprise to go through the collection and find out how diversified is the accession list. As an institutional library of such a historical organisation as the Corporation, the salient possessions of the library are the proceedings of the Corporation and different special Committees, Budgets and Administration Reports ranging from 1872-73 to date. Proceedings of the "Justices of Peace" (1863-1872) who were the precursors of the present day Corporation are hand-written and naturally have a special value. Among the other important publications of the Corporation carrying a wealth of information are the Year Books from 1908 and the Municipal Gazettes from 1925.

Among valuable books of reference catering to the needs of various readers are encyclopaedias on various subjects including the Encyclopaedia Britannica of different editions, Census Reports from 1866, District Gazeteers and dictionaries. Various publications on Local Self Governments in England, America and India are available in the Library, while major portion is occupied by law books and journals e.g. Halsbury's Laws of England, English and Empire Digest, Local Government Law and Administration in England & Wales. All India Reporter, Nagpur, Calcutta Weekly Notes, Civic Affairs and Mayors' Newsletter are the notables among the former category. Proceedings of the Municipal Corporations of Bombay, Madras and other major cities occupy 20 per cent of the library space.

Reports of the State Governments and Manuals, Rules and By-laws of the Calcutta Corporation have been systematically preserved in the library. Also available are the Municipal Acts of Bombay, Delhi and Madras Corporations as well as the reports of NEERI (National Environmental Engineering Research Institute of Nagpur, previously called CPHERI or the Central Public Health Engineering Research Institute), CMPO (Calcutta Metropolitan

Planning Organization) and CMDA (Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority). The report on "Feasibility Studies for Alternative Methods of Garbage disposal for Calcutta City", for example, is one from CPRERI which is still sought after in any study of solid wastes in the city.

Other important collections of the library are the books on engineering, especially civil engineering, health, public health engineering and sanitation. Selected books on accounts, economics, business management, history and growth of the City of Calcutta and general history and biography books have extended the coverage of the library. Then there is a sizable collection of Bengali books, mostly an Bengali literature and on Calcutta. Daily newspapers of the city are preserved in the library for certain period for reference.

The library could not yet be housed in any hall or rooms by itself, but are spread in the three Committee rooms. The walls of the room are decorated with Daniell and other engraving pictures on Old Calcutta which creates a special atmosphere for the readers. Research scholars, occasionally from abroad too, come to the library to study the evolution of the municipal government in Calcutta. Students of the Calcutta University, Bengal Engineering College and other institutions sometimes visit the library for their special requirements.

There are quite a few problems in the administration of the library, and a scheme for its modernisation and scientific management is overdue. The first and foremost requirement is space which cannot be solved unless the Corporation building is extended either vertically at its present site or by building an annexe, preferably in the Corporation plot opposite the Hind Cinema at Wellington Square which has now a single-storied small building housing a primary school. On a very short term basis, some space can however be found out in the existing almirahs by removing some obsolete books to the Record Room or better by gifting them to some special libraries.

Another deficiency in management is the want of any accession register. Books have been recorded in an existing register in a haphazard manner, without any scientific basis. It is necessary to register all books of the library in a library accession register chronologically. It is needless to say that the utility and importance of a library is in its cataloguing and classification. A catalogue was printed for the Corporation library in 1943 on the basis of the stock register. The so called catalogue has also lost its importance with the lapse of time. This has to be redone now, preferably in the form of card catalogues in a cabinet which is

the modern trend. The books also require to be classified scientifically either on the Dewey or the universal system of decimal classification which only can bring all books of the same subjects at the same place.

#### **Reading Room at Municipal Museum**

There is another small library and reading room on top of the College Street Market which is run by our Publicity Department as part of the Municipal Museum. The Museum was first started as Commercial Museum in the Central Municipal building in 1932 during the mayoralty of Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy. It was shifted next year to the College Street Market and had a small library attached to it in 1934. Then in the early fifties, a free reading room was added where the public can read the leading dailies during office hours.

In those days when there were very few public libraries in the city, this Museum library gave yeoman's service for some specialised reference. It started with about 1000 books, mostly on health and hygiene, e.g. general health, physical culture, sanitation and public health, maternity and child welfare, nursing, bacteriology, drugs and medicine, sexology and venereal diseases, food and nutrition, malaria and medical literature. There are also some books on other matters like general science, chemistry, industry, engineering, workshop practice, agriculture, economics, business and factory organisation and education. Apart from these a set of encyclopaedias, monthly journals and periodicals are also in its collection.

The previous practice of lending books had to be discontinued for want of a librarian and the substantial loss of books. Books are now available only for use in reading room where current magazines and periodicals are also placed on tables for readers. It is no doubt a very small library, but possesses a few old and rare books. There are no subscription or membership fees. The library is attended daily by more than 50 and the reading room by more than 100.

#### **Girish Memorial Hall**

Another unit of the Corporation comprising a library and a reading room is the Girish Memorial Hall. When the Central Avenue (renamed on 26 May 1926 as Chittaranjan Avenue) was being laid in the north, the residential house of the great dramatist Girish Chandra Ghosh fell in the middle of the alignment. The Calcutta Improvement Trust demolished other portions of the building, but kept intact the two-storied central portion compris-

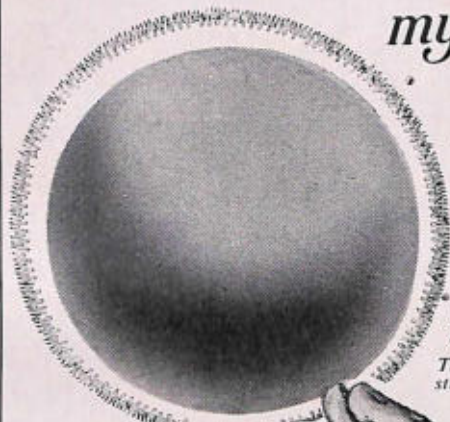
ing the drawing room and the study. This along with a small patch of garden stands today as an island on Jatindra Mohan Avenue in memory of the dramatist and houses some of his personal effects, paintings and books. It was maintained by CIT till June 22, 1958 when the Corporation took it over. At the entrance is a standing figure of Girish Chandra on a high pedestal put up by the Corporation on May 31, 1969 and bearing the inscription that the poet-dramatist lived in the house from 1844 to 1912.

Although it is a small library with less than 400 books, it has all publications of Girish Chandra, biographical publications relating to international dramas and stage and most of the dramas of Tagore and the early dramatists of Bengal including Dinabandhu Mitra and Kshirod Prasad Vidyavinod. Half its collection is in drama and the balance is on stage-craft and connected literature. It is great help to persons interested in the drama movement who require to make any analytical and critical study, there being no full-fledge library in the city on the subject. It remains open in the evening and is of great help to postgraduate students and researchers.

#### **Library Movement & Book Fair**

While the Bengal Library Association celebrated Golden Jubilee in 1975 it made a suggestion to the Corporation of Calcutta that a free public library system should be introduced by the Corporation of Calcutta in the city with a central municipal public library at the apex and base libraries in each of the hundred wards. The Association pointed out that there was still no free public library system for the people of Calcutta, although the Delhi Public Library had been established a long time back. In examining the proposal we found that the proposal would entail easily Rs. 3 lakhs as the capital outlay and a minimum of Rs. 1 lakh as the recurring annual expenditure for books, staff and library service. We could not take up the venture because of the severe financial constraints. But we thought that with assistance from Raja Rammohan Library Foundation, the Government of West Bengal in Education and Social Education Departments and the Government of India in Education Ministry, if available both in lump and annual grants, it would be a worthwhile and possible venture. We also felt that the proposal was in line with the philanthropic and welfare activities which the Calcutta Corporation had undertaken in the field of education, health etc. right from the time of Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das as the first Mayor. That the Corporation of Calcutta is aware of the need for such public library facilities for the citizens is evident from the fact that it was extending grants till a decade ago to the

# In the depth of my awakening



Suchetana, you are  
a remote island  
near the evening star  
where solitude reigns in the  
woods of clove.  
The embattled success  
of the world is a fact,  
but not the final truth.  
Calcutta one day will be  
a bewitching opulent beauty,  
yet my heart is for you alone.

The world ails and ails;  
still the debt of man  
is to the earth.

I see often the ships  
bring their wares  
to our sun-kissed port;  
they reflect the golden spell  
that keeps our hearts mute,  
as it did to our fathers;  
Buddha and Confucius.  
And yet the bugle blows  
for blood and fatigue.

Suchetana, lamps will  
light the way—  
the way of the  
world's steady advance,  
though it shall take many  
seers and centuries.  
I have a vision:  
of the past and the future,  
of man who will not  
be overcome,  
and of the eternal day-  
break in the endless night.

From 'Suchetana'  
JIBANANANDA DAS  
Translated by Manish Naldy



REVIEW

JIBANANANDA DAS (1899-1954)

Born 18 February 1899 at Barisal (now Bangladesh). Died 22 October 1954 at Calcutta, having been knocked down by a tram car a week ago on Rasbihari Avenue near Lansdowne Road crossing. Educated at Barisal and Calcutta (B.A. from Presidency College and M.A. from Calcutta University), Jibanananda started career as a lecturer in City College, Calcutta and then taught mostly in B. M. College, Barisal. After Partition he came over to Calcutta and taught in Barisha College (1951) and Howrah Girls College (1953).

His major publications include *Jhara Palak* (1928), *Dhusar Pandulipi* (1936), *Banalata Sen* (1942), *Maha Prithivi* (1944), *Kabitar Katha* (an essay on poetry and poetics) and *Rupasi Bangla* (1957—published posthumously). *'Banalata Sen'* was an epoch making poem and distinguished Jibanananda as a giant in the post-Tagore School.

His poems are a manifestation of the flowing environment of rural Bengal; they supplement and reinforce one another to the poet's yearning for an idyllic world where sounds have taste and words have image. The poem overleaf was included in *'Banalata Sen'* and is of one piece with its romantic world. But from the longing for the evening star and the cardamom field it goes beyond in an optimistic spirit to the historicity of Buddha and Confucius.

libraries, privately managed and run on subscription: Now that efforts are being made to augment revenues of the Corporation it should give serious thought for creating such a facility in the city as soon as its financial position improves.

When in 1925 the Bengal Library Association was formed, it had Rabindranath Tagore as the first president. Forty years earlier there was an essay from his pen under the title Library. It was an exquisite prose-poem, and went partly as follows :

'If anyone could bind the roaring waves of the ocean for a hundred years and make them quiet like a sleeping baby, the quietude of that great sound could compare with a library. Here the expression is tranquil, the current is static and the immortal glow of man's soul is chained in black alphabets and tied in the paper prison. . . . As the conch-shell can give the murmur of the sea, so can the library make the heart audible in rise and fall. Here the dead and the living coexist at the same place. . . .

'A battle is on between the crude destiny and man's soul. When the bugle blows in the four corners of the world calling the soldiers to action, should we confine ourselves merely to filing suits and appeals in the court over the plot of land for a vegetable garden ?'

In offering our felicitations to the Calcutta Book Fair which is being held for the second year here under the auspices of the Publishers and Booksellers Guild we remember that great master of books Rabindranath and affirm that in the Corporation of Calcutta we too are devoted to books. The book fair affords a splendid opportunity to project the scope ahead of publishers and booksellers and to take stock of the reading habits of the people. Calcutta has still the distinction of being the biggest book market in the country and the National Book Fair, organized by the National Book Trust of India in 1973, was a recognition of the fact. We have however to forge ahead and keep up the tradition—the tradition of the first general library started in Calcutta in 1835 by the efforts of the paper "Englishman", the first lending library of the moffusil viz. Jayakrishna Library of Uttarpara and the pioneering work done in the collection of rare books by the Asiatic Society and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad of Calcutta.

#### Postscript

This may an after thought in self-advertisement! But we feel our devotion to books will not be complete unless we mention the Calcutta Municipal Gazette and its special numbers. Collectors and consumers of books as we

are, we should also take pride in introducing ourselves as producers, albeit on a limited scale. Let us reproduce a recent advertisement published under the heading. 'The Corporation of Calcutta salutes the Savants':

"Born 1924, the Calcutta Municipal Gazette is still going strong. It was founded by Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das, nurtured by Deshagaurab Subhas Chandra Bose and edited till 1949 by that doyen of Editors, Amal Home. It is now published every fortnight, bringing out topical articles in civic services and the running of the Calcutta Corporation, and incorporates market notices and prices relating to the ten municipal markets in the city—a valuable feature for shoppers and researchers alike. The Gazette has recently brought out a few special publications.

\*SARATCHANDRA CENTENARY VOLUME: Published on 17 September 1976 in 152 pages, this number in Bengali contains reproduction of the novelist's own drawings and manuscripts, rare pictures and unpublished letters. There are 43 articles from established essayists and litterateurs headed by Banaphul, Premendra Mitra, Probodh Sanyal, Janardan Chakravarti, Hiranmay Bandyopadhyay, Haraprasad Mitra, Gopal Chandra Roy, Pulakesh De Sarkar, Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Revolutionary Hemchandar Ghosh and Dr. M.s. Roma Chaudhuri.

\*AMAL HOME SPECIAL NUMBER, Published on 13 November 1976, it contains a four coloured portrait of Home by Abanindra Nath Tagore and contribution from a galaxy of essayists including Dr. Suniti Chatterjee, Dr. Rabi Das Gupta and Lila Majumdar in English and Radharani Devi, Rani Mahalanabis and Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay in Bengali.

"Besides these, a few special numbers of 1970 which are priceless are made available for the public now:

\*NETAJI BIRTHDAY SUPPLEMENT: Published on 24 January 1970, it contains 19 historical pictures of Netaji and 42 pages of writings—in Bengali by Tarasankar Bandyopadhyay, Prof. Satyen Bose, Hemanta Kumar Bose, Saroj Kumar Raychaudhuri and others and in English by Subhas Chandra himself, Dr. Ba Maw, Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Satyaranjan Bakshi and others.

\*LENIN BIRTH CENTENARY SUPPLEMENT: Published on 22 April 1970, it contains 21 pictures of Lenin and facsimile of his writing and runs to 60 pages in Bengali and English. In Bengali section there are poems from Sukanta Bhattacharya, Dakshina Ranjan Basu and Birendra Chottopadhyay and essays from Dr. Buddhadev Bhattacharyya, Prof. Nirmal Bose, Prof. Piyush Dasgupta and others. In the English section there are reprints from Lenin and Gorky and original essays from Satya Ranjan Bakshi, Mohan Kumaramangalam, Prof. Sudhangshu Dasgupta, Yelina Stasova and others.

\*DESHBHANDHU CENTENARY COMMEMORATION VOLUME: Published on 5 November 1970, it contains 48 illustrations and facsimile of manuscripts. It is bilingual having 50 pages in Bengali and 64 pages in English. In Bengali it features Chittaranjan himself, Subhas Chandra, Pramatha Chaudhury and Sarat Chandra in reprints, Achintya Sengupta and Hasirashi Devi in poems and Sibaram Chakravorti, Kalyani Devi, Tripura Sankar Sen Sastri, Bhupendra Kishore Rakshit Roy and others in essays. Contributors in English include Mrs. Nellie Sengupta, Dr. Ramesh Chandar Majumdar, Prof. Hiren Mukherjee, M.P. and Principal Devaprasad Ghosh.

## MACHINES FOR MUNICIPAL MATHEMATICS

Today change has become a way of life, and is equated with progress. To achieve that one needs to innovate and improve for which the management of any organisation requires accurate and up-to-date information which is easily retrievable. Data banks are therefore developed by diverse departments, preferably in a form that allows others also to draw on them for planning and execution.

In India, although we have drawn up five-year plans, we have not been so good in their execution. Apart from the timely husbanding of resources, a major reason for such shortfall had been felt particularly acutely in municipal administration. As a result of the recognition of these facts at various levels, a need was felt for the introduction of modern techniques for the collection, collation and consummation of the desired data.

On 19 March 1974 we inaugurated the data processing unit of the Corporation of Calcutta. It was a big step, for modern data processing techniques were chosen to streamline the revenue accounting system of the Corporation going back to early this century. It began in an atmosphere of distrust, for the unions felt that the installation of unit recorders was the first step towards automation and shrinkage of employment. Through detailed discussion with the union representatives and also by offering protection and upgradation to some existing staff, we could dispel distrust to the extent that there was no direct opposition to the start-up. The unions also were gradually convinced that data processing would not restrict employment; on the other hand, it could add to further employment with certain job orientation.

Making a modest start with rate billing operation from the first quarter of 1974-75, the unit took a year to stabilise, because of initial teething troubles. These were gradually overcome. We could issue bills for house-tax to owners or occupiers in time and wipe out the old time-lag of two to three quarters. Visitors from the municipal corporations of other states and the World Bank were impressed with our IBM installation. This was the first step towards change and was largely responsible for the increased collection of Rs 2 crores as revenue.

### The Three M's

However, we cannot be complacent. We have to streamline

\* Economic Times, 24 July 1977.

other areas of our administration. Using the modern technique of data processing is a valuable aid. The principal resources of the Corporation or, for that matter, of any live organisation are threefold: money, materials and men. Under the three heads we can respectively count revenue from house-tax, stores inventory and the employees.

As regards revenue, the timely issue of bills to owners and occupiers has resulted in larger collections. A further increase is possible if accounts reconciliation is taken up. The timely reconciliation of the billed amount with that collected would greatly help in sending out reminder notices to defaulting owners and occupiers. A regular follow-up would then increase the revenue further.

There remains another important area which needs closer attention—inventory control. We have eight stores at different locations with approximately 50,000 items and a total value of Rs. 40 crores. Our aim is to have centralised material control over the decentralised locations. This would help the Corporation in scheduling preventive maintenance, in timely supplies to various projects undertaken and, ultimately, in controlling consumption. Items which have not moved and are not likely to be used could be pin-pointed through the help of the machines and disposed of, thereby releasing blocked capital. This is an area of vital importance which should be tackled early.

The Corporation has 33,000 employees in looking after whose welfare we may emulate the CMDA. This sister organisation has already mechanised its Personnel Information Centre with emphasis on service to employees. If we can develop personnel data base along the same line for all our employees, decision-making at the central HQ level will be much facilitated. The personnel information system would not only help in maintaining up-to-date service records of all employees but also in streamlining and improving working procedures in the areas of leave details, pension contribution, pay roll, leave salary and provident fund. It is becoming increasingly difficult to keep track of details for all the employees on a current basis. To help our employees we have to ensure that they are not denied due benefits on due dates.

#### **Accounting & Accuracy**

A work study engineer considers accounting as nothing but recording, calculating, selecting, scheduling and summarising transaction data following an order or convention. When the data involved are a few in number, manual processing is feasible but

## MACHINES FOR MUNICIPAL MATHEMATICS

difficulties creep in when they are large. Since timeliness is the essence of a report, manual processing very often results in failures.

A sure way to avoid this failure is to use the original data every time without retranscription so that errors and omissions in the process are avoided. Since unit records have the advantage to take part in all processing without retranscription, vouchers containing unit information or record are in use for a pretty long time. In the manual system of data processing, a general type of cards with pearl holes on three sides were used to contain unit records. Some of the holes were notched according to requirement denoting codes. Cards were kept in trays in a sequence of transactions. A special needle was inserted through the holes to select a group of cards. They were arranged in a pegboard, one almost overlapping the other and exhibiting the desired column of data. Thereafter photocopy was taken and summarizing was done with a calculator. Although the system was much inferior to the present day data processing, yet it is worth mentioning being the precursor.

The present unit record machines work on the same principle and have the advantage of doing the series of operations from recording to summarizing with speed and accuracy. The medium used here is a data processing card of definite thickness, shape and size so that machines can accept it. The unit record machines cannot accept any information in human language but from a pattern of holes. Rectangular or round holes are punched on the cards by the recording machines, while the processing machines sense the holes for processing. When one unit of record is punched on one card, it becomes a unit record card. Source data must be absolutely correct to give the correct output. After transmission by punching, they should therefore be verified again to ensure the correctness. This pre-requisite to data processing is known as data preparation.

If the input data are not accurate and the handling of the high speed machines not careful and correct, the inaccuracy and inefficiency will be magnified many times and make the product a costly garbage. To obviate against this, a large data processing unit should have a systems division. It can distinguish and identify various faults, e.g., machine, operator, panel and electricity, and take remedial measures. Selection, scheduling, summarisation and calculation, if needed, are done in separate machines, known respectively as sorter, collector, reproducer and tabulator machines. To process a job, a host of instructions are fed into the machines by wiring control panels. For accuracy,

efficiency and establishing checks and control, the control panel wiring should be of the highest order. \*o

The prevailing accounting system of the Corporation of Calcutta was designed in the early decade of the twentieth century when the volume of work was quite low. Although the volume has increased vastly, there has been no appreciable change in the system. Accounting principles remaining the same, the book-keeping system can no longer cope with the volume. In 1910-11 the city had a valuation of Rs. 3.24 lakhs and an annual rate of Rs. 30 lakhs which in 1972-73 went up to Rs. 38.15 lakhs and Rs. 9.67 crores, respectively. The number of defaulting quarterly bills was not even 10,000 then but is now more than 34 lakhs. The revenue receipt which was less than a crore of rupees then, is now more than Rs. 16 crores. It is almost impossible to finalise rate accounting under the prevailing pen and ink method within the prescribed time. One futile attempt was made in 1964 by partially implementing recommendations given by a management consulting firm, IBCON.

After the unit record machines were installed in 1974, billing of 3 lakh rate bills per quarter has been entrusted to the data processing unit. The master cards used for quarterly billing are well over 15 lakhs. For regular updating of masters, more than one lakh of cards are either added or replaced by the data preparation unit. About 3 lakhs of are reproduced as quarterly tax cards by the processing unit while preparing tax bills. Processing units handle well over 33 lakhs cards by way of preparing bills, demands and posting certificates. This is usually done in course of two months in each quarter by two operators on two accounting machines or tabulators. The load on each accounting machine is 30,000 cards per day of 10 processing hours, that too with only a limited application. The CESC and the LIC which have taken to data processing units do not have such a workload on an operator or machine.

### Looking Forward

The potentiality of data processing is indeed unbounded in a large establishment like the Corporation. Apart from what we discussed earlier about rate-billing, stores accounting and establishment matters, it can do a lot in financial and public health reporting. In the hand of an accounts manager it can accelerate financial accounting, budgeting debenture flotation and sinking fund accounting. In public health and public engineering, it may also be an aid in the fields of vital statistics, water analysis, sewage disposal, conservancy handling, road maintenance, street lighting etc.

## MACHINES FOR MUNICIPAL MATHEMATICS

If data processing has to play an important role in such areas it can be achieved by using sophisticated higher generation sets. Let us hope that whatever little has been achieved in the Corporation in these three years will pave the way for a computer-based information system which will guide it in planning, mobilising and allocating resources and will equip it for better service to the city of Calcutta.

## TO DELEGATE OR TO RELEGATE

Oh Lord, let us pray that we come to no decisions  
Nor run into any sense of responsibility,  
But that things are so ordained that  
We have new and unwarranted departments  
For ever and for ever.  
Oh! though you send all things below,  
Grant that thy servants go slow,  
That they may live to comply  
With regulations until they die.

This is the prayer of the government servant who may have his powers and functions so tied up between departments that he can weave a maze and still not be caught for the consequences. For a municipal servant, however, the cause and effect relationship is much more direct. He deals with the day to day affairs of house-keeping, and any deficiency or delay would immediately hurt someone and expose him, although the thrust of operation and the intensity of exposure is on a lower scale for a member of a local body compared to a government servant. That should be a blessing for the former. Following the Peter Principle he could rise to his own level of inefficiency, here however he can go even beyond.

This is by way of invocation. We shall now take a hard look at the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951, and the authorities and functionaries therein, in the light of the above loopholes and limitations. There are three coordinate authorities in the Act: the Corporation, the standing Committees and the Commissioner; There are five standing committees: Finance and Establishment; Education; Health and Bustee Improvement; Water Supply; Drainage and Sewage Disposal; and works and Town Planning. There is a sixth category called Standing Borough Committees. Originally in 1951 there were, besides the Borough committees, nine standing committees, namely Education, Accounts, Taxation and Finance, Health, Town Planning and Improvement, Works, Buildings, Public Utilities and Markets, and Water Supply. In 1964 the number was minimised and work streamlined. On 5 November 1953 rules were framed prescribing the powers, duties and functions of the nine committees. After the amendment of the Act new rules were framed in suppression on 13 July 1965.

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\* Economic Age, 21 July 1977.

## TO DELEGATE OR TO RELEGATE

An examination of the Calcutta Municipal Act to find out how many authorities are mentioned there makes an interesting reading. The last section of the Act numbers 615, but it has 38 later insertions with by-numbers and 29 sections omitted by later legislation (of which 25 alone were by virtue of the Central Act on the Prevention of Food Adulteration). Thus we had in all 624 sections, out of which the Commissioner featured in 238, the Corporation in 187 and the Standing Committees in 23 sections. As many as 17 in relation to the Corporation was about meetings and 25 about raising loans. Only 155 sections therefore relate to the Corporation as an authority for executive and financial matters. It shows the preponderance of the Commissioner, at least theoretically, as an authority, in comparison with the other two coordinate authorities of the Corporation and the Standing Committees.

The discrepancy between Commissioner and other principal officers of the Corporation is glaring. These are the Finance Officer and Chief Accountant, the Chief Engineer, the Health Officer, the Secretary and the Deputy Commissioners. They feature in the Act for four, one, 14, three and about a dozen times respectively. Besides there is a special category of officers who might be appointed by the Government with all powers, functions and duties of the Commissioner. These are Special Deputy Commissioners about whom there is a mention in two sections only. The Act is therefore by design weighted in favour of the Commissioner, hoping that such a top and powerful executive, being the head of the Corporation's establishment, would be the stabilising factor in the rough and tumble of the elected body. That is why the Commissioner, whether he comes on deputation from Government or selected by the Public Service Commission, cannot be removed by the Corporation except by some sort of an impeachment with three-fifths majority in a special meeting.

In actual practice, most of the Commissioners, in the vortex of happenings, have usually had brief tenures in the last twenty-five years of the current Municipal Act. Also because the elected elements always breathe down the neck of such officials, the growth of his junior colleagues usually remains stunted. The very positioning of the Commissioner in a room with six doors of which at least three could be used for easy ingress by the officials and employees who come with papers requesting instant disposal, is something of a mirror of the system.

More such practices might be cited. One rooted in the old tradition is a circular of 1971 which says that no officer of the Corporation should give any statement or supply any information of the Press without the prior approval of the Commissioner.

The circular swears by rule 459 of the Manual of Office System issued by J. Donald, Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation on the 15th day of October in the year of our Lord 1919! It seems that the Corporation, the problems and the officers refused to grow in the intervening half century. During my time as Commissioner I amended the circular by saying that Controlling Officers should answer queries from the Press relating to the civic services in respective departments, but it would be desirable for them to keep the Commissioner informed.

Another strange practice which grew in the Corporation was a ban on the disclosure of names of officers in its documents and advertisements. It was on the basis of a resolution passed in the sixties. The ban came to be enforced with such rigidity that the directories of Calcutta Telephones showed the officials only by designation, even for residential connexions. In his own residence and living with his family an official of the Corporation could be listed as, say Amusement Officer, North or Executive Engineer, Drainage! The trend of nameless and faceless functionaries was thus taken to the extreme and the sufferer was the common citizen who could get better attention if he could contact a man on the chair and not merely the chair!

The crucial section for the flow of authority in the Corporation from the Chief Executive is Section 34. It says that the Commissioner may delegate to any municipal officer or servant any of his powers, duties and functions, including those delegated to him by the Corporation or a Standing Committee, except about a score as specified. More important matters on which such an embargo as existing in 1974 were the preparation of budget estimates, submission of accounts to the auditors, the demolition or alteration of unauthorised constructions, the amendment of any valuation of property and the assessment-books, the power for all permanent appointments of salary between Rs. 150 and Rs. 700 per month, powers to remove or dismiss such appointees and the power to sanction an estimate or make a contract for expenditure not exceeding Rs. 5,000.

The restrictions in regard to unauthorised buildings, assessment, appointments and expenditure were too severe. It required Commissioner's personal imprimatur on all such cases of too petty a nature. Also it was felt to be dangerous to concentrate all powers and discretions in one hand which could be an open invitation to pressure, torture and even subversion. Besides, what could one individual do, however upright, courageous and hard-working he might be? He cannot stop the deluge all by himself, although there is the classical example of Aruni in the hermitage who laid

prostrate on the embankment to stop flood waters with his body.

Therefore, gradually these restrictions in Section 34 have been removed in the last few years. First came Section 416A in an amendment of 1974 which stated that for matters relating to streets and public places as well as demolition, alteration and stopping of unlawful work the term 'Commissioner' would include a Deputy Commissioner or any other officer drawing a salary of not less than Rs. 1000 per month, specially appointed by the Corporation with the approval of the State Government. Also, a beginning was made to break the bottleneck regarding building cases, but in a roundabout manner. The fact is that the original embargo still featured in Section 34!

For a direct attack on this Section we had to wait till 1976 when the embargo relating to valuation and assessment was deleted, enabling the Commissioner to delegate such powers and distribute such cases to other officers. In this amendment the Commissioner's personal responsibility for appointment and financial matters were also restricted to more important cases, by raising the floor from Rs. 150 to Rs. 500 in the former and from Rs. 5000 to Rs. 25,000 in the latter.

Logically, the recipient of delegated powers cannot sub-delegate the same to officials still below. As almost all powers in the Calcutta Municipal Act are in the name of Commissioner, he has therefore to choose and work out carefully what powers to give away and to whom. Commissioner has to delegate his authority straight to the level at which the work is to be done and not via media. When I joined the Corporation, I studied the existing delegation order by a predecessor in 1969. I found that the order ran to 25 pages and 344 items and the delegated authority could, starting from Deputy Commissioners, Chief Engineer and Health Officer, go as low as six or seven levels removed to, say, the constructional assistant, the dog catcher, sergeants and guards!

Since we found that the delegation of powers and responsibilities by the Commissioner was a vast and complicated subject, we devised a way for delegating his duties and functions to the second level of officers in the Corporation, called Controlling Officers. There were nine such officers and, subject to certain reservations, the Commissioner transferred his powers to each of them, with the proviso that they themselves would be subject to the Commissioner's overall control and supervision, that all previous delegations direct to the lower level should remain valid and that any further delegation, if necessary, should be proposed in time. I had no way of dispensing with the large array of angling rods for the subordinate officials fishing in the delegated waters,

but at least for the controlling officers, I arranged a large netting operation!

Thus a system arose whereby the distribution of power between the three Authorities i.e., the Commissioner, the Standing Committees and the Corporation did not get split merely between the Chief Executive or the bureaucracy of the Corporation and the other two Authorities. The powers of the Commissioner in this set-up is exercised in continuation by the other two Authorities, the day-to-day administration being run by a Committee system. For example, in disciplinary matters, instead of the usual Inquiry Officer, a mixture of officials and Councillors conduct the proceedings the report of which is submitted to the Commissioner who is the punishing authority.

In a note which B K Sen the first Commissioner in the new Corporation of 1952 (who died a few months ago) submitted to the Corporation on 16 January 1958 for giving a few suggestions for improving the administration, this deficiency and overlapping was brought out in a clear manner: "... apart from certain powers and functions directly exercise by the Commissioner under the Act, practically all the important ones connected with the day-to-day administration are vested in the Corporation, specially the different Committees. By the term administration people usually understand the executives, but here this assumption does not hold good, even though there is a constant endeavour of all the authorities concerned for a cleaner and healthier Calcutta, ... for the successful or timely execution of any plan or policy, ... sanctions etc. are not always forthcoming to the executives."

As a counter-veiling measure, we may note, Section 30 of the Calcutta Municipal Act enables the Corporation or a standing Committee to delegate any of its powers, duties and functions to the Commissioner, while under Section 34 the Commissioner has been allowed to sub-delegate such powers etc., received by him. This is an unusual privilege, for the normal law is that the delegated authority handles itself whatever is given to it subject to the overall or residuary supervision and control being left with the original authority. As Commissioner is already an over-burdened authority he had to be provided with a release valve; otherwise he was becoming too much of a bottle-neck. That is why the Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Act, 1953 introduced this unusual feature within a year of the new Act!

Such a safety or release valve had also to be installed in regard to the Commissioner's powers as the chief executive. Normally an appointing authority is the disciplinary authority, that is to say, he can charge-sheet a subordinate official and punish

him after going through the departmental inquiry or proceedings, in the course of which, he can also suspend the delinquent, should it be necessary to facilitate the proceedings. In other words, only an appointing authority can suspend an official, according to the normal scheme of things. Not so in the Calcutta Municipal Act, at least after a decade's working difficulties. The Calcutta Municipal (Second Amendment) Act of 1964 substituted the original Section 36 to say that all municipal officers and servants shall be subordinate to the Commissioner and that 'the Commissioner may pass an order of suspension pending proceeding, or an order of censure against any municipal officer or on the recommendation of the State Public Service Commission, for any breach of rules made under this Act or of discipline, or for carelessness, negligence of duty or other misconduct.'

The upshot of this amendment is that the Commissioner, though not the appointing authority, can suspend or inflict minor punishment on officials for whom the Corporation on the recommendation of the Municipal Service Commission is the appointing authority. Overlapping of powers sometimes creates confusion. For example, the Administrator when he acts as the equivalent to the Corporation, often receives appeals that the Commissioner has overstepped his limits, e.g., suspended an employee who should have fallen within the administrator's jurisdiction! Such issues concerning the Commissioner's right sometimes even go to the High Court. The Commissioner might have acted perfectly within his jurisdiction, but the confusion is due to the overlapping and sub-delegation as explained above.

These was an even more upsetting decision of an appellate authority about the complaint lodged in the courts of municipal magistrates by the officers of our Health Department against adulteration of food articles or other health hazards. The authority decided that all of them should be signed by the Commissioner himself in whose favour the delegation was made by the Standing Committee of Health and Bustee improvement and not by any others. We went to the High Court citing Section 34 which gave such powers of sub-delegation. It took many months to get the Commissioner's right accepted by the High Court, and, in the meanwhile he ran the risk of getting the health cases thrown out by the Court or put up with the signing of several undred cases every week.

About the statutory powers of the Standing Committees and the Corporation, quite a few of them are of routine type or involving petty sums, at least by today's standards and could be handled well and adequately by the Commissioner and his officers. But political prerogative and local patronage demand that each Coun-

cillor oversees a proper share of the amenities and works coming to his ward. That led to the proposals being brought up as printed agenda items comprising the background information, reports by officials at different levels and a summary giving the alternatives for action. The Committee's deliberations would then have a summary of what was said by whom, to which a resolution would be appended in two or three sentences saying that the decision was taken in such and such manner. The weighing of pros and cons would feature rather rarely in such resolutions, for the weighing was actually on the physical plane—how many votes were cast on what side.

The delegation for such small matters could have been made to the paid officials headed by the Commissioner within a broad frame setting out the guide lines and the territorial distribution. But much could not be done on the line during the elected regime. After becoming the Administrator I made a study how much of my powers and functions as the Corporation and as the Standing Committees, could be delegated to the Commissioner.

From the Standing Committee there was no delegation whatsoever in favour of the Commissioner. There was however a resolution dated 18 September 1953 by which the Corporation delegated to the Commissioner as many as 77 items under 71 Sections, Sub-sections and rules. If I cite a few examples, the contention would be clearer.

- : To sell unserviceable stores by public auction upto Rs. 10,000.
- : To decide whether a work costing Rs. 5000 or below can be done by contract or otherwise.
- : To defend or comprise any claim, suit or legal proceedings against the Corporation upto Rs. 5000.
- : To plant and preserve trees on public streets and places costing within Rs. 250.
- : To cancel irrevocable dues not exceeding Rs. 50.
- : To sanction upto Rs. 50 for floral wreaths on the death of a distinguished person or on a distinguish anniversary of birth or death.
- : To file suits for arrear house-tax.
- : To require owners of new or existing buildings for 20 or more labourers to provide for privy, urinal, bath and wash subject to an appeal to Standing Health Committee.
- : To permit sinking of tube-wells under prescribed conditions.
- : To remove obstruction in public streets.

## TO DELEGATE OR TO RELEGATE

- : To cause hedges and trees to be trimmed and cut.
- : To alter school hours.

We also concentrated on finding out what the Corporation and Committees could delegate to the Commissioner and through him to other officials. Because of the minor functionaries who grow around a prevalent system and the inertia which develops into it, the suggestions for change could not be readily worked out from administrative, personnel and legal angles. Ultimately however in the middle of 1976 I could issue two orders of delegation—one on behalf of the Corporation in addition to and in partial modification of the one of 1953 and the other delegating the Standing Committees' powers etc. for the first time. This narration would not be complete unless I highlight at least the major items in both.

### *Powers of the Corporation*

- : To decide whether a work costing between Rs. 25,000 and 1 lakh should be done by contract or otherwise.
- : To sell unserviceable stores by public auction upto Rs. 25,000.
- To finally require owners of new or existing buildings for 20 or more labourers to provide for privy, urinal, bath and wash

### *Powers of the Standing Committees*

- : To lay out and maintain squares, gardens and playgrounds and to supply and maintain games equipment therein where cost does not exceed Rs. 1000.
- : To plant and preserve trees on public streets and places costing not more than Rs. 1000.
- : To fix for municipal markets rates of stallage, rents etc., period thereof, condition of auction or private sale thereof etc.
- : To levy charges for unauthorised use of water.
- : To repair and provide municipal drains.
- : To provide outfall for storm water and sewage.
- : To provide and maintain public privies and urinals.
- : To take measures for lighting public streets, squares and gardens.

Even with the most meticulous arrangement for delegation of powers and functions, it may bog down if a functionary at any

## PREVIEW, REVIEW & OVERVIEW

level is not equal to it and does not have the right feel or finesse for the art of doing things. If he is too timid, he under-does and refers many matters for prior consultations. If he is too reckless and scheming, he over-does.

Is there a golden mean? If there were one, I would try my hand in propounding it in the following laws which could be named A Mayor's Panchsheel of Municipal Engineering:

In any field of organized endeavour if anything can go wrong, it will.

Left to themselves, things will always go from bad to worse.

If it is possible for several things going wrong, the one that actually goes is what will do the maximum damage.

Nature always sides with the hidden flaw.

If everything seems to be going well, you have obviously overlooked something.

## MUNICIPAL CALCUTTA—THE LEGAL FRAME

A municipality or a municipal corporation is a local body or a unit of local self government. That does not however make it a third tier of Government to the Union and the State Governments. A local self government apparatus, whatever might have been its historical evolution, is today fairly and squarely in the lap of the State Government, by virtue of entry No. 5 in List II—State List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. The entry runs as follows: "Local government, that is to say the constitution and powers of municipal corporations, improvement trusts district boards, mining settlement authorities and other local authorities for the purpose of local self government or village administration." The Seventh Schedules owes its existence to Article 246 of the constitution of which the relevant portion is as follows: "... the Legislature of any State . . . has exclusive power to make laws for such state or any part thereof with respect to any of the matters enumerated in List II . . ."

### The City & the City Hall

The municipal affairs of the city of Calcutta are regulated by the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1961 (West Bengal Act XXXIII of 1961). After repealing its precursor, the Calcutta Municipal Act 1923 with Section 2, the new Act goes on to say in Section 3 that all properties movable and immovable and all interests . . . vested in the Corporation of Calcutta as constituted under the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1923 . . . with all rights . . . shall be deemed to be vested in the Corporation as constituted under this Act. The definition of Calcutta is given in Section 5, Clause (ii): "Calcutta means the area described in Schedule I." Schedule I runs as follows: "Calcutta is the area included within the following boundaries except that it does not include (1) For William, or (2) that part of Hastings north of the south edge of Clyde Row and Strand Road to the river bank. . ." The Schedule also demarcates the boundaries starting from the north at Pramanik Ghat Road, Cossipore Road etc., taking the eastern boundary, then turning west ward and falling on the Hooghly, and returning to the point of origin along the river.

There is no formal definition of the Corporation of Calcutta. But in Part II of the Act dealing with constitution and government, Sections 6 and 7 lay down the relevant frame. Section 6

\* Law Review, University of Burdwan, December 1977.

says that 'the municipal authorities charged with carrying out the provisions of this Act are—(a) the Corporation, (b) the Standing Committees, and (c) the Commissioner. Section 7 constitutes the Corporation with 100 elected Councillors, the Chairman of CIT (ex-officio) and five Aldermen to be elected by the Councillors. Election to the Corporation used to be held every three years under the 1899 and 1923 Acts and every four years under the 1951 Act.

Adult franchise was introduced in the elections by the Amendment Act of 1962. The amended Section 48 became: "A person who resides in a constituency and whose name is included in the electoral roll for the time being in force for election of members to the West Bengal Legislative Assembly from an area which includes that constituency shall be qualified to be an elector of that constituency". In the new Corporation which emerged after the general election of March 1965, the extended franchise gave a larger hand to the citizens in shaping the administration of the civic body.

The Second Amendment Act of 1964 which came in the meanwhile ushered several other far-reaching changes, e.g. the creation of a judicial tribunal to decide building appeals, constitution of Estimate and Accounts Committees and the regrouping of the existing nine standing committees on rational lines into five on Finance, Education, Health, Water & Drainage and Works. The Committees were given certain powers under the statute itself and certain others under the Calcutta Corporation Standing Committee (Determination of Powers, Duties and Functions) Rules, 1965.

This amending Act also made provision for the supersession of the Corporation by Government. Newly inserted section 47C provides as follows: "If, in the opinion of the State Government, the Corporation has shown its incompetency, or has persistently made default in . . . duties or . . . functions . . . or has exceeded or abused its powers, the State Government may . . . declare the Corporation to be incompetent (etc.), as the case may be, and supersede it for such period as may be specified in that order." The next section 47D sets out the consequences of suppression in the following manner:

- “(a) All Councillors and Aldermen and all members of Standing and other Committees shall vacate their respective offices.
- (b) All the powers and duties which may . . . . . be exercised and performed by the Councillors (etc. as

above) shall be exercised and performed by such person or persons as the State Government may direct."

In 1972 amendments were carried out to these provisions further to strengthen the hands of Government. Previously in Section 47C there was provision for a notice to be given by Government to the Corporation asking for its representation against the proposed supersession. This was done away with. In Section 47D, a provision was introduced that the person or persons appointed by Government to take the place of Councillors, Aldermen and Standing Committees shall discharge the duty "subject to such directions as the State Government may issue from time to time." There have not been so far more than one person appointed to take charge of the entire elected paraphernalia including the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor and the person so appointed is called the Administrator, although, except in the notification by Government in the Home Department for the present incumbent, the terminology is not to be found.

By virtue of Section 47C, the Corporation was superseded by order No. 561/LSG dated March 22, 1972 for one year. The period of supersession was then extended by notifications, one year at a time, upto March 21, 1975; then by six months at a time, upto September 21, 1976; and then again by one year upto September 21, 1977.

### Founding & Growth

Let us now turn over the pages of history and look backward. The city of Calcutta at the time of its birth comprised the area along the river bank from to-day's Bagbazar to Burrabazar, thence to Esplanade, and from there up to Hastings. This is what was then distributed among the three villages named Sutanuti, Kalikata and Govindapur, and formed the nucleus from which the city sprung. Earlier in the 17th century the English "East India Company of Merchants and Traders" had, among other places, established a factory at Hooghly. In the new city of Calcutta huts with mud walls and thatched roof were first built, but later when a supply of good water was found in Laldighi, pucca houses began to be built. Thus the Dalhousie Square area came into existence. But even up to the middle of the 18th century the rest of the city consisted of cutcha houses or huts, tanks, jungle and ill kept roads with open drains along side and with no lighting or proper conservancy arrangements. Thereafter building activities were accelerated, and some attempts were made to improve roads. The city was first governed by the Chief Magistrate who combined in himself judicial, fiscal

and municipal powers. A Mayor's Court was established in 1727 by a Royal Charter and continued to function till 1774 when by a new Act of Parliament the entire system of Government was changed. A Governor General for India was appointed with a Council of four members, and a Supreme Court was established in Calcutta with four Puisne Judges and a Chief Justice of Calcutta.

In the early part of the 19th century some of the Governor Generals tried to devise plans for the improvement of the city but the only practical work done was achieved by the Lottery Committee. Funds were raised by means of a Government sponsored lottery and a Committee was appointed to administer funds so raised to carry out improvements in the city. During their existence for about twenty years they opened new roads, improved old ones, dug tanks or filled up old ones, built a town hall etc. Even so, the town continued to be considered a dirty and unhealthy city and had an usavoury reputation among visitors from foreign lands. From the middle of the 19th Century, attempts and experiments began to be made in establishing a Municipal Corporation for Calcutta to carry on the management of the city and to deal with its problems. Gradually in the latter part of the century filtered water supply was laid on, a system of under ground drainage established and various other important improvements carried out.

From 1830 to 1847, when the first Board of Commissioners for the improvement of Calcutta was constituted, the supervision of conservancy, the repairs of roads and drains and the lighting and watering of streets were in charge of an Officer called the Superintendent of Roads and Conservancy. The assessment of taxes was made by an assessor appointed by the magistrates in succession and controlled in practice by the Chief Magistrate. The collection of taxes was in the hands of Superintendent of Police, who was appointed by Governor. Between 1847 and 1863, the activities of the municipality took a wider range and the appointment of new supervisors became necessary. During this period, the supervising staff consisted of an assessor, a collector, a town clerk or secretary, a surveyor, an accountant and an engineer. Between 1863 and the present day, superior supervision has been gradually strengthened.

The first Municipal Corporation was created in India by a Royal Charter in 1687 at Madras. In 1727, Bombay and Calcutta followed suit armed with similar Charters. Since then scores of statutes have established municipalities all over India. Every municipal Act contains similar provisions regarding taxation, being an attribute of Local Self Government. All municipal Acts in

India contain provisions for power to the State Government to constitute municipalities, Corporations, municipal districts etc.

In Calcutta the most important changes were effected by the Act of 1923 sponsored by Surendra Nath Banerjea as the first Minister for Local Self Government of Bengal. This Act liberalised the constitution on democratic lines with the powers enlarged, and the fetters of Government control relaxed. A Mayor to preside over the deliberations of the Corporation and a Deputy Mayor were to be elected annually by five Aldermen and 90 Councillors. Executive powers were vested in the Chief Executive Officer assisted by two Deputy Executive Officers. A large area lying outside and adjacent to Calcutta proper, comprising the municipalities of Manicktolla, Cossipore, Chitpore and Gardenreach, as well as dock extension area was added to form greater Calcutta. Subsequently Garden Reach went out and again become a separate municipality. Women were for the first time enfranchised under this Act. After the new Corporation had carried on administration of the city for nearly a quarter of a century, in March 1948, it was taken over by the West Bengal Government on the ground of maladministration. The period of supersession ended on April 30, 1952.

#### **Quarter Century of the Current Act**

Thereafter on May 1, 1952 the Calcutta Municipal Act 1951 came into operation, replacing the 1923 Act. The new act envisages the Corporation as a policy making, deliberative and rule making body, the executive side being left as much as possible in the hands of the Commissioner. As already mentioned, the Act provides the three independent authorities of the Corporation, the Standing Committees and the Commissioner. This however is not altogether a new feature, for there were within the circumscribed sphere of the 1899 Act, the Corporation, the General Committee and the Chairman each acting independently of the others. The Mayor who was previously only an ornamental head was given under the 1951 Act the power for hearing appeals by employees against disciplinary actions taken by the Commissioner.

To render the Standing Committees more democratic, representative and authoritative, provision was made for the co-option of three associated members from outside, preferably experts or specialists. Among other new features, mention may be made of Borough Committees. Each Borough comprising four or five wards or constituencies was given a Standing Committee styled as Borough Committee, consisting of Councillors representing the local wards and not more than three persons from among the enrolled voters residing within the Borough.

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The Commissioner was given wider powers in executive matters with statutory powers quite independent of the Corporation. Particularly, the Standing Finance Committee was given extensive powers to control all the revenue earning departments of the Corporation, to frame rules and to prescribe fees and charges. Another feature of the Act relates to appointments. The Municipal Commissioner is to be appointed by the State Government on the recommendation of the Public Service Commission and the principal officers, like the Deputy Commissioners, Chief Engineer and Health Officer by the Corporation on the recommendation of the State Public Service Commission subject to the approval of the State Government. Certain other appointments are to be made by the Corporation on the recommendation of the State Public Service Commission, if the scale exceeds Rs. 1500 or of the Municipal Service Commission, if not, and by the Commissioner to other posts the maximum of which does not exceed Rs. 700.

A new system of collection of consolidated rate was introduced by the Act according to which a provision is made to allow a rebate for timely payment and to charge interest on the defaulters beyond one quarter in respect of which the rate is due. Rebate is also allowed in cases where there is no supply of water from the municipal water mains or no arrangement of sewerage and drainage.

On the administrative side building rules were made more stringent and the Commissioner was required to ensure their strict compliance. In 1976, the Calcutta Municipal Act was amended by introducing a provision for a surcharge not exceeding 50 per cent of the consolidated rate as may be determined by the State Governments upon any land or building which is wholly or partly used for commercial or non-residential purposes.

Under section 183 of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 any person dissatisfied with the valuation determined by the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner or any Special Officer has a right to appeal to the court of Small Causes having jurisdiction in the place where the land or building to the valuation of which an objection was made. In such cases the usual procedure is to issue the ratebills on the previous valuation pending the final determination of the objection. This provision of issuing ratebills on the previous valuation created almost a deadlock. Thousands of appeals were filed to take advantage of the situation and realisation of taxes at the enhanced rates were debarred until finalisation of the matter in different courts, even up to the Supreme Court of India. To get out of the situation, the Act was amended in 1976 and a person in order to prefer an appeal to the relevant court must deposit

consolidated rates payable up to the date of presentation of appeal on the valuation determined and is to continue such deposit until the appeal is finally decided.

The Municipal Act enables the Corporation to hold and acquire property and to manage public institutions maintained out of municipal funds. At present the activities of the Corporation are carried on through the following main departments and offices: Assessment, Accounts, Building, Collection, Conservancy, Drainage, Engineering, Health, Law, Licence, Mosquito Control, Printing and Press, Secretary's department, Survey, Water Works and Workshop (Entally).

#### Law—at Making & Receiving Ends

The Corporation of Calcutta today faces a barrage of litigation in different courts of law viz., High Court, both original and appellate sides, City Civil Court, Alipore Court, Sealdah Court, the Courts of Small Causes, Metropolitan Magistrates' Court etc. Under the Municipal Act 1951 a tribunal has been constituted for disposing of some building cases where also the Corporation is a party to defend its action.

Pursuant to the powers provided for in the Municipal Act, the Corporation framed a number of rules and bye laws for effectively carrying out the purposes of the Act as per chapter XXIV, and for the punishment of all transgressions against the municipal laws there is provision for fine and imprisonment under the next chapter XXXV. In the first section of the latter chapter, section 537 there is a large schedule running to 16 pages providing for fines, including daily fines. The fines range from Rs. 10 to Rs. 1000 and daily fines from Rs. five to Rs. 200. There is provision in the subsequent section for increased fine or even imprisonment upto six months for a second or subsequent conviction. The offences might be for contravention of building regulations, not taking out municipal licences, carrying on offensive trades and the like. Those relating to the sale of adulterated food-stuff are however regulated now under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act which is a Central Act.

There are municipal magistrates to try these cases. The Corporation is however a complainant and not the punishing authority in all such omissions and commissions in civic matters. It is even otherwise difficult to enforce the provisions of the Act adequately and ensure a clean and beautiful Calcutta unless the people cooperate. As early as in 1916. S. W. Goode ICS, the then Deputy Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation had such observations to make in regard to the working of the Muni-

cial Magistrate's Court: "The number of prosecutions show a steady increase from year to year; in 1913-14 no less than 22,043 cases were instituted being the highest on record. It must be admitted that placing laws upon the statute-book and the promulgation of by-laws is in India a much less laborious task than enforcing them." We trust that in the present atmosphere of peace and the enthusiasm created, our citizens are more alert and understanding and will make it easier for all concerned to abide by the law and get more out of the limited resources at our disposal.

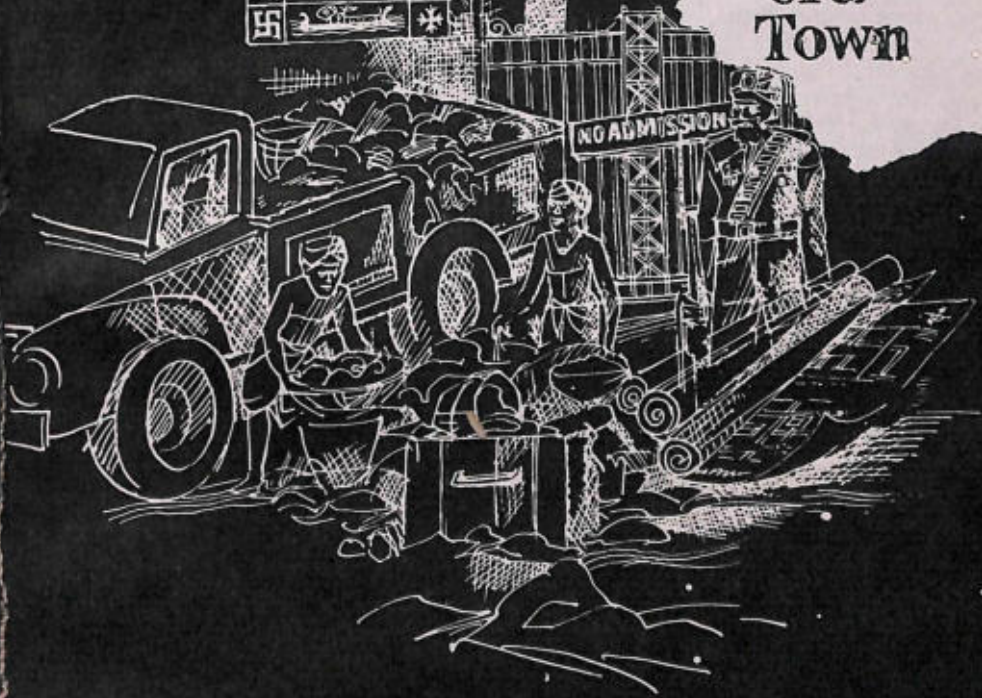
NEGLECT NOT PARKS AND TREES:  
THEY ARE CITY'S LUNGS.



THE CORPORATION OF CALCUTTA  
THE LIFE OF CALCUTTA



# Anatomy of a Town



## ON HOUSING, HAWKERS & MEENABAZAR

*Miss Krishna Sen:* Our first question refers to the housing tax. This is a tax on the building of multi-storied apartments which you propose. You may see of course that multi-stories cater to rich people only and the house owners can always shift tenants, but in the case of an expanding city with limited space there is a dire housing problem. We will soon have multi-storied buildings for lower income groups too. Would'nt then tax on housing be a deterrent to the growth of accommodation for the citizens.

*Author:* Thank you Krishna. The question, I think, should in all fairness be directed to Shri Sankar Ghose, Finance Minister. Because this imposition has been in the recent budget of the Government of West Bengal. As you know a municipality is concerned with housing as well as the collection of consolidated rates on buildings and lands as we have been collecting. As you have rightly pointed out, the city has to grow up-ward. But our building regulations, when it was framed about 30/40 years ago was more or less for a flat city. For multi-storied buildings we have to be given facilities to collect appropriate adequate taxes if we have to maintain ourselves and arrange for more services to the growing population. While we were on the job for amending our building regulation and bringing up a new one, Shri Ghose moved very swiftly and will be now taking away a substantial part of our taxes. I think that had to happen because we are subservient to the Government and for any new collection made or any new imposition proposed we have to have prior Government approval; we cannot do anything of our own.

*Krishna Sen:* Thank you Sir, In that case the question should be directed not to you. Then we will pass on. Now something of which you of course are the hero—hawkers.

*Author:* I do not know!

*Utpal Bose:* Since we are in the question of hawkers now, Mr. Samaddar, when was section 354 of the Calcutta Municipal Act formulated?

*Author:* The C.M. Act is dated 1951 and has got many sections.

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\* Interview 'On the Mat' broadcast from All India Radio, 13 and 14 April 1975.

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN.

A section under which we have issued notices on hawkers, and the unauthorised occupiers and owners of stalls is section 354.

*Utpal Bose:* O.K. Sir, you see it was formulated in 1951 and this is 1975 which makes it approximately 24 years. How come that you have suddenly become aware of this particular section, of this particular Act after all these 24 years. Why was no action taken earlier?

*Author:* You see one has to begin at a point and, as you might see for yourself, the unbearable congestion on roads and footpaths is a recent phenomenon. There has been some congestion in fact earlier, too. That is why the present Ministry when it came into being in 1972, started a drive for clearance, but notwithstanding some progress in the Sealdah area, the worst affected, the drive had to be discontinued.

*Utpal Bose:* I understand Sir. You say you have to start from a point, but why should it be 24 years later? Secondly you say because the city has become congested now; if the city had not become congested, these hawkers should be allowed to remain thereby violating section 354 of the C.M. Act.

*Author:* It is not like that Utpal. Section 354 says the municipality has power to keep its roads and road side areas free of any obstruction or encroachment of any building or any unauthorised projection of a shop. So this is an omnibus clause which has given certain general powers to the municipality. And to-day we are invoking that section to keep the pavements, footpaths or drains clear of obstruction and unauthorised stalls. The section gives us general power but cannot be said to be directed against hawkers as such.

*Utpal Bose:* Will you consider the right from the psychological and humanitarian angle? As every one wanted to earn by setting up stalls and started honest business, at that time you did not see. Now you suddenly let out a war cry and forcibly remove them. You are interested in the booking power which you have and not in the obligation. The moralistic and, should I say, the humanitarian aspect of your conscience is dead, Mr. Samaddar.

*Author:* Not at all. I am very alive to my obligation and invoking my conscience. In any human settlement a number of people come to live together, mixing their life together and in such organised human affairs every one has to part with a portion of his sovereignty or free will. This is what makes a human settlement. In this particular case nobody says that any one

should be denied livelihood—the howkers or the shopkeepers or the business men. They should be given only a reasonable opportunity and that is what is being done and done in a correct manner, not half-hearted.

*Krishna Sen:* . . . . . to evict them from the shops—this is unreasonable.

*Author:* Was it reasonable when they came to occupy foot-paths, patently an illegal act and not with any blessings or any licence given to them? May be due to various reasons, the Government or the municipal body did not tackle the problem when it was growing. But today it has grown to such an extent that the right and the life of a large portion of the people is at danger. This is the time we have to act.

*Utpal Bose:* This is so because the Calcutta Corporation waits till the life of all the other people are in danger before it enforces its rules.

*Author:* No, not exactly so, we are working here on this problem for the last two to three years, but it has grown to menacing proportions only in the last one year.

*Krishna Sen:* You talk of life in danger. Do you mean danger to those who travel in cars on the roads or to the pedestrians who walk? Do you value the safety of a few rich car owners more than those who depend on the roads for their livelihood?

*Author:* I do not mean car owners. I have got fortunately a copy of my recent advertisement. It says when a bud of a baby or a girl, may be a refugee girl, on her way home from the college, or the only earning father and husband of a family gets overrun by a speeding vehicle and the end is written in letters of blood because of the victim taking to the stony roads for want of a footpath to walk upon, whom should we pronounce guilty?

*Krishna Sen:* . . . It is beautiful!

*Author:* It is not beautiful, it is bloody. Whom should we pronounce guilty?

*Krishna Sen:* When the hawkers die of hunger because they cannot sell . . .

*Author:* The difficulty is that we go round and round in a circle. So let us cut that circle. I do not deny that a hawker

or a citizen has the right to earn his livelihood and for that the society, the authority or the Government, may be even a municipal body, has to make certain arrangements. Here in Calcutta we find that the city is slowly being choked to death, whether by pollution or human anarchy. We have to cry a halt. But then our effort is also for some reasonable arrangement for these people to carry on their activity. The arrangement is not merely for the hawkers. Just as some people have the need to sell, some others have to buy. For that we have hit upon a novel experiment called Meenabazar where these people will be given some limited facility for selling and buying.

*Utpal Bose:* We will come to the question of Meenabazar slightly later. The Operation Hawkers in the Esplanade and Chowringhee area started on the 24th March at 11 p.m. Do you like working in the dark or is a destructive activity like demolishing stalls better resorted to only under the refuge of darkness?

*Author:* No, it was not because dark deeds are better done in darkness. It is because we have to give the stallowners a reasonable opportunity of taking away their things. It might interest you to know, Utpal, that not a single piece of goods was misplaced or removed or taken away by us. Whatever we removed was only some debris or leftover of building materials. If you remember, our advertisement came about 48 hours earlier, as we intended to give them time to remove their valuable things, merchandise and goods which they did. When we arrived at the scene at close to midnight on that day, we could carry on without any difficulty and in an orderly fashion. The other reason was not to disrupt the normal daily life in the city including the traffic and the office going and returning people. At night even in such a congested city these factors would not be there. What we did was for the facility of operation with due notification and all publicity. So there was nothing dark or mysterious or sinister about it.

*Utpal Bose:* Thank you. Then you see some evicted hawkers have alleged that they have paid protection money to the police, but the police themselves have driven them out. When law makers are law breakers and indulge in this sort of corruption, what is one supposed to do, Mr. Samaddar?

*Author:* There again is a fallacy. If you ask any police officer operating under the Police Code, he will say that they have only to keep law and order and to give the protection and the covering, while the authority concerned carries out its activities. The police have to see that there is no breach of peace. In this

particular case the unauthorised stalls and projections were removed by us from our areas and the PWD from Chowringhee area, and police were there to keep the peace and to forge a shield for those in the field.

*Utpal Bose:* So you feel that the protection money allegation is absolutely baseless.

*Author:* That is not for me to answer. I do not think that in any country—anywhere in the world—people say that no policemen take a bribe. That is one part of the story, but there is the other part of policemen who are dedicated to their duties.

*Utpal Bose:* Some hawkers say that Esplanade and Curzon Park area has become free only to be an open zone again for anti-social elements who will be active in that area. Is it not that this greater evil is encouraged by your action?

*Author:* I do not know how to answer this question. If the area is streaming with people, naturally there will be one pattern of crime, may be shop lifting, snatching or pick-pocketing. If it is entirely free of people, there might be some other pattern, but we have to cope with it with better lighting arrangements and the police also taking care of the new situation.

*Utpal Bose:* We come to the question on Meenabazar. Yesterday in the newspaper it was announced that you have initially selected three sites for setting up these Meenabazars. Do you think Sir, it would have been much better to select a site first and then gradually evict the hawkers, rather than first throw them and then going about for a site.

*Author:* I tell you that the deliberate and conscious decision of the Government is that the city has to be cleaned of encroachments and hawkers but this is not linked with any compensation or rehabilitation. In other words, we do not subscribe to the concept that full fledged alternative arrangement, economic arrangement or rehabilitation should be made first, and when all these are on stream, only then we should start our operation on hawkers.

*Krishna Sen:* You remind us of the morals and the legal system of Dickensian England. When Oliver Twist went to prison Dickens narrated how there was a vagrant of sixty-five who was going to prison for not playing the flute; or in other words, for begging in the streets and doing nothing for his livelihood. In the next cell, was another man, who was going to the same prison for hawking tin saucepans without a licence; thereby

doing something for his living, in defiance of the Stamp Office. Because they are guilty of earning livelihood, your attitude appears to be like that and you ask the hawkers to vacate. You do not have to give them any chance anywhere but they have a large ground. . . (interruption)

*Author:* I am sorry I cannot go back to the early 19th century. You have to look forward to today's problem. There is a sea change from Dickens's England. When we are millions of people milling around in Calcutta, each one treading on the toe of another, I repeat what I said. We do not link the alternative arrangement or rehabilitation with Operation Cleansing. But any Government, municipal body or responsible organisation cannot totally disregard the humanitarian or economic aspect, as I indicated earlier. This town has grown fast and there is more need for goods to be sold and bought. As soon as possible after the operation, we should go about for the alternative arrangement. One arrangement is for the mobile people, that is to say Meenabazar. The second approach is to have a little more space carved out of the existing market to put people there on licences and short licences. The third and long term arrangement is also in our mind. In fact we have been working on it for some time for the New Market for more than a year now. This is the expansion of the existing markets and the establishment of some multistoried marketing centres. While we officially delink such efforts, we cannot totally forget to take care of the rehabilitation and economic aspects in a sensible manner.

*Utpal Bose:* One final question on hawkers. As you have noticed, these hawkers also abound in and front of hospitals. Hospitals, you must understand, is a different sort of institution and you cannot afford to have filth or such people roaming around in front of it. Something should be done to remove such temporary stalls from the front of the hospitals.

*Author:* Absolutely. We have to do that and that is why we have to take it as part of our overall programme. The experiment which has been started, I believe, in Chowringhee, Esplanade and Kidderpore areas will in the next phase be taken over to Gariahat and Gol Palk areas and then extended to other congested areas like Shyambazar and Sealdah. And in the sequence we should take care of the unauthorised stalls and of congestion and filth before hospitals, parks or any other civic places.

## WHEN ADVERTISING IS STREET FURNITURE

Courtesy demands that, as the Chief Guest, I should talk to you of the sweetest and best things. Your President Mr. Gimi and the organizers would however expect me to talk and discuss some official and business matters too. I have therefore to make a clever mixture of pleasure with business and of the enjoyable with the boring.

With advancement and development in all spheres of life, people are getting more publicity-minded and are inclined to receive and transmit what is narrated in advertisements and similar communicating messages. Amongst all the media of advertisement, outdoor advertisement is the most popular, perhaps because it is the cheapest and the most natural means for passing on the information or a slogan to thousands of passers-by. The only fault, if one is inclined to find one, is that it cannot communicate to the blind. But that should be the defect of other visual modes too, as it may be of the other attractive media—the radio—that it cannot give a message directly to the deaf. But for both categories of the handicapped, indirect transmission is very much a phenomenon in actual life.

A visual advertisement, if it speaks in pictures, is even better than the other attractive medium of mass publicity viz. the newspaper, because 70 per cent of our population is illiterate. Hence we can call you, the outdoor advertisers—a special and powerful group of advertisers. You can serve not only the commercial community but also civic bodies and many other organizations of public utility. Your hoardings and posters, displayed decently on attractive sites, can have real effect on thousands of people whom other forms of publicity can not reach.

### **Publicity is not Merely a Gimmick**

Let me recollect the story of an impressive poster that made history in the First World War. It was designed with the photograph of Lord Kitchener and a large forefinger pointing to the caption 'The Country Wants You: To Save Her'. The forefinger of Kitchener and the You of the audience were immediately linked in a hypnotic wonder and there was a stream of volunteers to enrol for the army and leave for the fighting

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\* Address under the title 'Partners in Prosperity' at the third Annual General Meeting of Outdoor Advertising Association, 14 July 1976.

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front. In the Second World War a similar effect was made by Prime Minister Winston Churchill of the United Kingdom. His forefinger and middle finger jutting out at 30° formed the famous V sign and sustained millions of Englishmen as well as combatants from other countries in the mortal fight in which the Allies were locked with the Axis.

Compared to that our publicity technique is yet to clear old obstacles and scale new heights. Our family planning campaign is yet to make a real dent on the people. The illiteracy of the people, the abominable standard of living for the vast multitude and many other factors stand in the way of their proper comprehension of the problem and the need to solve it immediately. But have we been able to devise any visual or audiovisual aid to publicity and understanding as yet? The inverted red triangle may be an esoteric improvement on the tantrik symbol of fertility or an intimate outline of the female anatomy but can we say that it has enthused us in the same manner as another such—the famous phallic symbol of Civalinga—has done us in religious and philosophical matters from time immemorial?

Our country should therefore require all your skill and service, for yours is no mean role in the progress of the country and for building the nation. Today you can make a significant contribution in implementing various nation building programmes. You have willingly put up hoardings free of charge for such purposes as for philanthropic and charitable objects. It is gratifying to hear from you that your members would be glad to put up hoarding displays without cost for the Corporation, should it have some special campaign of cleanliness or improvement of civic services in view. In a country like ours, overburdened with population but striving hard for progress and prosperity, you can and should enthuse the people.

#### **Civic Law & Publicity Rules**

Section 527 of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 empowers the Corporation to make by-laws for carrying out various provisions. According to subsection 17 of the section, the Corporation can prohibit or regulate the placing of obstructions, projections or encroachments in a public street or drain or any land vested in the Corporation. Subsection 18 regulates the posting or painting of advertisements on or visible from public streets or other public places. Hence the need of sanction from the Corporation for setting up advertisement for outdoor publicity. Again every person who erects exhibits, fixes or retains any advertisement on any land, building, wall, hoarding or structure or who displays any advertisement visible from public street or other public place

## WHEN ADVERTISING IS STREET FURNITURE

shall pay to the Corporation, for such advertisement, tax under section 229 at rates not exceeding those prescribed in Schedule VIIA. Section 232A(2) empowers the Corporation to make rules for the tax payable under section 229 regarding the time and manner. On the otherhand, the power to sanction and renew the licence for an advertisement is reposed in section 548, schedule VIIA delineates tax on advertisements of 12 different classifications: (1) on hoardings, walls or posts or as non-illuminated sky-signs, (2) on cloth hung across streets or footpaths, (3) against the wall or outer face of a building, (4) temporarily blank i.e. with the advertiser's name or a 'To be let' sign, (5) upon boards, carried on vehicles, (6) the same illuminated, (7) carried by sandwich boardmen, (8) the same illuminated, (9) illuminated sky-signs or other types of advertisements, (10) exhibited on screens by lanterns, slides etc., (11) posters on walls or hoardings and (12) fly posters or hand posters.

The first of these items includes advertisements which we see across pavements or on top of buildings either in pictures or in giant letterings. A general idea may be had from the item about the rates of advertisements. For such hoardings or sky signs, we charge annually a tax of Rs. 12 for one square metre, Rs. 25 for an area upto 2.5 square metres and Rs. 20 for every additional area of 2.5 square metre. Sky-signs made indifferently or fixed without care may lead to dangerous consequences. So rule 4 of schedule XV imposes rigorous restrictions about its structure, length, breadth, height, fixation etc. The list above clearly shows that publicity outdoor to attract the attention of pedestrians and citizens may be of various types. There are other devices like signs hung from telegraph, tram and lamp posts and flying of balloons with signs.

According to rules, the taxes and sanctioning fees are to be deposited in the licence department which is thus to administer the advertising media in the open. To display signs on the buildings, parks and lands owned by the Corporation, prior permission has of course to be obtained from the Chief Valuer and Surveyor and the concerned District Engineer.

### **Hoarding is not Hiding, nor Amassing**

A hoarding in a public place is one of the powerful forms of mass media advertisement. The Corporation of Calcutta first introduced the system of sanctioning hoarding sites on city streets and footpaths in the year 1959 with 20 sites as an experimental measure. Now it has come to about 230 sites for big hoardings and 32 for smaller hoardings erected over places

of public convenience. There are 44 approved shelter sheds also on which advertisement hoardings are being displayed.

Of late the Corporation has however stopped sanctioning any new sites for hoardings on footpaths in consideration of several valid objections received from the press and the public. Regulating the number of hoardings is found necessary, so that the city does not get an overburdened look, so as to avert accident at important street junctions and traffic knots and also in order that there are not too many brakes on the pedestrian flow on city pavements in busy areas. With the large scale activities of CMDA and MTP, the time has not yet come to review the matter or lift the ban on new hoarding sites. But after a while it might be examined.

Outdoor advertisers not only provide engagements and remunerate different categories of people, namely site owners, hoarding owners, designers, artists, copy writers, construction contractors, artisans, medic-offices, order securing persons and traders of required materials, but also make a considerable contribution towards the funds of the State and the civic bodies in terms of taxes and fees. I can say that the members of your Association have passed the initial growing stage. You are now major in your profession—competent and responsible towards your countrymen, specially the citizens of Calcutta.

#### **But a Journey in the Light**

We expect much from you and desire your full co-operation and best of efforts for the improvement of the city. We particularly need your whole-hearted support as well as initiative in matters relating to the framing of policies and proper execution. If you prosper, abiding by rules and regulations, we shall also get our share by way of the augmentation of revenue, and your own civic body will be in a better position to render services to this city of importance and cultural heritage. We can then give better comfort and amenities not only to the citizens of Calcutta but also the visitors and the honoured guests from abroad. If all the citizens, business groups and rate-payers are sincere, considerate, alert and scrupulous, I am sure much of the bad reputation of the city and the Calcutta Corporation can be rubbed out readily.

A month ago your President Mr. Gimi and a few others saw me to discuss some matters. One of them was that the Outdoor Advertising Association should be given formal recognition so that it could work for establishing a code of conduct and healthy norms of operation and also promote better cooperation with



**SELVEL**  
45-7073

**J.K.**  
The Hi-Fidelity  
transistor for every

**OBLITERATION OF WRITINGS ON  
WALLS BEAUTIFIES THE CITY**



THE CORPORATION OF CALCUTTA  
THE CITY BEAUTIFIES  
COMMITTEE **SELVEL**


The people have learned to trust

**RAJ & RAJ**

THE FURNITURE PEOPLE  
PODDAR COURT • CALCUTTA-1

**Coca-Cola**

**J.P. THAKUR**



### A BUNCH OF HOARDINGS

A photograph taken on the Y-junction of Pramathesh Barua Sarani and Gurusaday Road in June 1976. In this agglomeration of 'street furniture' we have, apart from 'The Furniture People', full-throated songs like 'Coca-cola: It's the real thing' as well as whispering campaigns on the latest cinema in the town.

The road-junction is one of the most important thoroughfares connecting the olden European area 'South of Park Street' with the newer settlement of Bengalis in Ballygunge. The settlers were mostly of the upper middle class hailing from East Bengal whom Calcutta gave success in their professions and callings.

Both the roads changed their original names. Ballygunge Circular Road was renamed Pramathesh Barua Sarani on 8 January 1971, after the famous actor-director Barua of 'Devdas' and 'Mukti' fame. Barua, a prince of Gauripur-Assam lived in the area towards the end of his life.

The original name of Gurusaday Road was Ballygunge Store Road, because of the military stores kept in the adjoining Ballygunge maidan. Gurusaday Dutt was more known as an educationist and the founder of the Bratachari movement than a member of I.C.S.

## WHEN ADVERTISING IS STREET FURNITURE

the Corporation on the one hand and the general public on the other. We fully appreciate the position and say Godspeed and Goodluck to the OAA, the premier and representative body of outdoor advertisers. However, we have still to keep our doors open for any party which for its own reason does not care to become a member of the Association.

In the same meeting OAA raised the problems of some cinema banners or cinema posters being displayed so as to obstruct existing licensed hoardings or clandestinely on trees. The Association of course acknowledged and appreciated that such activities had been summarily cut down. It will be our endeavour to keep constant vigilance. We have also decided to ask for a reasonable deposit from the party and a written undertaking that the displays would be made in the approved manner and without causing any obstruction to traffic or the existing advertisements, failing which the deposit might be forfeited.

The Association referred to the problems of obstructions to existing hoardings by growing trees and sprouting branches. It was agreed that light trimming only, without detriment to the tree, might be allowed by the District Engineer concerned. No heavy cutting is however desirable or permissible in view of the precious role a healthy tree plays for the atmospheric cleanliness and the beauty of a city. In such cases the hoarding itself should be resited at the advertiser's expense with the approval of Chief Valuer and Surveyor. I am glad that OAA readily agreed to these suggestions.

### Talking of Cakes & Ale

We appreciate the part played by you in popularising the passenger shelter scheme through the Town Beautification Committee formed under the Chairmanship of PWD Minister and Chairman CMDA and in particular in raising donation for 47 such bus shelters. You have mentioned that the TBC could so far set up only 22 such shelters—some of them on Corporation lands. I had the matter checked up with our Valuer and Surveyor department and understand that the approval of 32 sites in all are at the moment in an advanced stage of scrutiny by our Chief Engineer. I hope to take action before the end of this month so that these shelters would afford you opportunity for new hoarding sites. I however understand that you have as of today 22 No. bus shelters without any advertisement hoarding, as opposed to 44 with hoardings as already mentioned.

There is some suggestions that the existing hoarding sites should no longer be auctioned but renewed by negotiations amongst

the existing licences. In marginal cases or the special circumstances prevailing we may be receptive to such suggestions. But you as a professional body may kindly remember that in any contractual business, the normal practice is to allot the job by way of auction, tender etc. so that the authorities, be it Government or a public body can periodically assess the prevailing condition of the market and get the best consideration for work awarded or permission given. I would not also subscribe to the view that the system of tenders or auction is derogatory to those who are engaged in outdoor advertising. Your Mr. Gimi has once aptly described your calling as "an amalgam of an industry and a profession" and given an opinion that "it manages to survive because it is an effective tool for exploitation in such a ruthlessly competitive market." Nevertheless the point made by you regarding negotiation has several features to commend about it in present circumstances, and will be kept in mind by us while processing the new licences.

You have another major suggestion that licence fees may be collected in multiples of three months for giving relief to short term bookings which are coming more into vogue. I am afraid the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951, by virtue of section 229 and schedule VIIA, does not permit such a course. It prescribes annual licence, but has a provision for six months' rebate. I have asked our department to examine whether on that model some special rebate can be worked out for three months.

#### **A Thing of Beauty is a Joy for ever**

So far about the hard realities. Talking of beauty and joy, let me say that dignified outdoor advertisements educate people and propagate aesthetics. A person of aesthetic sense only can reach the height of success as an outdoor advertiser. An advertisement board with an impressive illustration and intelligent wordings can be delectable. Such display not only catches your eyes and preaches but also leaves an impression on your mind after having amused and amazed you. A neat and tidy hoarding, with pleasant paintings and humorous wordings, surely relaxes a fatigued mind even if for a little while. An obscene or immoral display is ultimately an eyesore and a cause of injury, especially to the teenagers. Gaudy displays are irksome, while those causing obstructions will give a bad impression about those who own, put up or maintain them.

To bring out new thoughts and novel techniques in advertisement is art married to technical know-how. On national days and during big festivals in Europe and U.S.A., trailers or structures are decorated to heart's content and drawn by vehicles to make

floats or moving exhibitions. By the assemblage of trees, flowers and colours, different worlds are created. Somewhere there are a bevy of beautiful damsels and handsome young men and in some clowns with painted faces bursting and bubbling in laughter. In our country too, we have nowadays, on the Republic Day or other important festivals, floats on family planning, agricultural development, industrial progress and such other topics of public education. These are in effect meaningful illustrations of the 'outdoor' or advertisements in the open.

If the outdoor advertisers are really enthused to build an image for the city and its beautification, the burden of the authorities will be lightened to a large extent. If they prosper abiding by rules, the Corporation may take their help in any programme of city beautification and also gather strength to serve the citizens better and raise a sense of involvement among them. A hoarding or outdoor advertisement may be viewed as furniture beyond the four walls or of the street—in the same way as street indicators, traffic signs, overhead wires, railings, kiosks, neon signs and passenger shelters are. Outdoor advertising should however be reckoned and worked out as one of the most attractive amidst street furniture. If it is trim and decent it should give the city a pleasing make-up. Visitors and tourists will then be tempted to have 'dates' with such a city.

#### The Sun & the Air

The Corporation, poor though it is, had to discontinue the sanctioning of new hoardings and deprive itself largely from a growing source of earnings. But to stop the ever-increasing scars of the city, there was no other alternative. Simultaneously the city should be liberated from the bondage of posters or the noose of sky-soaring festoons. Till a few days back, all the wards of the city wore an ugly and wrinkled appearance due to writings on the walls. Two notifications were made on the 8th November 1975 under the Calcutta Police Act and the Calcutta Suburban Police Act according to which anybody, sticking posters on buildings, walls, fences, pillars, posts or trees or writing with the help of chalk or brush without securing previous permission from the owners or occupiers, will be summarily tried and fined upto Rs. 50. Shortly after the police undertook a drive to remove the posters and erase the writings on the walls, and did a lot in rubbing the city clean and restoring its complexion. On the 15th June 1976 the Government brought out an ordinance to amend the Calcutta Municipal Act, prohibiting the Corporation to allow any construction of sheds or fixtures even on a temporary basis on pavements and stipulating that anybody found to have encroached upon any public street or thoroughfare would

be liable to fine and imprisonment for a period upto one year. (Unfortunately the ordinance was allowed to lapse, for it was not converted into an Act within its life of six months).

Let all of us strive to ensure that there is no indiscriminate display of posters, festoons etc. in the city. A definite move should be made by the citizens and the Government to stop such a practice. If necessary, legislation should be made for the compulsory removal of unauthorised posters, festoons and hearings which are indiscriminately put up on private properties, particularly in busy commercial areas, hiding and obliterating the architectural style and facade of the buildings. A city for that matter a particular area acquires an architectural character by the process of its growth and the particular combination of building styles. As a connoisseur appreciates and preserves the paintings or furnitures of a particular period, or as the archaeological finds or specimens enrich the national treasure, so we have to restore and expose the building fronts, so that they become one with the sun and the air and form an exposition of our heritage. It is with this view that the Union Government have enacted the Delhi Arts Commission Act. We may also follow the same principles in dealing with ugly displays, advertisements etc. and generally for the sake of beauty and aesthetics.

Let me conclude by saying once again that the civic administration solicits the best of your co-operation and promptness in taking out of this city what is good and giving back the very best we can.

## OUR SYMBOL—OUR ENDEAVOUR

On the 22nd February 1961 the Corporation of Calcutta adopted a resolution "That though India ceased to be under British rule from the 15th of August 1947 . . . the Corporation's Coat of Arms under British Royal Warrant dated the 28th December 1896 . . . continuing to be used . . . for want of a new emblem, . . . on this day the Corporation of Calcutta adopts, in suppression of its previous emblem, the new emblem as shown in the sketch annexed hereto, which emblem was recommended by the Emblem Special Committee finally on the 3rd February 1961."

To understand the significance of this event let us journey into the past for a while and watch a part of the municipal march of Calcutta. By 1888, the Municipal Corporation of Calcutta had a preponderance of elected elements, 50 out of 75 commissioners being elected and of the balance, 10 being nominated by Government and 15 by the Chamber of Commerce, the Port Trust and the Traders Association. The Corporation asked now for a seal or coat of arms and, under a British Royal Warrant issued by Sir Albert William Wood, Garter Principal of the United Kingdom, got it on the 28th December, 1896 as shown below. First it had been without the motto "Per ardua stabilis esto" which was added after a representation by the civic body.



The old emblem of the Corporation showing two adjutants or giant storks, having serpents in beaks and carrying the British Crown on shoulders. The Latin phrase below means 'By arduous ways comes stability.'

It took the Corporation 65 years thereafter, and 14 years after the Independence to adopt the new emblem of Purashri Vivardhan.

\* Calcutta Municipal Gazette, 14 July 1976; Bengal version "Purasabhar Pratik O Pracheshta" in Sonar Kathi, November 1976.

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

It is on a rectangular area, the ratio of length to base being about 9 parts to 7. The rectangle has an inside border of about one part width, thus forming four pockets on four corners, and four panels on four sides. On top of the lower panel is another of same width and in continuation two square areas on left and right marked by wavy lines on top and bottom.

### Purashri Vivardhan

Bounded by the panels and pockets is a smaller inner rectangle. It has a hand with leaping flames of fire to signify purity and high ideals in the hands of the municipal body, to visualise the civic task of burning disease, filth and tardiness. In the top panel is the word "Purashri Vivardhan" and in the bottom inner panel "Kalikata Paurasangstha". Both are in Bengali letters of old manuscript style as found in punthis. In the bottom outer panel is the figure of a peacock-shaped boat sailing on the waves. This is the famed "mayur pankhi nao" of Bengal's maritime days linking the naval trade and adventure of olden Bengal with the modern port of Calcutta.

On the vertical panel on each side is an ear of rice representing food and nourishment. On the pocket under each is a fish heading towards 'Kalikata Paurasangstha'. A pair of fish in an auspicious sign. For Calcutta it may also indicate the importance of pisciculture. On the four corner pockets are:

- \* an eight petalled lotus symbolising beauty and culture—on the top left
- \* an eight spoked wheel denoting industry and progress—on the top right
- \* a clockwise (or dakshinabarta) swastika typifying all round prosperity—on the bottom left
- \* a double thunder-bolt forming four tridents standing for strength, righteous anger, rigid ideals and electric power—on the bottom right.

### Purify & Cleanse

Let us come to our efforts in relation to all that is symbolised in our emblem. First, take the matter of purity and the burning of filth by the hand that holds the flame aloft. Rabindranath Tagore wanted fire to be kindled with verve and vigour and gave a call for burning the refuse of dissipated life. In the Corporation we have to fight pollution whether of air or of the Ganga and other water courses around. Now that Central and State Boards for the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution have



पूवशी विवर्धन

कलिकाजा पीवमःश्वा



## OUR KILOMETRESTONES

Our endeavour is not the seamy side of our symbol

Present Town Hall constructed 1814.  
Street watering commenced 19 February 1818.  
Electoral system introduced in Corporation 1847.  
First gas lamps on Calcutta streets 6 July 1857.  
Tangra slaughter-house opened 1 October 1869.  
First supply of filtered water 8 July 1874.  
Work started on Palmer's Bridge drainage pumping station 26 Nov. 1896.  
North District (No. 1) of Corporation opened 1 June 1901.  
Talla reservoir commissioned 16 May 1911.  
First Mayor & Dy. Mayor: C. F. Das & H. S. Suhrawardy (16 April 1924).  
Calcutta Municipal Gazette started 15 November 1924.  
Commercial Museum & Publicity department started 30 June 1932.  
Kulti outfall scheme for drainage sanctioned 24 March 1936.  
Tollygunge Municipality merged in Calcutta 1 April 1953.  
First electric crematorium (at Keoratala) 7 August 1956.  
Opening of Mayor's T. B. Hospital at Boral 23 September 1965.

been formed, stringent actions are being taken against water pollution. We also work with the support of Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority for the renovation of our sewerage system and drainage pumping stations. For purity of the air, parks and greeneries on the road side or the boulevard are being given larger attention.

In our effort to improve environmental public health and to fight pollution we issued a notification in the Calcutta Gazette on the 28th November 1974 prohibiting certain trades in the majority of the Corporation area, that is to say in ward Nos. 7 to 10, 16 to 29, 32, 37 to 56, 66, 68, 71 to 78, 81, 85 to 93 and 96 to 100—in all 68 wards. The offensive trades, permission for which will no longer be given, include certain manufacturing activities e.g. metals, bricks, hides, colouring of cloths and pottery. Also prohibited is the storing of various chemicals like blasting powder, dynamite, fulminate of mercury, nitro-glycerine, saltpetre and sulphur; of several items of animal origin e.g. blood, bones, catgut, hides, tallow etc; and of voluminous materials like asphaltum, bitumen, soorki, timber, waste paper etc. In these 68 wards the main permissible trades are the storage of domestic gas, coal etc, ration shops, wheat crushing, dry cleaning and tailoring of clothes. There are also several restrictions for the remaining 32 wards, and the trades industries permitted there are generally of clean and quiet type which are not detrimental to home life, public health or safety and do not emit offensive small fumes or effluents. The provisions are being enforced vigorously and should be the precursor for a proper regulation on zoning for the city of Calcutta.

In the Vanamahotstv ceremony last year, we planted a large number of saplings on road-side lands and the rate of survival was more than previous years. We also got the first prize among urban local bodies on the basis of the survival of trees in 1973—out of 1067 trees planted by us, 641 or 60% survived. We gave a call to commercial institutions, women's organizations and clubs for taking up tree-planting as well as the maintenance of municipal parks. Quite a few have come forward and the places have got newer and bright-look. This will also enable us to give more attention to smaller and hitherto neglected parks by diverting a few malis from places which have thus been taken up. Since last year we have allocated 16 pieces of road-side lands and 12 parks, squares and traffic islands to private organizations for the maintenance of flower beds and greeneries.

The open spaces are truly the lungs of the town and the attention the Corporation bestows on road-side lands, roundabout, traffic islands etc. would determine how we go about it. Details of the

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

existing parks and open spaces for the four districts and Cossipore sub-district are given below :

District	No. of parks	Total area in acres	No. of parks, 3 acres or larger	Acreege of such larger parks
Cossipore	13	49	5	47
I	41	50	4	31
II	26	79	4	69
III	58	63	5	36
IV	39	50	5	25
Total	177	291	23	208

### Fight the Disease

Coming to the civic task of eradicating disease and filth, we may point out that out of the eight parts of the Calcutta Municipal Act, the entire part V relates to public health, safety and convenience. In this part, special note may be taken of chapter XIX which deals with drains, privies and receptacles of filth, chapter XXV which deals with scavenging public bathing and washing and chapter XXVIII which deals with sale, inspection, analysis and destruction of food and drugs. In fact health is a major department of the Corporation under a Health Officer with seven territorial deputies for District I (North), District II (Central), District III (South-East), District IV (South-West) and the sub-districts of Cossipore, Manicktolla and Tollygunge. They along with the Mosquito Control Officer take care of public health as well as preventive and curative aspects of medical attention. Vaccination against small pox, inoculation against cholera and 24-hour ambulance service to remove patients are the most conspicuous among our health services. For the last four years our staff averaged 1 lakh vaccination cases and 22 lakhs re-vaccination a year, for the 33 lakh population.

Our ambulance service is available free of charge within the Corporation area to all cases of accident, illness of street beggars, non infectious patients who qualify for free treatment in hospitals, and for non-infectious and labour cases from the armed forces. For paying cases, a nominal charge is made, the maximum being 75 paise per mile for cases outside the limits of the Corporation. Recently we strengthened our ambulance service by mutual arrangement with some private ambulance units belonging to the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and Nagarik Swasthya Sangha

of Burrabazar. To the latter we had given a piece of land for establishing the ambulance unit.

We have also a number of dispensaries, clinics and hospitals spread throughout the city. The Corporation has for its own employees a Central Dispensary located at the Central Municipal Office with eye and dental clinics attached and two dispensaries at Palta Water Works and the Talla Pumping Station of the water department. Apart from these the Corporation has 22 free dispensaries working from 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. in summer and 8 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. in winter. Three of them viz. Beadon Street, Gobra and Kidderpore have ENT, eye and dental clinics attached, two at Shyambazar and Tollygunge are run on the homoeopathic system and one at Entally Dilkhusha Street on yunani. Besides, the Corporation runs a maternity hospital at Mansatala, Kidderpore with 24 indoor beds.

The Corporation has six maternity homes at Shyambazar, Chetla, Kidderpore, Manicktala, Entally and Cossipore with about 200 beds. One viz. Bijoygarh Prasuti Sadan was recently taken over by the Government. Apart from this the Corporation have provided midwifery free of charge to persons of small means working in selected wards under the supervision of Lady Health Visitors. There are five such maternity units in operation now, at Entally, Bhowanipore, Kalighat, Ultadanga and Cossipore. The Corporation has also taken a fair share of fight against TB. It runs six chest clinics at Mansatala, Alipore, Tangra, Strand Road area, Tollygunge and Baghbazar, and a full fledged TB Hospital and Research Centre at Boral. The last has on its own 100 beds for 100 wards of the city and 50 beds for patients sponsored by the Government. It will shortly be expanded to 200 beds with Government help. It is gratifying that our fight against small pox and cholera is yielding result. Last year Calcutta city was declared free of small pox for the first time. Cholera cases have also come down substantially. We wish we can talk in a similar vein regarding malaria which was once totally eradicated. Unfortunately the mosquito menace and malaria have re-appeared recently. While we have intensified our efforts in the Mosquito Control department, we have also asked for adequate help from the Central Government, which gives liberally to the Delhi Corporation.

### **Burn the Spurious & bury the Filth**

Last year our drive against adulterated and deteriorated food stuff in the shops in general and in the municipal markets in particular were stepped up, and the number of criminal cases before municipal magistrates and the quantum of fines were doubled.

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

Talking of garbage we need mention a recent encouraging development, namely the progress in the establishment of mechanical compost plants in dumping grounds for the conversion of garbage compost. One such plant of the capacity of 100 tonnes per day will be set up by the West Bengal Agro-Industries Corporation and the foundation laying ceremony was held on the 19th March at Bantala by Public Undertakings Minister Zainul Abedin and our Minister Subrata Mukherjee. Another plant of same capacity will be established at Kadapara by a private party. We require and would encourage the establishment of at least 10 such plants ringed round the city.

Regarding the service latrines we have taken a programme, with the support of CMDA, for their conversion to sanitary units connected with septic tanks. This requires Rs. 1200 out of which CMDA would provide Rs. 900 as matching grant, if the party spends Rs. 300 only. Till now about 400 latrines have thus been converted.

In the drive against filth and squalor we might also include efforts so far made for the removal of hawkers and unauthorised stalls from the footpaths. In a major drive in 1975 in Central Calcutta, Gariahat-Rasbehari Avenue area and Kidderpore, substantial results were achieved. But because of the human problems involved viz. alternative avocation to the petty traders or the availability of suitable sites for hawking, the campaign was stepped down. Again, in February this year in Central Calcutta and Bhowanipore similar cleaning operation has been undertaken. The campaign can however gather full momentum when some alternative arrangements are made for bonafide hawkers in vacant spaces available in the city.

### **Ride the Waves**

Let us now take up the sailing boat on our symbol and link to it some of our activities. Mayur pankhi nao stands for ocean going vessels and maritime activities. The Corporation is closely connected with the Calcutta Port Trust right from the beginning. When in Act X of 1866 the first Port Trust was constituted, Government appointed the Justices of Peace for the Town who were in charge of municipal administration also to function as trustees for the port. Shortly however it was felt that the port and city responsibilities should not be in one hand. By a new Act a separate set of Commissioners for the Port were appointed on 17 October 1870, the Chairman of the Calcutta Corporation being only one of them. Under the Port Trusts Act, 1973 we have two of our representatives as trustees, viz. the Commissioner and a nominee of us from the trade.

We have also the statutory responsibility for water supply to shipping. The supply is made through water carriers propelled under own power as well as barges tugged by motor boats. As we could not always supply water fully to the Calcutta Port area and the ships, we have entered into a tripartite arrangement with the Port Authorities and the Shipping Corporation of India by which the latter could run their own vessels for water supply to ships. We have also taken up capital repairs to our vessels and been collaborating with the Calcutta Port Trust for laying water lines in the port area.

#### **Nourish the body**

Food features in our symbol through fish and the ear of rice. To ensure the availability of fresh and wholesome food the Municipal Act makes elaborate provision for inspection, destruction etc. of food in chapter XXVIII as already mentioned. Chapter XXIX is devoted to the matter of milk supply, providing for the licensing of dairymen, sanitary condition of dairies, veterinary attention to milch cattle etc. This also enjoined upon the Corporation the responsibility for regulating khatalas or cattle sheds. But by a subsequent act—the Cattle Licensing Act 1959, the running of khatalas in the city has been prohibited and the responsibility for enforcing the order has been given by the Government to the Milk Commissioner. The Corporation also runs free milk kitchens throughout the city for children of the weaker sections of the community, particularly in slum areas. There are six such milk kitchens in District I, four in District II, 15 in District III, six in Maniktala, three in Cossipur and one in Tollygunge, making a total of 41—a doubling of number since Independence. Each kitchen caters to 40 children upto 2 years and distributes half a litre milk to each child in the morning.

For the supply of wholesome food the Corporation has itself established municipal markets and slaughter houses. Numberwise municipal markets are not too many for the city of Calcutta—only 10 out of the total of 152 markets. The first was New market established on the 1st January 1874 and the last the Maniktala market on the 16th June 1972. We claim that we are also aware of the importance of fish in Bengal and that is why we give on lease some of our parks and squares for pisciculture and a plot of land at Palta to the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute. They have built a research station and are propagating improved methods for the production of fish.

The Corporation maintains two slaughter houses at Tangra and smaller ones for sheep and goats at Chitpur, adjacent to Sir Charles Allen Market, at Halsibagan and at Bowanipur (Lans-

downe Market). The main slaughter house at Tangra has one part for big animals like buffaloes, bullocks, cows and the other for sheep and goats. Another slaughter house for pigs is situated nearby at Hughes Road. The main slaughter house at Tangra, built for a capacity of 500 big and 1000 small animals per day, now slaughters about 300 of each kind. It is through proper vigilance at the slaughtering stage that public may be assured of meat from good and healthy animals. Arrangements for the improvement of Tangra Slaughter House are at hand. This will also go a long way for ensuring supply of glands and other waste parts from the slaughtered animals for the preparation of specialised medicines like pituitarin, pepsin and adrenalin. The Corporation has taken up the matter with the two State Government undertakings concerned, viz. the West Bengal Livestock Processing Development Corporation and the West Bengal Pharmaceutical & Phytochemical Development Corporation.

#### Kindle the Glow of Culture

Coming to the part of beauty and culture in our symbol, we can mention the Town Hall, the Corporation Library, the Girish Memorial Library and the Municipal Museum, apart from the vast and elaborate set-up of schools under the Education Department of the Corporation. The Calcutta Town Hall opposite the Assembly House was erected in 1814 and houses valuable paintings, marble busts and antique pieces of furniture. Unfortunately almost the whole of it is under the occupation of the Government, High Court and certain departments of the Corporation including the Calcutta Municipal Service Commission. Quite a few of the valuable records and paintings have been loaned recently to the Victoria Memorial for preservation. It should however be seriously thought how to restore the Town Hall to its previous glory and functions, as Calcutta must be one of the few cities without a functioning Town Hall. The Corporation Library has preserved old proceedings, municipal gazettes and rare books and is a veritable store house for research scholars. The Girish Memorial Library at the residence of the great dramatist Girish Chandra Ghosh was taken over by the Corporation on the 22nd June 1958 and has a good collection of dramas and writings on drama.

The Municipal Museum was a pioneer institution in the display of charts, models, posters, photographs etc. covering a wide range of subjects of civic consciousness, public health, personal hygiene, maternity, child welfare, food and nutrition, prevention of epidemic diseases, disposal of garbage, primary education etc. It was conceived as a commercial museum in the days of our national movement and swadeshi campaign. Many of the local

manufacturers displayed their wares in the halls of the museum and it gave a fillip to our trade and industry. It was started on the 30th June 1932 when Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy was the Mayor. Jnananjan Niyogi was the first Director. The Commercial Museum was converted to Municipal Museum in 1953. Admittedly however the museum badly requires another overhauling today to highlight the more complicated problems of civic service and municipal administration and to create consciousness among the people.

In November 1924, when Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das was the Mayor and Subhas Chandra Bose the Commissioner (Chief Executive Officer) the Calcutta Municipal Gazette was started to promote an understanding of the Corporation's work by the public and to mould public opinion for better roads, more public schools, larger water supply, better living conditions etc. aiming to create a neater, cleaner and more beautiful Calcutta. It had a stalwart in journalism like Amal Home as its editor and got blessings in plenty from Rabindra Nath Tagore, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee and others. For the last few years the gazette was limping along, some times several months in arrear and almost always in an emaciated form. From the beginning of this year however we have been able to bring the gazette upto date and in its improved form include the current prices in various municipal markets. Market prices used to be useful for the people and for record purposes, and we are glad to revive the feature.

#### Light the Candle of Education

Unlike municipal bodies in West Bengal or elsewhere in the country, the Corporation of Calcutta still spends its own money in providing primary education to boys and girls, and the bill comes annually to about Rs. 1.25 crores. Free primary education was especially encouraged by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan and Netaji Subhas Chandra and that is how 270 schools gradually came to be established for the city. Of the 100 wards in the city, only 10 do not have schools, namely 6, 39, 43, 53, 74, 76, 78, 79, 95 and 100. Of the schools, 153 are for boys, 108 for girls and nine for adults in the shape of night schools. There are 188 schools in Bengali medium 42 in Urdu and 31 in Hindi. These schools teach upto class V. There are seven model schools, including one for girls, which have special provision for art, craft and music. Night schools are run for adult literacy among the Harijan mazdoors and sweepers residing at gowkhanas, scavenger barracks and Corporation markets. Free primary education is now the responsibility of the State Government, and even according to section 124 of the C.M. Act the Corpora-

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

tion has a liability of spending annually Rs. 5 lakhs only for promoting primary education among boys and girls within 12 years of age. We have therefore taken, despite our extremely limited funds, much more than our share for providing education to the weaker section of the community.

Coming to the end of this survey let us discuss industry and power which are symbolised by the eight spoked wheel and the double thunderbolt. Apart from the general infrastructure which the Corporation provides for trade and industry in the city, it participates in a way in such activities through its units of Entally Workshop, printing press and electric generating station at Palmer Bridge. The Workshop used to be a very large and busy centre in olden days for the fabrication, assembly and repairs for the conservancy railway, mechanical units, pumping stations etc., including railway engines, ceiling fans, handcarts and dustbins. The printing press also had its brighter days when, apart from the printing of Corporation forms, reports and the Municipal Gazette, it used to take orders from outside as the E.W.S. also did. Our power station at Palmer's Bridge was established as early as 4.5.1930 but is hardly in working order now, although in 1974, during large load-sheddings, we renovated and utilised it. For paucity of funds and other difficulties, these units are now working on much reduced capacity and require renovation. In our Palta Water Works, apart from the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, we also came to the help of the Brick and Tile Board of the State Government in establishing a mechanical brick plant on our land and manufacturing bricks from the accumulated silt of our settling tanks. The unit is however working at about 1/3rd the rated capacity and stands now in the way of our boosting brick production in the area.

Our crest 'Purashri Vivardhan' refers to the growing beauty of the urban body. 'Shri' is however a more comprehensive term and, apart from beauty, it also means purity and prosperity. In our efforts to keep this local body in a healthy state and to see that it grows with the need of the people, we have to ensure its internal strength, proper organisation and capacity to render service to the people.

## THE GAZETTE—HOME'S HOME OF FAME

Amal was the eldest son of Gagan Chandra Home whose native village was Shilka in the district of Mymensingh. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, the 'Unknown Indian' and Satyajit Ray who has infused new life into Indian cinema happened to hail from the same village. Amal was born at his maternal uncle's house at Majilpur in the district of 24 Parganas on November 10, 1894. He took to writing while in the College and contributed articles to 'the Bengalee', owned by Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee. Thereafter he joined the 'Modern Review' and the 'Prabasi', edited by Ramananda Chatterjee, both as a member of the staff and a writer. In 1916 he covered the joint session of the Congress and the Muslim League held at Lucknow as a special representative. That very year he was appointed Assistant Editor of the Lahore daily 'The Punjabi', started by Lala Lajpat Rai. In 1918 he attended the Delhi Conference of the Congress as a Special News Correspondent of the Punjabi. Then Amal came over to the 'Tribune', another daily of Lahore edited by Kalinath Ray. In 1919 Kalinath was arrested under the Martial Law, and on Amal fell the responsibility of editing the paper. When the Hunter Commission initiated an enquiry into the political unrest prevailing then in the Punjab, he appeared as a witness on behalf of the Tribune. His deliberations attracted people's attention both at home and abroad. His evidence got coverage in the newspapers of England and U.S.A. also.

Amal's path of success was not, however, strewn with flowers. As he entered the field of journalism as an undergraduate, he had to struggle hard and show proficiency to make his way. In his search for a job, he asked a small favour in the form of a credential from Ramananda Chatterjee, the editor of the Prabasi, whom he revered as his father. Though Ramananda Babu did not straightaway refuse it, he could not till the end manage to give it. How the world of today abounds in credentials, introductory letters and telephonic recommendations we know pretty well! Please compare Amal's fate from the letter on the subject which Ramananda Babu wrote to him from the Prabasi, 210-1, Cornwallis Street, Calcutta, on March, 1920: "Having been unable to reply to your letter in time, I refrain for the present from giving an introductory letter for you to Lala Lajpat Rai. Hope, this will make no difference. Your work will introduce yourself. I am happy that you are well. With best wishes".

\* Published in Bengali under the title 'Pura Patrikey Tumi Amalin' in Amal Home Special Number of Calcutta Municipal Gazette, 13 November 1976.

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At the invitation of Pandit Motilal Nehru, Amal came to Allahabad. As assistant editor, he joined the 'Independent', a daily edited by Bepin Chandra Pal. For some time he worked as its managing editor too. In the month of January, 1921, he returned to Calcutta and joined 'The Indian Daily News' as its assistant editor. He worked there upto 1924 till that newspaper merged with the 'Forward', founded by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das. He was appointed the first editor of the Calcutta Municipal Gazette on November 7, 1924.

### Birth of the Gazette

In 1923 Sir Surendranath gave a new shape to the Calcutta Municipal Act truly to usher local self government in the Corporation and vindicate the dignity of elected members. Chittaranjan became the first Mayor and Subhas Chandra, the Chief Executive Officer (predecessor of the present Commissioner). They invited Amal to come over and take up the publication of the Calcutta Municipal Gazette. Amal published the first Number of the Gazette on 15th November, by enlarging and renaming the weekly pamphlet 'Market Prices Current'. The proposal for the publication had been taken on the 15th September. The main purpose and scope of the Gazette was then defined as :

- : To remove misapprehension from public mind regarding the acts and intentions of the Corporation.
- : To invite and entertain correspondence of a general nature from the public and to meet and answer the same.
- : To carry on sanitary propaganda on an extensive scale and to reply to the citizens' queries.

During discussion in the Council the three-fold objective was elaborated and a resolution taken that the Gazette should be an effective medium of conveying to the public all important news regarding the Corporation's activities. To be sure, it should published rules, orders and notifications of the Corporation, important resolutions of Standing Committees and all notices, communique and warnings issued by the Health Officer.

This task of dissemination was taken up by Amal in a hearty manner and the Gazette turned in his hand into a lively vehicle for Calcutta and outside. He also started taking interest in the wider field of civic services. When the All India Local Self Government Conference was held for the first time at Delhi in March 1936, he was the sectional President for Education. A little later the Punjab Local Self Government Institute arranged a series of lectures at Lahore. Amal spoke for two days on the



## Sign of the Four

This city was their major area and the Calcutta Municipal Act their banner:

*Top left: Surendra Nath Banerjee* (Nov. 1848—7 Aug. 1925) Born at Taltala in Central Calcutta. To England in 1868. Joined ICS in 1871, but compulsorily retired in a few years. One of the founding members of Indian National Congress and presided over its 11th (Pune, 1895) and 18th (Ahmedabad, 1902) sessions. Left Congress in 1918 to form Moderate Conference.

Councillor of Calcutta Corporation in 1876. Entered Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1893 as Corporation representative. Opposed new municipal bill brought by Lt-Governor Sir Alexander Mackenzie in 1897, for it sought to reduce number and powers of elected representatives. Quit the Assembly with 27 others in 1899 when the bill was passed. Welcomed Montague-Chelmsford reforms. Knighted in 1920 and became first Minister of Local Self Government and Health to Government of Bengal. Chief architect of Calcutta Municipal Act 1923.

*Top right: Chittaranjan Das* (5 Nov. 1870—16 Jun. 1925) Born at Pataldanga Street in North Calcutta. In 1890 to England for ICS, but disqualified. Became a barrister in 1892 and practised in Calcutta High Court from 1893. Debut in Congress (1906 Calcutta session). Gave up vast practice overnight in 1921 on Congress call of non-cooperation with the rulers. Presided over 37th session of Congress (Gaya, 1922). Founded Congress Khilafat Swarajya party for entering legislative councils and non-cooperation from within.

Swarajya party swept civic elections in under C.M. Act, 1923. Elected Mayor, also in 1925. Outlined a nine-fold civic programme including free primary education, free medical relief for the poor, supply of more filtered and unfiltered water, sanitation in bustees and congested areas, poor housing and suburban development. In 1925 gifted his house in South Calcutta for a medical training centre and a hospital for women.

*Bottom left: Subhas Chandra Bose* (23 Jan. 1897— ) Born at Cuttack. College education in Presidency and Scottish Church of Calcutta. In 1919 to England. Selected for ICS in 1920, but declined. On return home became an active worker of Congress. Off and on in jail and during 1933-38 mostly in Europe. Elected President of Congress for Haripura session (1938). Re-elected for Tripuri session, resigned from presidentship, founded Forward Bloc and expelled from Congress (1939). Mysteriously disappeared from Calcutta residence 25 Jan. 1941. Formed Azad Hind Government at Singapore in 1943. Unconfirmed report of death in a plane crash on 18 Aug. 1945.

Elected councillor of newly formed Calcutta Corporation (Apr. 1924), appointed Chief Executive Officer (17 May) under Mayor C. R. Das but interned (25 Oct.). Elected Mayor of Calcutta on 22 Aug. 1930. For improvement in water supply introduced supply through water tankers, sanctioned a new settling tank at Palta and purchased a water boat for supply to ships. Injured in police charge and arrested near municipal office while leading an 'Independence Day' procession (26 Jan. 1931), released (3 Mar.) and laid down office to Dr. B. C. Roy, the new Mayor (15 Apr.).

*Bottom right: Bidhan Chandra Roy* (1 Jul. 1882—1 Jul. 1962) Born at Patna. In 1901 joined Calcutta Medical College. Disqualified unjustly, he had to take LMS (1906) instead of M.B. degree. To England in 1909 for MRCP and FRCS (1911). A great physician and wizard of diagnosis. Entered Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1923 as an Independent from Barrackpore in greater Calcutta, defeating Sir Surendra Nath who stood as a Moderate. Worked under the leadership of C. R. Das of Swarajya party. Joined Congress in 1924. Became member of Working Committee in 1929 and again in 1938 when also President of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee Chief Minister of West Bengal from 1948 till death.

Elected Alderman of Calcutta Corporation in 1930, 1938 and 1941 and Mayor in 1931 and 1932. As Chief Minister brought out new Municipal Act of 1951, separating policy making from the executive. Civic experience and vision found further expression in his plans on greater Calcutta, reclamation of Salt Lake area and formation of CMPO (1961).

origin and growth of Calcutta and on the evolution of the Calcutta Corporation.

After Independence Dr. B. C. Roy became the Chief Minister of the newly born State of West Bengal on the 23rd January, 1949. In March he appointed Amal to the post of Director of Publicity. Bichan Babu was elected Mayor twice (1931 & 32) and Alderman for seven years (1930, 38 & 41). From close quarters he could observe the activities of Amal. On the 9th November 1949 when Amal reached 55, he became a full-fledged Government servant, having been on deputation for the preceding few months. He joined Damodar Valley Corporation as its Chief Publicity Officer in 1954 and worked there till 1959. In 1961 on the occasion of Rabindranath's Birth Centenary All India Radio arranged various programmes throughout the year and Nehru took Amal to Delhi as the Director in-charge of the entire programme. Sacrificing home comfort and leaving behind his dear and near ones, Amal plunged into ceaseless work. The extra-ordinary pressure told upon his health and he was taken seriously ill from which he could not recover. On returning to Calcutta, he remained paralysed and speechless until August 23, 1975 when he breathed his last.

Tidy and smart Amal, when he engaged himself to the work of the Gazette, spared no pains to make it perfect in all respects. He took so much care in taking snaps and making blocks that the Gazette in no time turned into a pioneer in photo-journalism in India. The high standard that he introduced in the sphere of picturesque journalism would be evidenced by the commemorative numbers for 'Deshbandhu', 'Sir Rajendra Nath Mukherjee', 'Deshapriya Sengupta', 'Sir Prafulla Chandra Roy', 'Rabindranath' and 'C. V. Raman'. In addition to 12 special 'Health' numbers, he got published special numbers on the themes of 'Safety', 'Grow More Food', 'Town Planning' and 'Transport'. His last as special number was 'Independence 1947', Amal was over careful how to improve the quality of the Gazette without raising the cost of the publication. Hardly had the Gazette crossed four years of its publication, when for its quality printing and picture it received congratulations from many.

#### Sir Jagadish Bose

Eminent personalities approached Amal for professional help and advice. This could be evidenced from two consecutive letters of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, who congratulated Amal for unprecedented success of the 'Sir J. C. Bose Number' of December, 1928. In his letter dated December 5, Sir Jagadish wrote :

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"I must congratulate you on the extraordinary success of your December number. I am literally besieged by very distinguished people for copies of the journal. You should send a copy of the paper to His Excellency, marking some of the pages.

"I have been thinking of sending copies of your paper to some of the eminent scientific men in Europe by this mail. Could you send me a dozen copies? You should also send copies for review in some of the leading daily papers in India.

"I also want you to lend me blocks of your illustrations for bringing out a pamphlet which will serve as a report of the Institute for the last year."

Within a week Sir Jagadish wrote again, His letter dated December 12, 1928 is self-explanatory.

"The demand of your Gazette has been so great that the copies already sent to Europe are not sufficient. Could you kindly send me 20 more copies?"

"I also would like to have all your blocks for a small pamphlet on the Bose Institute. Could I have it printed in your press under your supervision. Please come to see me one afternoon."

The Gazette earned encomium from different corners of the country. C. Y. Chintamani, member of the Legislative Council, United Provinces wrote from Allahabad on January 12, 1929: "I consider the Calcutta Municipal Gazette to be an admirable journal, probably the only one of its kind, now in existence anywhere in India, which serves a very useful public purpose and reflects great credit upon the capacity and devotion of its public spirited editor, Mr. Amal Home who, I trust, has a great future before him of public service and personal distinction."

### Jawaharlal Nehru

We find another letter from Allahabad the same year. It is from Jawaharlal Nehru, Chairman of the Municipal Board, dated December 12, 1929 and addressed to 'My dear Amal Home.' It runs as follows: 'I am sorry for the delay in answering your letter ... I am glad you are conducting the Calcutta Municipal Gazette. It is attractive and should do good. But do not expect an article from me. I do not indulge in this kind of extravagance.'

Four months ago while on a tour in Calcutta Jawaharlal asked Amal for some information. The letter is date lined Camp Calcutta, August 25, 1929 and written on the letter pad of All

India Congress Committee (Fifty-two Hewett Road, Allahabad, office bearers for 1929: President Pandit Motilal Nehru. Treasurer Jamnalal Bajaj & Sivaprasad Gupta, General Secretaries Dr. M. N. Ansari & Jawaharlal Nehru). He wrote: "I have had an enquiry from Berlin ... there is going to be a World Congress of Engineers in Tokyo. I am asked as to who the Indian representatives are going to be. I do not know the address of any organization of Engineers whom I can ask. Could you perhaps find this out for me and let me know?"

Jawaharlal's reluctance to write to order is manifest from another letter of his dated August 18, 1941 from District Jail Dehradun:

"Sometime back I received your 'Tagore Birthday Special Supplement' and I appreciated it very much. It was a fine production. Now your second letter has arrived asking me to send contributions for 'Tagore Memorial Number', I am afraid you do not realise that a person confined in prison has to live within all manner of limitations and restrictions. Any way I am not supposed to send contribution to papers or magazines for publication. Even if there was no such bar, I would hesitate to do so from prison, for I cannot write within the narrow ambit of numerous censorships. So I cannot send you anything.

"My mind goes back to nearly ten years ago when I was in the very jail and you wrote to me for a message for the 'Golden Book of Tagore'. I sent you then a few lines. A few lines or many lines of formal appreciation or sorrow now would almost be an impertinence to the memory of Gurudev. When the time comes, I suppose I shall write about him."

Jawaharlal once used the word 'extravagance'; this time 'impertinence'. He however acknowledged his devotion to Gurudev and faith in Home's capacity in 1961 when he was the Prime Minister and brought him over to Delhi as the Director of All India Radio to organise the year long celebration of Tagore Centenary. That was Home's last job too.

#### Subhas Chandra Bose

Subhas Chandra Bose inducted Amal into the Corporation and was himself associated with the activities of the Gazette. That is why in his letters we find various business matters about it, and also request for advice in the related field. One of his letter dated December 5, 1929 on the letter head of Bengal Provincial Congress Committee ("Bipiseese" Phone No. 2952 Barabazar) runs as follows: "Order have been placed with the

Indian Photo Engraving Coy for preparing a block of Jatin Das's photo. Kindly help us by requesting the Coy to reduce their charges as far as possible. The sale proceeds of the photo will go to the memorial fund and I shall very much appreciate if they could do it free of charge. Do you know what has to be done to take a copyright of a photo? If so, please advise the bearer of this who is working for the Jatin Das Memorial Committee."

In his travels abroad Subhas would not forget the cause of the Gazette but help in promoting it whenever he could. In a letter from Palace Hotel, Prague, Czechoslovakia, dated July 9, 1933 he wrote to Amal Home Esqr :

"I am sending to the Mayor of Calcutta the greetings of the Mayor of Prague together with his photo. Please publish the photo and his message in the Calcutta Municipal Gazette along with my letter.

"Please send the following gentlemen in Prague copies of the M.G. every week which will be greatly appreciated : (1) Ju Dr. Karel Baxa, Primator, (2) Dr. Jur Ladislav Jehlicka (3) I. Reismann, Editor Reismann Foreign Press ... Dr. Jehlicka is virtually the private secretary of the Mayor of Prague and knows English quite well and will be of great help in securing articles for the Gazette.

"I have requested the Mayor of Prague to write for the CMG himself occasionally or request his office to write. He was quite agreeable and wanted to know which subjects would interest Calcutta. I said 'any subject would do, but Calcutta is more interested in water, drainage, electricity, gas and social welfare work.'

"If you keep up correspondence with Dr. Jehlicka he may be able to secure the articles and send them to you. He is a very nice man. The Mayor of Calcutta may also write to the Mayor direct.

"I am glad you are sending the Gazette to Dr. Vetter at Vienna. Both Dr. and Frau (Mrs.) Vetter were delighted to receive the Gazette direct."

In the vortex of politics Subhas's association with the Gazette got attenuated but never severed. In a letter date lined C/o. the Superintendent of Police, Darjeeling, March 19, 1936, he wrote : "I am sorry to hear of your physical ailments, but I see no reason why you should be so pessimistic. ... I may tell you that diabetes is curable ... my late father ... got over it through careful dieting ... In view of your health, I think you should go on leave, even if you cannot leave the work in the best hands, because, after all, your absence will not be long and in

your present circumstances your health should be your first consideration."

In 1938 when Subhas was the President of the Indian National Congress he continued to be an alderman of the Calcutta Corporation. Foreword in his own hand dated April 4, 1938 adorns the ninth Health Number of the Gazette:

"As one primarily responsible for the starting of the 'Calcutta Municipal Gazette', I have always cherished a warm corner in my heart for this pioneer civic organ, which has come to worthily fill a gap in the ranks of Indian journalism and won approbation at home and abroad. I was also responsible, as Chief Executive Officer in 1924, for the choice of the Editor, and it affords me real pleasure to find it admitted on all hands that my choice has been justified. Mr. Amal Home has conducted the Municipal Gazette for the last fourteen years in a manner which has reflected great credit on himself and the Corporation of Calcutta. I have, therefore, gladly responded to this invitation to write a few lines as a foreword to the eighth Health Number of the journal. For seven years this particular issue of the Gazette has come out with a wealth of articles and illustrations bearing on all aspects of personal hygiene and public health and gathered in its pages a storehouse of most valuable information—thus materially contributing to the awakening of that health consciousness in our people, without which no progress is possible.

"Long may the 'Calcutta Municipal Gazette' continue its career of immense usefulness helping in the building up of a healthy race, fit to take its place among the nations of the world—strong in body and mind and ready to fight its battle for its rights and liberties."

**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi**

Let me now present a letter hallowed by the memory of Gandhiji and mentioning the name of his constant companion Sudhir Ghosh. It was written in Bengali by another companion Nirmal Kumar Basu, the renowned anthropologist, datelined C/o. Mahatma Gandhi, Vill & P.O. Ray Srirampur, Noakhali, December 8, 1946:

"Respected Amalda,

"I received your letter along with the cutting and informed Gandhiji. He himself referred to the letter you wrote about the Municipal Gazette. In the meantime, that number of the Gazette reached here and he advised me to keep the

clipping of the essay. Let me tell you what he said today. You will certainly be able to collect such cases as are 100% authentic. He wishes that you collect such cases from different newspapers and send them, ready for printing. He is thinking to publish them in the Harijan and no doubt wants to depend fully on your competence.

"You must be getting other news through newspapers. I do not know how long he will stay there. Perhaps he is planning to move from village to village, setting out as soon as the roads are dry. We are pulling on well, about which later. Please accept my pranam and convey the same to Boudi. Sudhir is away to a village at a distance of three miles."

#### Lin Yutang and Buddhadev Bose

After joining the Corporation occasionally I turn over the old pages of the Gazette and feel like taking a dip in the river of old memories. The 'Rabindra' Numbers and 'Special Health' Numbers edited by Amal Home will still make us wonder. Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, the biographer of Rabindranath and Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay who was very close to him were of the view that the Rabindra Numbers, if reprinted, would still serve the needs and pleasures of many. General people might not know much about the Health Numbers, but we know the splendour of jewels and gems in them! The Special Number of 1941 is the 12th and last Health Number. Turning the pages I find the following write-ups and pictures in addition to an elaborate treatise on venereal diseases:

Cover—A well proportioned male figure sketched by O. C. Ganguly.

Old Calcutta Health & Sanitation—Written by a Corporation Official B. V. Roy, it dwells on the water supply, drainage, garbage, crematoria, floating population, hospitals etc. of Calcutta as they were 100 years back.

Women & Alcohol—Written by Lt. Colonel Barkeley Hill, I.M.S., who was then the Superintendent of the Ranchi European Mental Hospital.

The Chinese Art of Eating—By world famous Chinese writer Lin Yutang.

In a Calcutta Slum by Luis Gompatoz—It is a write-up on the running of a Maternity and Child Welfare Centre situated in a land donated by the Corporation in the big slum area at Dinendra Street and managed by Bengal Social Service League. The writer was a young aristocratic lady on a visit from Europe.

On hypochondriacs by Buddhadev Bose—It is a serio-comic

write-up in English on those perpetual pessimists about own health by that wizard of Bengali language. Very few might know today that Buddhadev Bose wrote beautiful English and used to contribute regularly to our Gazette.

There were three sections in the Number—(1) Public Health, Food and Medicine, (2) Mother and Child and (3) Tuberculosis. There were seven exquisite pictures reproduced from plates. Special mention may be made of (i) Abundance—Health to Prosperity which was taken from the architecture of Poissant, (ii) Picture of 'Mother and Child' engraved by Budel on the rock of Niderbrook and (iii) Damaged Goods—taken from the picture of John Collier. The number was crowded with write-ups by specialists and doctors of Madras, Bombay, Allahabad, Dehradun, Delhi and America (New York, Cornell and Illinois). It is a shining example of pictorial journalism with which the name of Amal was so much associated.

Stylish and refined in personal life, Amal was so also in his job and hobbies. In arranging the pages of the Municipal Gazette in words and pictures no trouble was too much for him. Similar was the care he bestowed in arranging his photo album or the bunch of letters. This would be evident from a look at his personal collections. We sometime take snaps with our own cameras and sometime collect photo-prints from others. Busy as we are, we feel lethargic in a few years to arrange them chronologically, not to speak of arranging them subject-wise. After a while the photographs get jumbled up and difficult to trace out. Some albums of Home were chronological and others arranged carefully according to place and subject. Fixed with photo corners they look like a bouquet of flowers. Amal was ever fond of beautiful faces, company of the famed and a congenial association. It is by going through his albums bearing names and annotations in Amal's hand that one can realise the wonderful opportunity of travelling in a land over green with memory. Let me therefore repeat that he justified the name Amal—which means clean—throughout his life.

## PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PROPERTY

The Corporation of Calcutta is the owner and custodian of many properties of public utility as well as many municipal installations. In the first category may be taken roads, footpaths, street lights, water taps, parks, streets etc. which are distributed throughout the city and require to be protected, being in use day in and day out by the people. In the other category of installation or places where civic services are arranged, we may put dumping grounds, water works, sewerage and drainage stations, pumping stations for unfiltered water supply etc. These are exclusively for the Corporation's own use and people have no business to be there. The former category is however used by the people and the Corporation alike. The question as to which of them are most important and vulnerable may be answered from two aspects. If we talk of vulnerability, our water works are in that category. The supply of water is vital for the city and that is why Government in the Home (Political) Department issued notifications protecting all such installations and preventing people from wondering around for sightseeing, picnic or any such purpose.

Compared to us CMDA are not much concerned with protection and maintenance, but they have to do it for the assets created by them e.g. big diameter tubewells and new street lights till these are handed over to proper agencies. For the above within the Corporation limits obviously the agency is the Corporation of Calcutta.

To safeguard against the loss of public property, we have fundamental provision in the municipal and criminal laws including the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 and the Criminal Procedure Code by which certain damages to public properties or offences in this regard are dealt with; but that is not enough. To take a deeper look, we have to realise that our city is for the people, and we have to develop a feeling that a public property is our property too, to be protected by the people. It will help if we feel that the roads and footpaths, the hydrants, or even the railings of a park or trees on the roadside require to be protected by us as citizens.

When in April 1975, we undertook a drive against hawkers on

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\* Talk on AIR, 30 October 1976 and published in Hindi as 'Jansampatti ke Raksha' in Chhapte Chhapte, 26 February 1977.

## PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PROPERTY

footpaths, the question of rehabilitating the displaced was raised as much as that of protecting the liberated stretches from fresh incursions. For the hawkers, we mooted the idea of Meenabazars on streets and boulevards in the afternoon. There was a hue and cry that we, the custodians of public property, were disturbing the normal function of the road, the greenery of the boulevard and the environmental hygiene. On the other hand our tentative thinking on reducing the width of the footpath by accomodating traffic bays interspersed with shrubs and plants was greeted with a cartoon showing a personage walking on cactus feet. The moral of the incident is that the people are quite conscious of the duties and responsibilities of civic and other authorities, and it is time that they develop them correspondingly on their side.

তিথিক



Ananda Bazar Patrika dated 23 April 1975 "The city becomes a green garden and no chance of squatting for hawkers"—in the series 'The oblique'.

...শহরটা সবুজ উদ্যানে পরিণত হলে  
এবং হকাররা বসতে পারবে না

I feel that our laws are not sufficiently harsh or severe enough for immediate action against any lapse in civic duty. Before making such a sweeping statement I should give, by way of explanation, certain background information. For the proper maintenance of any public property three things are needed. First for a property which is seen and used by the people, they should develop some emotion and sense of attachment. Secondly, there should be general awareness for maintaining

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and protecting the property and against maltreating it. If the citizens are fully aware of it, they will think twice before they spit on the road or throw a banana skin, thereby creating a chain reaction. Thirdly there should be stronger and, if I may use the word, some draconian laws against the misuse or damage of public properties. The law is obviously not adequate today. I however hasten to explain that no draconian measures might be necessary to use if public attention is drawn properly to the problem. Then the strict provisions might be there, but we need not use them. If people know the problem and the consequences of their wrong action, they will not damage or maltreat public property. An instance may be taken from CMDA's sphere. The service latrines are being converted in the bustees free of charge into septic latrines. The bustee dwellers protect these new assets because they come to realise its benefit.

Unless there is a proper sense of involvement, or if I may say so, a sense of belonging, the odds and ends of civic or communal properties strewn all over the city cannot have proper protection and maintenance. For example, we have manholes down to underground sewers and cast iron lids to cover them up. Quite often the covers are stolen and the holes on the road surface become death traps. In places where Calcutta Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority laid new sewer lines there are reinforced concrete slabs. The incidence of theft has no doubt been brought down there, but at the same time the lifting of these slabs has become more difficult and consequently the cleansing of the sewer lines has been neglected.

Or take the case of water taps and stop-cocks. In olden days they were of brass, quite a valuable metal, but people dared not touch them. Then because of increasing pilferage and high cost of replacement they were replaced by those of cast iron which also came to afford great temptation for the scrap dealer. Now we have plastic stop-cocks which have hardly any value in the kabadi market. They are still stolen with the result that 40% or more of the precious water we generate at Palta or draw out of ground by spending so much energy and money, goes down the gutter. Recently the Bharat Sevak Samaj at Burrabazar experimented with very inexpensive wooden cocks with plastic cords for plugging all such water points with defective closing mechanism or none. It is unfortunate that even these attachments were removed and the experiment proved a failure.

It reminds me of the poem 'The Lord of Inchape Rock', where a master pirate cut off the warning bell on the submerged rock to facilitate piracy, and shortly there-after his own ship floundered on the rock in the thick fog which suddenly developed. Our pirates

## PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PROPERTY

can also bring nemesis on themselves or on the community if they step up vandalism, while a sense of belonging and ownership can only stop such tendencies. To develop it in a short time we have to have a judicious mixture of education and fear—fear of consequences and penal measures.

What I said about water and sewerage, the two basic components of civic life can no doubt be extended to the question of proper up-keep for several other services or municipal items like public conveniences, collection centres of garbage or street lights. The major reason that the city looks and smells dirty is that the urinals and lavatories are fouled up recklessly and wastes and garbage are thrown at will. Proper and tidy use is the surest way to protect and maintain these places of convenience. Similarly if the citizens can ensure that neither bulbs are stolen from an electric lamp post nor electric current from the overhead wire, they would have properly lit roads round the year and less incidence of electric charge on the community.

Those are the basic things for the protection of civic properties. The maintenance or expansion of the protection force, which however well equipped and well deployed might be, can only give the general frame. We have then to fill it in with a purpose and vitality. A related question is whether we have adequate and proper staff for maintenance, and if so whether they are properly employed. I should say that we have enough staff but our difficulty is, as is generally known and appreciated today, the lack of enough money. As the position is accepted, the remedies are also being seriously worked out. That is why in October 1976 a top level meeting was taken by the Governor himself and it was decided that for the proper maintenance of roads, there should be adequate funds. Calcutta Corporation has the staff to do the work but not enough materials or their supply in time. This makes it difficult to take up the job of maintenance properly.

In our vital installations like Palta Water Works and Talla Pumping Stations we have protection and coverage from the Government, and police platoons are also stationed there. For certain other units and purposes, on the other hand, we have our own force, as in markets, workshops, the Central Municipal Building or the unit of unauthorised building construction. We have our own security staff complete with guards and sergeants. It is not a statutory body of disciplined or armed people like the police force or even the railway protection force. It is a debatable point whether we should have our own force or function under arrangements with police from whom protection staff should be drawn from time to time to our set-up. There

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may be at the moment some difficulty in getting people from the state police cadre, but given the will and understanding, the difficulties can be solved and we can work out a regular flow of trained people from organized cadres to our best advantage and working under a unified command.

Ultimately it is a sense of involvement. We keep our houses clean but we throw garbage on the street. We talk of public property and public maintenance. As it is everybody's property it is everybody's duty to keep it clean and in a hygienic condition. To create such awareness we, in our recent City Welfare Programme, highlighted some matters as follows

- : Waste of water is a sin—close a running tap
- : Electricity stolen from lamp posts is money stolen from public fund
- : Lungs of the city are parks and trees—don't neglect them
- : For throwing garbage avoid 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- : Aesthetics demands no writings on walls
- : Pavements are for pedestrians—encroachment is a non-bailable offence now
- : Roads are arteries of the city—their maintenance is a must
- : Our city—don't treat it as a spittoon or urinal

Such publicity should create a sense of belonging and a constructive spirit. If we can also have adequate statutory provisions to demand proper attention from the people and penal provision against transgression, there will be the right atmosphere for the maintenance of the city's properties.

**It is high time to think and act together**

Here is our

# CITY WELFARE PROGRAMME

for the good of Calcutta



Calcutta of tomorrow will emerge from today's efforts.



Impurity in foodstuff cripples the nation: join hands to punish the crime.



Town is part of country: its improvement is country's improvement.



Your constructive criticism will keep us on right path.



Waste of water is a sin—close a running tap



Electricity stolen from lamp post is money stolen from public fund.



Lungs of the city are parks and trees—don't neglect them.



For throwing garbage avoid 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Aesthetics demands no writings on walls.



Regular inoculation and vaccination fight epidemic



Education brings national solidarity—we run 261 free primary schools, 1 creche & 9 night schools.



Pavements are for pedestrians—encroachment is a nonbailable offence now.



Roads are arteries of the city: their maintenance is a must.



Our city—don't treat it as a spittoon or urinal.



Ganga and the sky are our heritage—don't pollute them.



Revenues are sineews of service—pay your tax regularly.



Avoid eating cut fruits to prevent diseases.



Maximise co-ordination to further all activities.



More and more amenities to citizens—is the motto of the Corporation.



Every construction should keep adequate open space as per new building regulations.



*The Corporation of Calcutta  
in the life of Calcutta*

#### POINTS INCORPORATED

Our august Corporation has come out with a remarkably sensible 20 point programme and we take advantage of Point No. 4 "Your Constructive Criticism will keep us on the Right Path."

Point No. 5 reads "Waste of Water is a Sin—close a running Tap." Certainly very necessary where there is running water, and where there is a tap that can close. . . . Water is wasted in households . . . for whatever excess is stored . . . is thrown away when the next supply of filtered water gushes through the taps.

Point No. 12: "Pavements are for Pedestrians—Encroachment is a Non-bailable Offence now." If the offence includes hawkers, somebody must be joking. Did this point get into the manifesto by mistake?

Point No. 13: "Roads are Arteries of the City—their Maintenance is a Must." . . . the roads are far from maintained at the moment. Holes caused by sinking tram-tracks have been filled with jagged bricks. The number and danger of bursting tyres have increased. The other morning a man was crossing Esplanade at the point of Bentinck Street . . . he did not notice the sudden drop between the tram-tracks and the rest of the carriageway. He lost his balance and fell. His glasses went flying and got broken. His papers fell into a puddle. . . . What he and the others said about road maintenance is unprintable.

Point No. 14: "Our City—don't treat it as a Spitoon or Urinal." Certainly very pertinent. But compliance needs strong measures. Fines should differentiate between the rich and the poor. Confinement for a couple of hours might have some effect. Best of all, hand each person caught a piece a rag . . . and force him to clean up the mess. Call it motivation if you must. Call it coercion if you will.

(From 'Calcutta Notebook' in the Statesman, dated 6 September 1976)

## NEW MARKET IS NEW NO MORE

The Fever Hospital Committee was quite perturbed with the glaring defects of the markets of Calcutta, but it was only in 1863 under the new constitution that the municipal administration took the matter in right earnest. The two largest markets then were Tiretta Bazar and the Dharmatalla Market, both under private management. On January 16, 1866 the Justices of the Town resolved to allot a lakh of rupees for founding a market at the corner of Grant Street and Corporation Street (now Suren Banerjee Road). The matter was rejected after two years due to deep dislike to municipal trading in certain quarters and the much larger capital outlay that was found necessary on closer scrutiny.

In December 1870 Stuart Hogg (later given knighthood), Chairman of the Municipality revived the matter. The decision was to purchase the Dharamtalla Market for about Rs. 6 lakhs, and failing that to construct a new market between Corporation Street and Lindsay Street. The Calcutta Markets Act of 1871 was accordingly passed, authorising the Justices to raise a loan of Rs. 6 lakhs as also for the control and regulation of private markets. In February 1874, i.e. a month after the commissioning of the New Market, the Dharmatalla Market was acquired by the Municipality after a heated debate. But the decision proved to be wrong and the ill organized market with various inbuilt deficiencies made it a dead weight round the neck of the New Market. In 1887-91, the Dharamtalla Market was divided into 22 lots and sold by public auction for Rs. 5.4 lakhs. The Sir Stuart Hogg Market did not look back thereafter and its prosperity grew steadily.

New Market is a nickname, while the Christian name is Sir Stuart Hogg Market and the surname Municipal Market. A bonus of Rs. 1000/- was offered for the best design and was bagged by R. R. Bayne, Architect to the East Indian Railways Co. Construction commenced in September 1871. The building with an accommodation of about 86,000 sft. rentable space, mostly for food and food products, was commissioned as a market on January 1, 1874. Messrs Burn & Co. were the contractors and the cost of the building including the acquisition of land was Rs. 6,55,277/-. Further extensions to the market were made in subsequent years. After 1907 ranges for the sale of meat, fish,

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\* Amrita Bazar Patrika, 19 February 1977.

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

poultry, birds and games and a number of shops and quarters for the staff were made. The capital account of this market on the 31st March 1915 amounted to over Rs. 25 lakhs and the income had increased over the years. In 1903-04 the income was over Rs. 2 lakhs and the highest ever collected was above Rs. 25 lakhs in 1975-76. It is expected that in 1976-77 the income will exceed Rs. 30 lakhs. Thus it became a profitable investment, although running deficits for the last few years.

The Corporation of Calcutta maintains for the market a staff of about 264 members, including a battery of sweepers for sanitation. It is one of the biggest market complexes in the world covering a space of 36 bighas. The variety and selection of merchandise is astonishing—from a ladies handkerchief to a tiger. More than 2500 stalls in about 30 blocks have an enormous attraction for both sight-seers and customers. The romance of shopping expeditions to the endless alleys still exists here. It has a clientele drawn from the plain and the elegant alike and visitors ranging from beggars, middle class Babus and housewives to rich Americans, film stars and V.V.I.Ps. One can be pleased here, ambling from shop to shop, and to give them the 'atmosphere', the latest addition is piped soft music.

The total area of the New Market is 5,18,400 sft. of which only 38% is rentable. More than 50% of the area is open and used for passages or circulation. The rentable area can be increased by effective planning, consequently increasing annual return and more benefits to the shoppers and stall-holders. Official records do not show any unauthorised occupation. But there is no optimum utilisation of space, for many stall-holders use large areas for storage. There are many persons living within the market and a night time population of at least as many shop assistants and a half as there are shops. They sleep within or near the shops. Some passages are filled up with hawkers and squatters. Depending on locations, the New Market has been divided into various sections, viz. Main Building, West of Fenwick Bazar Street, East of Fenwick Bazar Street, Hogg Street and Bertram Street. Service and institutional facilities like banks, post offices, book stalls, police outposts are scarce or inadequate in the Market, and recreational facility altogether absent. Still the New Market maintains its aristocracy of being the chief retailer and shopping centre of the metropolis.

The century old structures of this market have started showing signs of decay and the cost of maintenance is mounting up from year to year. There is acute shortage of space. No new space can be arranged so as to help raise the finances of the Corporation, while other problems have also piled up. The

surrounding areas have intensive use in shops and establishments, mostly private, and hawkers are in the narrow alleys and lanes. There are increased problems of parking cars and of the accessibility of pedestrians to the market. The parking demand is quite heavy and to meet it the Corporation introduced here, as in some other selected areas of the city, a scheme of fee parking through lessees. Parking is necessary mostly for shopping purposes, but recently many Government as well as commercial offices have come up here, making the problem worse.

A considerable portion of the perishable goods range is now devoted to wholesale activities which cater mostly to the markets of South Calcutta. It creates congestion and confusion, particularly on the north eastern corner of the market. The area has a lot of dilapidated structures with poor illumination and maintenance, and downright slums in a portion on the east—a setting in which the antisocial elements thrive. Several service type industries are in the vicinity, as also a temporary sweepers colony and a number of low income people who are dependent on the Market. So, any scheme for the improvement or expansion of the New Market should have provision for them. Similarly consideration has to be given for traffic which will go far beyond the present dimensions. All these make the planning more complex. A New Market complex has however to be planned, for it is now bursting at seams and is crying for expansion. The only solution of some satisfaction, in case no grandiose scheme can be taken up immediately for pulling down the market in parts and raising multistoried structures in lieu, is to go up vertically and increase floor space, not disturbing the available open space on ground. Today the congested circumstances of the market make traders lose some perishable goods and create a closely packed unhygienic condition. Due to such congestion the market itself and the surrounding areas suffer in environmental hygiene and, if we may say so, even in moral atmosphere.

In the management of the New Market, the problems which have been acutely faced by us in the recent past are deterioration in the structures, uncontrolled transfers to third parties, encroachment on the area meant for circulation, unauthorised extension and very low and incomplete schedule of charges. To take a comprehensive view of the matter, a committee was set up in the Corporation in September 1976, comprising a Deputy Commissioner, a Deputy Chief Engineer, the City Architect and the Superintendent of the Market. The Committee submitted a report in December. The major findings and recommendations as given in the following paragraphs have been accepted by the Corporation.

The main cart passage of the Market was blocked up with the allotment of stalls by the Corporation and Standing Committees during the elected regime, and there is no way now for the Fire Brigade or other vehicles to come this way. Another cart passage has been largely encroached upon by the abutting stalls. The Committee recommended that no new extension of any stall or range should be allowed, either vertically or horizontally, and a third cart passage, still free from encroachment, should be cleared of nuisance and kept open for the Fire Brigade, ambulance etc. The existing latrines and urinals which are ill-kept and quite a few lying choked should be improved, and a few more places of public convenience built.

It was found that about 25% of the fish range and 40% of the beef and mutton range were lying vacant for lack of custom or supply, and there was persistent demand or attempt to put them to other use. The Committee recommended that the vacant space in the former should be utilised for putting up a cold storage, so essential for refrigeration and wholesome storage facilities now-a-days. The vacant space in the latter may in its turn accommodate stalls for the type of goods in demand and those which require to be removed from the encroachment on passages and gates.

A matter of grave concern is the ramshackle condition of electric wiring, the inadequate capacity of the system to bear the load and the aggravation made by leaky roofs. The Committee pointed out that several small fires occurred in the recent past and the market was virtually living with the risk of a fire havoc, and recommended that the first priority should be on repairs and rewiring of the Market. In the recent past the Corporation spent about Rs. 3 lakhs on repairs of the building, electric lines, water supply and drainage. It is budgeted to spend another Rs. 2 lakhs this year for essential repairs including those of gates and leaky roofs and in further sinking of tube wells.

Another matter of eyesore is the hoardings in front, i.e. on Lindsay Street being displayed in a haphazard way and masking or distorting the facade. The Alkali and Chemical Corporation of India gave us an ambitious programme of total reorientation to the New Market area keeping the central building intact. After some discussion between them, CMDA and ourselves, we found that it was not possible to proceed with the matter as the Corporation would have to bear the brunt of expenses. ACCI then came up with a modest proposal for rearranging the hoardings so as to expose the architectural beauty of the building and for painting the walls in an interesting colour scheme. Even this limited work could not yet be worked out, for ACCI's

contribution in kind only, viz. paints, could hardly come to 20% of the cost which would be more than Rs. 7 lakhs. Whatever money we can get by digging into the Corporation kitty requires to be more urgently utilized in essential repairs and upkeep.

The idea is not however given up. Between the Chairman of the company and ourselves our endeavour would be to get commercial houses to adopt the beautification scheme in the same way as we have succeeded in giving parks and squares to institutions and societies for beautification or in getting private parties to adopt stretches of roads. For a more pleasing display of the hoardings, in the meanwhile, the Corporation has decided to allow only 14 hoardings of 8 ft by 16 ft at a uniform height, one foot below the parapet wall. It is heartening that the outdoor advertisers, despite some cost and trouble, have agreed to cooperate.

The New Market, once a major revenue earner of the Corporation is recently running into deficits. In 1965-66 it had an income of Rs. 17.5 lakhs and an expenditure of Rs. 12.7 lakhs. The corresponding figures for 1968-69 are Rs. 19.5 lakhs and Rs. 15.8 lakhs, for 1972-73 Rs. 19 lakhs and Rs. 21.3 lakhs and for 1975-76 Rs. 25.1 lakhs and Rs. 28.6 lakhs. Both in revenue and expenditure the New Market accounts for half of the Corporation total, the College Street Market, one-fourth and the remaining eight markets viz. Gariahat, Entally, Lake Road, Lansdowne, Park Circus, Maniktala, New Alipore and Allen Markets (arranged in order of revenue generation) account for the remaining one-fourth. Our overall deficit for all the ten markets was Rs. 8 lakhs, in 1975-76. The main reason for such deficits is the very poor rate of rents and fees. The Committee's finding in this respect is that the existing schedule of charges neither contains any penalty clause for any transgression or unauthorised transaction nor any yardstick for the enhancement of rent when the character or occupancy of the stall changes. To put the matter on sound footing, it is now decided not to allow transfer outside the members of family, including parents, brothers and sisters without the strongest justification. Similarly there could be no addition or alteration of business unless justified from the point of view of customers and the overall character of the line or range accommodating the particular shop. Simultaneously the Corporation has provided for penalty charges, revised charges for vendors and enhancement of rent in case of approved transfer, partnership, extension, change of business etc. These would work out to 25% of the existing charges or a little more in cases which should bear more.

To exploit the potential of the area, it is time that the New

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Market has an intensive development programme commensurate with comprehensive planning and the density circumstances. It is with this end in view that the Corporation in collaboration with CMPO prepared in 1970-71 a scheme for the construction of a multistoried building in place of the present structure to develop a market-cum-commercial complex and presented it to Government. It is however hanging fire since 1974. When it was posed to LIC, they proposed a stiff rate of interest as applicable to parties in the open market, and a back-up guarantee from the West Bengal Government. After that the scheme has been scrutinised several times by Government, CMDA and CMPO, down to a detailed project report, including cash flow and profitability, but nothing concrete emerged. In the meanwhile LIC lost interest as well as increased the rate of interest. There was an alternative proposal to hand over the scheme to CMDA and the construction to State Housing Board, but no firm views could again be taken. The crux of the matter is creating additional space for which the current commercial rent of Rs. 2.50 to 5.00 per month per square foot can be collected so as to subsidise the old tenants 80% of whom pay between 30 paise and Rs. 1.50 and whose rent can only be increased by a small percentage.

To come back to the original plan of ACCI, it is to make it a shopping-cum-recreational landmark of the city without any basic changes in the existing structure but a little rearrangement here and there. It entails on the Lindsay Street promenade the construction of community buildings consisting of walls and plazas, free from vehicular traffic, a theatre hall, a civic hall, public toilets, children's play-ground, sculptures, banks, post offices, telephones, magazine stalls, information centre and exhibition space along with shopping and residential facilities. We do not know when such an endeavour or in the alternative the multistoried marketing complex can be taken in hand. Surely Calcutta deserves some such project both for beauty and utility, 103 years after the Britishers built this magnificent edifice.

## LINE UP & BUILD

The city of Calcutta, it may be mentioned at the outset, is the core area of Greater Calcutta as is under the municipal government of the Corporation of Calcutta. It accounts for 37 sq. miles and 33 lakhs people out of the total of 510 sq. miles and 80 lakhs people for the larger area of the Calcutta Metropolitan District. There is of course another inner circle of twice as much area and population as the Corporation has. This is what is popularly known as Calcutta or Greater Calcutta, taking into its fold the municipalities in the immediate neighbourhood. This presentation is made in two parts on buildings and roads, as mentioned above, for the Corporation area only and may be relevant and useful as a case study for urban planning and development aspects.

### Tall Buildings

The advancement of building science leads to the speedy growth of multi-storied buildings in the city; but in Schedule XVI of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 viz. "Rules as to the use of Building-sites and the execution of Building work" there was no provision to deal with such cases of construction. The authorities naturally found it inconvenient in dealing with the increasing number of applications for the sanction of multi-storied buildings which were coming up for the last few years. So, it was considered necessary that some recommendations and guide lines in this behalf should be made available to the authorities. A committee was thus formed for dealing with tall buildings; but difficulty was still being experienced as this was no statutory body. For short buildings there was no doubt more adequate provision in the C.M. Act 1951, but with the change of time, some modification were found essential.

The building by-laws of the Corporation, by and large, are based on the original Act of 1889 and amended slightly in the wake of 1923 and 1951 Calcutta Municipal Acts. The last amendments to the building by-laws were made in 1964.

An expert committee was set up by the Government of West Bengal for amendment to the existing building regulations as in Schedule XVI of the C.M. Act. It had already given an extensive recommendation on new items and yardsticks for regulating

\* Paper presented under the title 'Building Regulations & Alignments in Calcutta' at a seminar on 'Urban Settlement' at Gopalpur-on-Sea, Orissa on 28 March 1977.

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building activities, particularly for tall buildings. This has been necessitated by the recent experience in our country and abroad in fire fighting, flow of traffic, safety, hygiene, urban development etc. The recommendations were accepted by the Corporation on 19 February 1975 and sent to the Government for necessary legislation.

As it was known that any comprehensive legislation would take time, we in the Corporation had found it expedient to move in an ad-hoc manner to control the construction of tall buildings. A Tall Building Committee had therefore been set up earlier on 21 August 1974 under a notification by the Municipal Services Department to advise the Corporation on proposals for tall buildings received from time to time. The Committee has as Chairman the Deputy Director General of the Indian Standards Institution, Government of India, and as members the Chief Government Architect, the Director of Fire Services, the Director of Planning, CMDA and the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) from the West Bengal Government and the Deputy Commissioner (Building) and the City Architect on behalf of the Corporation. It had then been framing its recommendations in line with the draft regulations submitted to the Government. Such recommendations, being reasonable and sound in the present circumstances, have been of great help to the Corporation in giving sanction to new buildings.

The Committee goes into cases for building plans for tall buildings which are defined as a building 60 ft. or more in height or any building which has more than about 4000 sq.ft. of covered ground space. The jurisdiction of the Committee is advisory and the basic responsibility for approving or rejecting the building plans lies with the Corporation.

### **Ordinance on Building & Alignment**

The Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Ordinance 1977 came into effect from the 22nd January. Apart from two sections of the ordinance dealing with street alignment and provision for larger circulation area in the city, all others relate to the amendment of the schedule in respect of constructions in the city area. People of Calcutta are perhaps aware that the law in respect of building sites and the execution of building work is mainly in Schedule XVI of the Calcutta Municipal Act. In the ordinance this schedule has under-gone a revolutionary change. To be sure, there are some changes under sections 378 to 380 of the Calcutta Municipal Act replacing licensed building surveyors by licensed building architects for processing the building cases

LINE UP & BUILD

with the Corporation. All the remaining provisions relate to Schedule XVI.

Parts I to VII of the old Schedule have now been substituted by parts I to IV, parts VIII and IX of the old Schedule are retained and part X thereof has been omitted. If we make a comparative study of the old and new provisions we may say that old part I corresponds to the new part I, both having two rules and substantially being the same, old part II with six rules only have now been expanded into new part II with 34 rules, and old part III with 13 rules have also been recast to a great extent into new part III with 11 rules. Old parts IV to VI now go out and old part VII corresponds to the new part IV. Some idea of the re-structuring of the law may be had from the following comparative table :

Old		New	
Part I	Building sites.	Part I	Building sites.
Part II	Buildings generally.	Part II	Buildings generally.
Part III	Masonry buildings generally.	Part III	Masonry and frame buildings generally.
Part IV	Dwelling houses and other domestic buildings.		
Part V	Buildings of the Warehouse class.		
Part VI	Public buildings.		
Part VII	Application for permission to erect new buildings (other than huts).	Part IV	Application for permission to erect new buildings.
Part VIII	Huts.		Remains.
Part IX	Application for permission to erect new buildings which are huts.		Remains.
Part X	Application of rules in this schedule to alterations and additions of buildings.		Omitted.

There are several features of the Ordinance which are large improvements on the existing situation and will go a long way

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in correctly guiding and strengthening the building activities. The introduction of licensed building architects in place of licensed building surveyors will lead to better planning and design of buildings. Building completion certificates are now to be submitted by licensed building architects (L.B.A.) who are indirectly responsible for the construction of the structure as well as the use of standard building materials and also for any deviation from the sanctioned plan for a building.

There has been the introduction of a new concept viz floor area ratio (F.A.R.) to control the total floor area at each building site. Another great change is the reliance placed on the "National Building Code," and competent architects. All building materials as well as construction of all structures are required to be done now as per standards specified in the National Building Code.

There will be more control now over the growth of multi-storied buildings in the city. There is the provision of larger and more evenly distributed open space around a building, particularly for one in the category of tall buildings i.e. exceeding 18 metres (60 ft.) in height. The provision for front-yard, back-yard and side open spaces for buildings of different heights is shown below in a summary manner:

Height of the building	Front and side space	Back space at the narrowest part
Below 10m (32'10")	1.2m (4 ft)	2m (6'7"), averaging 3m (9'10")
10 to 13.5m (44 ft)	—do—	3m
13.5 to 18m	1.2m in front & 1.8m (6 ft) on sides	3m, complying with 60° back angle
18 to 36m (120 ft)	3.5m (11½ ft)	7m (23 ft), as above
Above 36m	1/10th height	10m (32'10"), as above

From the view-point of health and hygiene, the century-old provision of building upto boundaries (i.e. attachment against adjoining owners' premises) has been deleted. There is now concession given in the case of a staircase room of a building up to a height of 2.5 metres inasmuch as it will not be taken into account while considering the street angle, and provision made for proper ventilation of inhabited rooms.



### SWUNG ITS TRUNK IN THE SKY

Tagore referred to the Ochterlony Monument as 'an elephant in must' which 'swung its trunk lustily in the sky'. The 158 feet tall monument was erected on the maidan in the memory of Sir David Ochterlony (1758-1825), the architect of British victory in the Nepal Wars (1814-15). It was a poetic justice to rename it as Shaheed Minar in 1967 in honour of our martyrs in freedom struggle.

In the picture overleaf the swinging of the trunk is by the tallest building in Calcutta recently put up on Chowringhee (vide Miss Calcutta?). Mahatma Gandhi's statue, as caught in the camara in August 1976, seems to stride towards the newer shape of the city. The bronze statue was by the master-sculptor Devi Prasad Roy Chaudhuri and put up in the island opposite Park Street on 30 November 1958. The statue had however, to be shifted recently to the north, on the junction of Dufferin Road and Guru Nanak Sarani, because of the diggings for the tube railway.

As urbanisation grows, homes and highways grab larger and larger bits of the countryside and open areas. As megalopolis arrives, green spaces disappear. In the circumstances, a congested city has to opt for highrise buildings and, instead of a slice of the sky for each, the co-occupiers have to share it. If it leads to closer contacts and some common activities among the inhabitants, should we reach Gandhiji's ideal of the self-contained village unit?

## LINE UP & BUILD

### Floor Area Ratio

The new parameter of floor area ratio will be very useful for inherent comfort, for environmental improvement and generally for better amenities to the inmates of all buildings. FAR has got now legal status in the Calcutta Municipal Act, and we visualise that it will be universally accepted as the most effective instrument for the curtailment of occupancy load in buildings, specially from the view-points of fire protection, density, parking facilities, traffic load and the services available. FAR is defined as the summation of space in all the floors in a building divided by the area of the site,

$$\text{i.e. FAR} = \frac{\text{Total floor space}}{\text{Area of the site}}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Hence, total floor space as sanctionable} \\ = \text{Area of the site} \times \text{FAR} \end{aligned}$$

In the regulation the maximum FAR permissible is 4.5 for buildings on streets of 36 metre width and above. For public buildings, viz educational institutions, hospitals and hotels with sleeping accomodation as well as places of public assembly, the corresponding maximum is 4.00 while for warehouses in declared locality 3.50. It is felt by many that the ratio should have some flexibility and scope for exception in certain areas and for special purposes. The Bombay Municipal Corporation which adopted the concept of FAR about nine years ago has reportedly been giving relaxation to commercial zone buildings set up in high value areas. On the other hand the concept is becoming firmer now and the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, which recently adopted the same, has reportedly kept FAR for the Connaught Circus area as low as 2.3. By such comparison we may not come readily to any specific solution, but we have to have regard to the realities of the situation.

The maximum FAR of 4.5 mentioned above is for plots fronting streets not less than 36 meters (120 ft.) in width. When the Tall Building Committee first started functioning it recommended FAR up to 6 to make the idea acceptable to builders, but after the first two months or so it has been insisting on 4.5. The high value of FAR sanctioned to buildings, quite often above 10, should now be a matter of the past and in the interest of the city, the civic authority has to enforce the much lower FARs as per the amendment.

### More about New Building Rules

A very welcome feature of the Ordinance is the new rule 56 in

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

part IV which says that "if within the period prescribed under rule 55 (i.e. two months) the Commissioner has neither granted nor refused to grant permission to execute any work, the applicant may refer the matter to the State Government, and the State Government may ... direct the Corporation either to grant or refuse to grant the permission within a specified time and also to take steps against the officer or employee of the Corporation ... found responsible for the delay ..." This is a distinct improvement over the old rule 56 both from the Corporation's point of view and that of the public.

Under the old rule a petitioner could sometime catch the Corporation on the wrong foot in the processing of a case for building sanction if it took the Corporation more than a month in making the first communication. A petitioner could claim that the plans should be deemed to be sanctioned under rule 56 of Schedule XVI of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951, which ran as follows:

"If within the period prescribed by rule 55, the Commissioner has neither granted nor refused to grant the permission to execute any work, such permission shall be deemed to have been granted; and the applicant may proceed to execute the work, but not so as to contravene any of the provisions of the Act or of any rules or by-laws made thereunder."

The old rule 55 prescribed a period of one month after the receipt of any application or of any information or documents or further opinion or documents required under the Schedule. According to a court judgement "the rule was never intended to cover plans which were clearly in contravention of the Act or the by-laws. If it transpires that his (the person asking permission to build) plan is contrary to the Act or contrary to the by-laws, the implied permission will not save him". The Corporation has nevertheless been put to an awkward position many times, and illegal constructions proceeded with. Similarly in the name of scrutiny many builders suffered unnecessarily in the hands of the Corporation.

There are certain demerits in the new regulation. No provision has been made for the renewal of sanctioned plans. For want of such a provision, a building plan once sanctioned will deem to be sanctioned for an indefinite period, as there is no specific period mentioned for the validity. Previously it was for five years which was renewable by another five years. There is also no scope for the revocation of a building beyond the sanctioned plan in case of material misrepresentation.

Certain disadvantages for small plot holders might also be noted

and perhaps taken up for redress when we get settled with the new procedure. There is provision for front open space in case of any building to be constructed in an area where a substantial number of buildings have not been constructed. By this provision the small plot holders will be in a disadvantageous position, because of the small area of their plots. No provision has also been made for the construction of any privy block up to 40 sq.ft. area at the back of the building, a benefit available under the old provision. This should not however be looked upon as the denial of an advantage, for the detachment of privies from the main building blocks should not be necessary with the abolition of service latrines.

The building rules as have been promulgated now have been worked out after studying the building by-laws operating in Delhi, Bombay and Madras and the expert views of the I.S.I. as contained in the National Building Code. It appears that while the proposed building rules will take care of structural and architectural aspects, they will not generally have any relation to land use planning and other requirements of the area. Even after this amendment to the building rules, the following aspects remain ignored :

- (i) There being no land use or zonal plan in the city, the proposed rules cannot deal with the uses of the buildings or in which area tall buildings can come up.
- (ii) The amended rules have no relationship with the level of service. In other words, whether the water mains, sewer lines etc. are capable of serving the proposed building or is not taken into account.
- (iii) The rules have no connection with traffic characteristics. For instance, in one particular street several high rise buildings may come up contiguous to one another with serious implications for traffic.
- (iv) The rules have no connection with intersection point either. Tall buildings can come up even at street junctions with grave consequences for public safety.
- (v) The rules have no provision for collection and disposal of refuse which such high rise buildings generate.
- (vi) The rules will not provide for adequate architectural facade control.

#### **Street Alignments**

The genesis of the Calcutta road system is an outgrowth of the winding paths and alleys which are characteristic of village settlements. In recent times there has been no planned approach

for the improvement of the roads of the city. Of the principal cities in India, Calcutta is the most unfortunate, having only six percent of the built up space available for roads, whereas Bombay has 16 percent and Delhi 20 percent; Cities in western countries reportedly enjoy as much as 30 percent for roads. There are pockets in the Calcutta metropolitan area which are important economically, but rather difficult of access for industrial or commercial traffic. For the improvement of the roads in Calcutta the concerned authorities are the Corporation of Calcutta and the Calcutta Improvement Trust, but due to paucity of funds the Corporation was unable to do much for the roads. The Calcutta Municipal Act itself posed a problem, for it had no provision for raising taxes exclusively for roads, not to constitute a separate and captive fund therefor.

As per definition of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 "building line is the line which is in rear of the street alignment and up to which the main wall of a building on a land abutting on a street or projected public street may lawfully extend". Street-alignment again "means the line dividing the land comprised in and forming part of the street from the adjoining land". From the definition it is obvious that the law makers not only thought about the development of Calcutta for the time being but also for the future. Curiously however, in empowering the Corporation in this behalf, the legislation hardly encouraged appropriate and practical measures for the improvement of the city's circulation system. To substantiate the above let us have a look into some sections of the C.M. Act, 1951.

Under Section 356 the Corporation has been empowered to prescribe building lines and street alignments for public streets. Proviso to Sub-section (1) however states that "no building-line shall ordinarily be prescribed for any street laid out and made before the commencement of the Act." Such a provision of the Act bars the Corporation from prescribing the building line for roads brought into existence before 1923. It is a well known fact that most of the major roads of Calcutta were constructed before 1923. Due to the partition of India, particularly Bengal, and the sudden increase of population in the city and the neighbouring municipalities, the existing roads gradually became insufficient to take up the traffic volume. But as the Corporation had practically no power for prescribing building lines which are absolutely necessary for the future development of a city nothing much could be done. According to sub-section (4) of Section 356 again, "a building line shall not be prescribed so as to extend further back than the main front wall of any building (other than a boundary wall) abutting on the street at its widest part." This provision restricts the width of the building line.

## LINE UP & BUILD

Under Section 357 the power to cancel a building line or a street alignment has been given to the Corporation, and generally an alignment is to remain in force for 25 years from the date of its prescription, i.e. the date of the publication of a notice in the Calcutta Gazette. Due to the paucity of funds as stated earlier and other administrative difficulties, it is not always possible for the Corporation to complete the acquisition proceedings within the period of 25 years. Of course the Corporation may prescribe any alignment after its cancellation, but during the period in which the alignment remains cancelled, the rate payers get their building plans sanctioned, thus making it almost impossible for the civic body to complete the acquisitions. Further the Corporation has no power to modify, revise or cancel any alignment prescribed by it.

Regarding powers of acquisition, in most of the cases the Corporation has to acquire land and structures for street alignments through the Land Acquisition Collector. It is experienced that such proceedings by the L.A. Collector are long drawn out and take an indefinite period for completion. All these aspects were regularly brought to the notice of the Government but only recently in 1976 a high powered committee of officials from the Corporation, CMDA, CIT and Police was asked to go into them.

### More Circulation Space

On 27.5.76 and 11.6.76, the Committee examined the matter in depth, expressed its views in favour of amendments to certain Sections of the Act and formed an alignment sub-committee for the selection of roads and streets requiring immediate attention. As stated above, it would be understood that a street alignment relates to the present development, of roads whereas a building line relates to the future development. While selecting such roads for development the following factors were considered by the sub-committee :

- (a) movements of future traffic flow—six lane traffic requires 72 ft. (24 metre) wide carriageway ;
- (b) the footpath for main roads in built up areas should be about 36 feet (11 metre) wide ;
- (c) the central median should be atleast four feet (about 1.2 metre wide) ;
- (d) adequate space for car parking, bus stop etc. is also necessary by way of recess in the footpath.

In view of the above the sub-committee recommended that (a) for the main roads in future, street alignments should have a minimum width of 50 metres and the building line should be fixed at least five metres from the street alignment on each side

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

and (b) for semi-main roads the street alignment will have a width of 30 metres and the building line should have five metres on each side of the street alignment.

Such groups of existing roads were taken into account as run from North to South e.g. Bhupendra Bose Avenue—Chittaranjan Avenue—Jawaharlal Nehru Road—Asutosh Mookerjee Road—Shyama Prasad Mookerjee Road—Deshpran Sharmal Road. In this category two other continuous road alignments running East to West have also been taken up.

In the next category of roads to be taken into account are roads which run from Central Calcutta to the South, such as Old Ballygunge Road—Syed Amir Ali Avenue—Gariahat Road—Raja Subodh Mulick Road—Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road; similarly from North to Central Calcutta like Rabindra Sarani—Bentinck Street. In another category, several important roads have been considered from Central, North and South Calcutta, for example Lenin Sarani, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Dum Dum Road, Beadon Street, Bengachia Road, Harish Mukherjee Road, Rash Behari Avenue, Hazra Road, Tollygunge Circular Road etc. Certain roads which run from east to west like Ultadanga Main Road—Aurobindo Sarani—Manicktola Main Road have also been taken into account. It is expected that two to three hundred such street alignments can be prescribed in phases, in course of the next four years. Unless the width of important roads is enlarged fast, the city can no longer bear the stress and strain of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

As already mentioned the Government of West Bengal on 22.1.77 promulgated the Calcutta Municipal (Amendment) Ordinance, 1977, inter alia in respect of Sections 356 and 357 of the C.M. Act, 1951. According to this, the proviso to Sub-section (1) of Section 356 has been omitted. Building lines can now be made for streets in existence as per 1951 Act, that is to say as in 1923. Sub-section (4) *ibid* has also been omitted. A building line can therefore be prescribed so as to enter further back than the main front wall of a building abutting on the street. For Section 357 there is a major change. Previously a building line or street alignment could be cancelled ten years after the prescription and was bound to be cancelled after 25 years. In the new section the Corporation is empowered to revise any building line or street alignment, of course, after giving public notice and considering all objections received against any such proposal.

For the orderly growth of a city as a place to live and work, the role of street alignments cannot be overemphasised. Sections 356 to 363 of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 afford power to the

## LINE UP & BUILD

Corporation to prescribe either a road alignment or a building line or both, restraining and restricting construction of buildings, structures etc. by the owner of the land beyond the limit of the prescribed line. In the positive aspect of such a prescription, the Corporation can widen the existing roads by the acquisition or purchase of land from an owner which falls within the alignment line. But due to financial handicaps, the Corporation could take very little advantage of it. In the negative aspect of the prescription, a land owner is restrained from constructing any structure beyond that line and when the existing building or structure is demolished or the owner proposes any new erection, he is forced to shift his building line outside the prescribed limit, and the acquisition of land becomes easier.

It may be added that an Ordinance is a temporary step having a life of only six months. The amendments have therefore to come to the legislature for being made into a pucca Act. We may see that in the process some more development aspects are introduced and lacunae removed. Since the creation of the city of Calcutta, very little has been done for planned improvement. The task which lies ahead is a gigantic one and until and unless an active co-operation from the people and the Government is forthcoming, we may not be equal to it. Streets are the arteries of the city. It is not enough that they are not choked, but with the growing age and the larger load, they should be widened for a free and life-giving flow.

### Postscript

The Ordinance of January 1977 was substituted by an amendment Act of 27 April 1977, removing some difficulties. In the Ordinance there was no provision for renewing a building permission which was to be valid for five years. Now, in line with the old regulation, renewal can be made upto five years. In the Ordinance the professional right of hundreds of licensed building surveyors, who were generally licenciates in architecture or engineering, were taken away, for they were to be totally substituted by licensed building architects or graduates in architecture to be licensed by the Corporation. The right of L.B.Ss has been restored by the Act with some limitation. They will now be permitted to submit building plans and execute works for short buildings, that is to say upto the height of 13.5 metres. Beyond this the work will enter into the domain of L.B.As.

The new provision for open space around a building is found to operate harshly against the existing ones, particularly those in the old areas of the town. Government is now examining whether for repairs and renovation to such buildings as well as vertical extensions, the old privilege may be continued, if they are less than 18 metres in height. This will mainly benefit the middle-class house-owners who have also pressed for the privilege of being considered for sanction under the old rules for applications submitted before the Ordinance i.e. upto 22 January 1977. If such consideration is ultimately shown to the existing owners of houses it will no doubt remove a lot of hardship, but the initial objective of a vigorous renewal of the city's buildings will not be feasible.

## HALDIA QUICKENS CALCUTTA

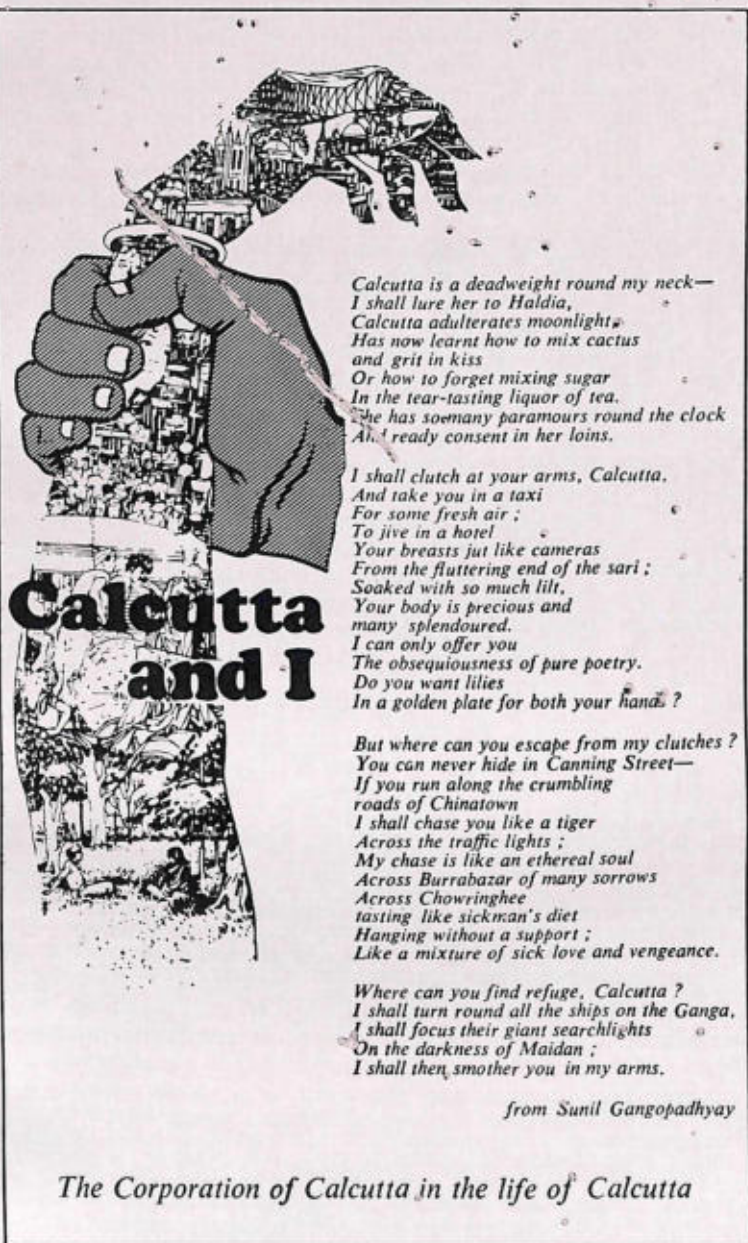
I was the collector and district magistrate of Midnapore from 1961 to 1964—two years of sweet and satisfying memories. Land acquisition for the Haldia Port Project and the Panskura-Durgachak railway line started in my hands. Acquisition was not always a smooth and untroubled affair and I remember several meetings where I assisted the then Land and Land Revenue Minister Shyamadas Bhattacharya. We had to make an impassioned plea on the golden future of Haldia, starting from Tamralipta as the port of exit for Fa-Hien, the spread of commerce and culture from this port and then traversing the ups and downs of Khejuri and Hijlee to come to our thesis of Haldia as the re-incarnation of Tamralipta.

By the Haldia Project we mean not only the establishment of the subsidiary port at the hands of the Calcutta Port Trust, but also the erection and commissioning of the Government of India undertakings, viz the oil refinery and the fertiliser plant which are in an advanced stage, as also others like petro-chemical complex and ship-building which are reasonable to establish there; and along with these State Government and private enterprises which could be ancillary and downstream units.

To go back to Port Tamralipta of Fa-Hien. In the reign of Chandragupta Vikramaditya, 405-11 A.D. on his way back from Nalanda, Fa-Hien set sail from Tamralipta to Ceylon. In 640 A.D. Hiuen-Tsang, the other Chinese scholar came again to Tan-mo-liti but did not embark on a ship to Srilanka because of cyclonic weather. Tamralipta was the focal point for Kalinga in the south, Magadh-Rajgir on the north and Sumha-Bengal in the central region. Unfortunately with the silting of the Rupanarayan, commerce and transportation got dried up and by 1000 A.D. Tamralipta faded out.

Several hundred years later appeared Hijli-Khejuri on the west bank of the Rasulpur. (Note Ka<sup>l</sup>alkundala's question: 'Traveller, have you lost the way?') In the beginning of the 16th century the Pathan chieftains came into the scene; Hussein Shah, Taj Khan Masnad-i-Ala of Midnapore and Suleman Karrani of Orissa were equal opponents of the mighty Moghuls. Hijli became an entrepot, throbbing with life, but ushered the Portuguese and in association the Arakanese pirates. The English and the Dutch

\* Amrita Bazar Patrika, 14 April 1977.



# Calcutta and I

*Calcutta is a deadweight round my neck—  
I shall lure her to Haldia,  
Calcutta adulterates moonlight,  
Has now learnt how to mix cactus  
and grit in kiss  
Or how to forget mixing sugar  
In the tear-tasting liquor of tea.  
She has so many paramours round the clock  
Ah! ready consent in her loins.*

*I shall clutch at your arms, Calcutta,  
And take you in a taxi  
For some fresh air ;  
To jive in a hotel  
Your breasts jut like cameras  
From the fluttering end of the sari ;  
Soaked with so much lilt,  
Your body is precious and  
many splendoured.  
I can only offer you  
The obsequiousness of pure poetry.  
Do you want lilies  
In a golden plate for both your hands ?*

*But where can you escape from my clutches ?  
You can never hide in Canning Street—  
If you run along the crumbling  
roads of Chinatown  
I shall chase you like a tiger  
Across the traffic lights ;  
My chase is like an ethereal soul  
Across Burrabazar of many sorrows  
Across Chowringhee  
tasting like sick man's diet  
Hanging without a support ;  
Like a mixture of sick love and vengeance.*

*Where can you find refuge, Calcutta ?  
I shall turn round all the ships on the Ganga,  
I shall focus their giant searchlights  
On the darkness of Maidan ;  
I shall then smother you in my arms.*

*from Sunil Gangopadhyay*

*The Corporation of Calcutta in the life of Calcutta*

SUNIL GANGOPADHYAY (1934- )

Sunil was born at Maijpara in Faridpur district (now Bangladesh). Son of a school teacher of Calcutta, his entire education upto M.A. was in the city. He is an assistant editor of Ananda Bazar Patrika and editor of Krittibas, a literary quarterly. Sunil has 80 published works to his credit, which include novels, poems, essays, short stories and juvenile literature. For belle lettre type writings he finds pennames handy: Neel Lohit, Neel Upadhyay and Sanatan Pathak. Sunil started as a poet and gradually shifted to prose which is now his major vehicle of expression.

The poem overleaf was first published in a now-defunct monthly Uttar Taranga in 1964, having been written the same winter. 'I was in an angry mood that foggy morning', reminisced the poet, 'Why can't Calcutta better herself? It was from this deep love for the city that I worked myself into a frenzy'. The monthly had to reprint the poem by popular demand after a couple of months. It was then included in his collection of poems *Ami Ki Rakam Bhabhe Benche Achhi* (1964).

drove them out in the middle of the 17th century. Hijli died as a port before Job Charnock set sail from there in 1690 and cast anchor at Sutanatee-Calcutta. In 1912 there was a talk of partitioning Midnapore and making Hijli the headquarters of the southern half. But the proposal was cancelled as the First World War broke out. To salute history the new tracts developed near Kharagpur was named Hijli, vide Hijli Detention Camp, then turned into IIT and the forest range of Hijli. But the real successor of Hijli and Tatalipta is riverine—the new port of Haldia.

Haldia is being developed today as a subsidiary and satellite to the Calcutta port. It is a dire necessity for the survival of the Calcutta port system. In olden days the tortuous route of 125 nautical miles from sand-heads including 80 miles from Sagar island up the river Hooghly or Bhagirathi was a manageable affair, for bulk carriers were not in vogue then and a comparatively shallow draft was all right. The deterioration of the riverine approach, particularly between the Hooghly Point and Calcutta, became conspicuous after the Second World War. With the steady siltation of the river, bore tides increased in severity and frequency, thus reducing the Port's effective working capacity by one-fifth. It was to remedy this situation that the search was on for a counter-magnet to Calcutta Port with rail, road and expansion facilities. Ultimately Haldia on the right bank of the Hooghly at its junction with the Haldi river, 56 nautical miles downstream of Calcutta was chosen.

The work on the Dock Project started in early sixties. In the first phase there are one oil jetty, two fully mechanised berths for loading iron ore and coal, a fertiliser berth for mechanical discharge of rock phosphate, potash and sulphur and two general cargo berths. The modern deep-water dock system at Haldia will have an ultimate draft of 40 feet, provide access to ships of the 80,000 dwt class and cater to the needs of modern bulk carriers and oil tankers upto 920 feet in length. The oil jetty is in commission since 1968 and connected by a pipe-line with the oil refinery at Barauni. The iron ore berth is equipped to load both lumps and pellets. The two general cargo berths have each a quay, 730 ft. long and 120 ft. wide with a back-up area of 60 acres, and with latest and powerful cranes are equipped for handling container traffic.

In addition there are a finger jetty and a container marshalling yard. The former is for the transfer of salt and similar bulk cargo from ships to barges or other shore installations at the rate of about 2500 tonnes a day. The latter is equipped with two high-speed, rail-mounted cranes capable of serving both rail and road vehicles and will provide storage for 1500 containers a day. A

## HALDIA QUICKENS CALCUTTA

single track railway line connecting Haldia with Panskura on the Howrah-Kharagpur section of the South Eastern Railway has been commissioned and electrified. Haldia has been linked to the Calcutta-Bombay National Highway (NH 6) by a road to Mecheda (NH 41). The portion on which NH 41 falls is common for Calcutta-Madras (NH 5) route too.

In the Haldia Dock project, care has been taken to provide land in specially earmarked areas for industries, and also to arrange for infra-structure e.g. water, power and communications. The Government of India has completed the construction of the oil refinery with a capacity of 2.5 million tonnes per annum. Work is also on for setting up a fertiliser plant under the Fertiliser Corporation of India. For these two plants 1000 acres have been made available. In the next phase a petrochemical complex is a must in the region for the production of consumer articles like man-made fibres, synthetic rubber, chemicals, dyes etc. The Government of India has set up a committee to decide on the location of a ship-building and ship repairing yard at Haldia and we hope that a modern ship-yard there will be in the fitness of things.

Private enterprise has shown interest in setting up medium and small scale industries around the giants at Haldia. For the location of such industries 1300 acres have been kept apart. The Chambers of Commerce have made a move to get a 'free trade zone' at Haldia for industries which can draw on imported raw materials and export finished goods to Africa, Middle East and South East Asia. Before one goes on to that aspect it is essential that the facilities for medium industries are fully utilised and the units go on stream.

Progress on this front is not too encouraging. The West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation which is to act as the agent and catalyst and the West Bengal Industrial Infra-structure Development Corporation which is to give land allotment have not been able to do much. WBIDC was given 100 acres of land by the Calcutta Port Trust for inducing medium industries. From the southern end of the area it gave possession of 35 acres of land to M/s. Eureka Chemicals and Hindusthan Development Corporation in August 1973. Both are reported to have gone into production at the end of last year, the former producing carbon black and the latter calcinated coal.

The handling of land and the arrangement of water, power etc. have since devolved on WBIDC. It gave a 15 acre plot to M/s. Metro-Arc and is currently taking steps for the allotment of the balance 50 acres. The first phase of water supply scheme is reported to have been completed by WBIDC and the second

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phase is to be taken up soon. It has since been given possession of 188 acres from Durgachak Road to Durgachak Railway Station for the development of Haldia Urban Complex in the first phase. The Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization has started land use survey for another 250 acres for the second phase of the complex.

Let me conclude on a nostalgic and hopeful note. Before I stepped into my teens, there was a homely football group in our locality which played with a tennis ball. This suited me fine, for the first time I ventured out to play in a standard ground with a standard ball, my chest unfortunately lay on the ball's swift path and what appeared to me like a peal of thunder and the strike of lightening blacked out for me the green of the field and the blue of the sky. For several years the front lawn of our house was my football ground. There was however one difficulty with the soft and light ball. Very often it used to disappear in the ditch or the hedge around and it was a job, in the failing light, to locate it. My playmates used to cry in unison, a translated version of which would be like this: 'The ball is lost/Must find it at all cost/The ball's name is Haldi/It must come out jaldi'. And it worked. After all the serious and sustained efforts we still feel that Haldia our new port is not coming out so quickly. We therefore put all our hope and faith in its quicker commissioning and stabilisation, so that it can quicken Calcutta; it can restore natural life and vigour to this port which in its turn can fully stimulate this great city.

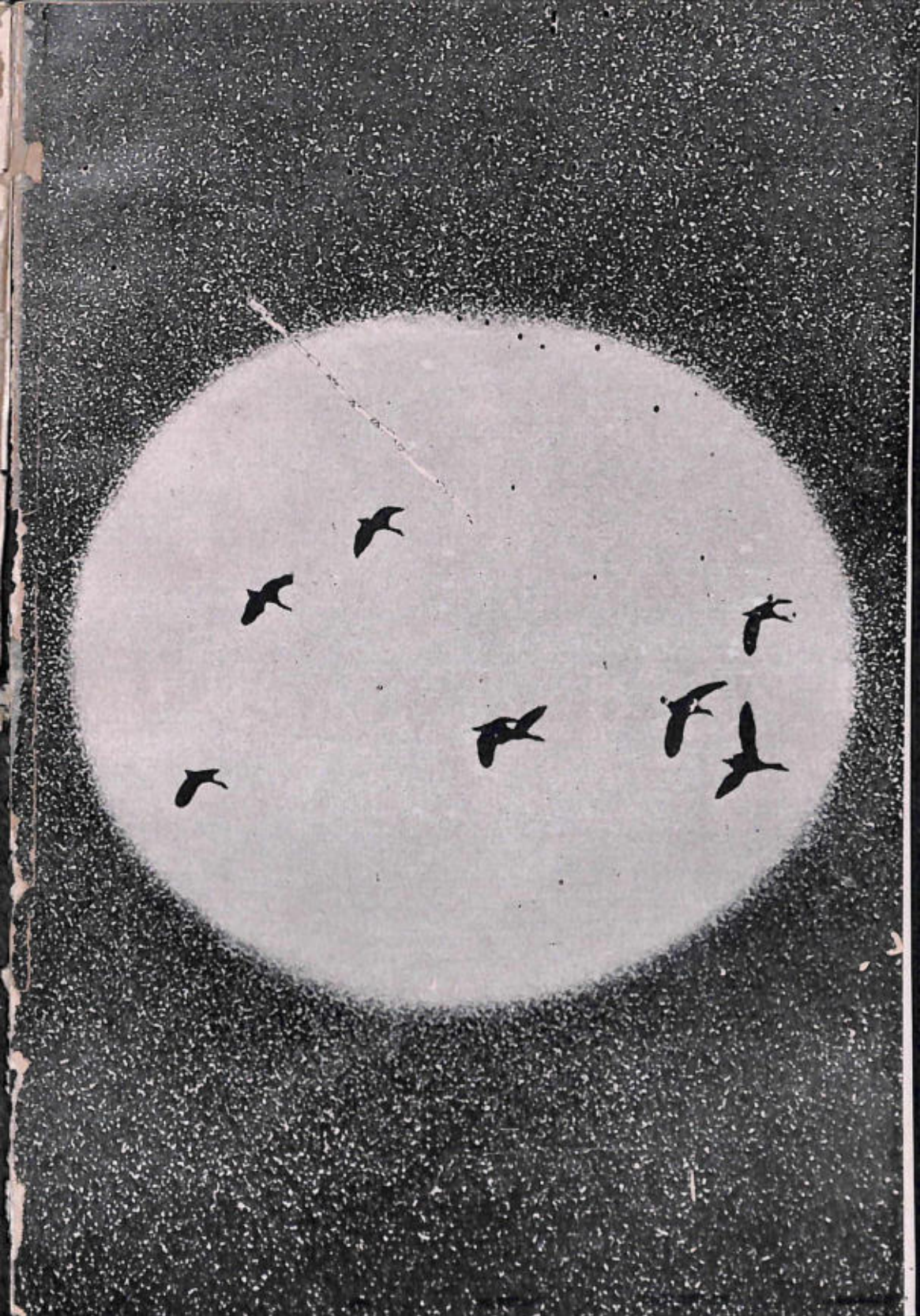
## KEEP YOUR CITY CLEAN

A city is its air, water and the good earth. To maintain the cleanliness of the city one should take care of all its components. For air there are certain laws and some newer measures in the offing. Many are not aware that the Smoke Nuisance Commission which looks after the purity of air and is to take measures against the fouling of the atmosphere by chimneys and vehicles has been working from 1905 under the Bengal Smoke Nuisance Act at the instance of Lord Curzon. But it is no longer found adequate and there might be a new law to constitute a Board for the control of air pollution, in the analogy of boards to oversee the cleanliness of water. On 23 March 1974 the Government of India brought about a comprehensive legislation called Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act. It envisaged the setting up of a Central and State Boards for a nation wide programme for the prevention, control and abatement of water pollution. The Central Board has been functioning accordingly. The West Bengal Board was formed in September 1974, but it is still to get into stride because the other water courses here (including the Tolly's Nullah which we revere as Adiganga) are subjected to a lot of maltreatment by way of dumping of untreated sewage, nightsoil and improperly treated effluents from factories.

Although for these measures there are other bodies, the Corporation of Calcutta is also concerned. It is represented in the Smoke Nuisance Commission. In the Water Board, our Chief Engineer is an invitee, although not a formal member. The Corporation, apart from air and water is concerned in a large way with the good earth, i.e. the roads, roadside lands, drainage, sewerage, and, last but not the least, the solid wastes. It is in effective and timely handling of the matters thrown up by the city life that we take care of the city and its atmosphere. In that respect I should say that conservancy or the matter of solid waste disposal is one of the largest prominence, not because it is the most important or difficult, but because it is so conspicuous. What the city generates in solid wastes, daily has preferably to be taken away in a day.

The service first to be affected in any conflict or disturbance is garbage removal. The efficacy of the civic body's functioning is likewise judged, mainly by the degree of removal of garbage

\* Published under the title 'Only Citizens can Ensure Cleanliness of a City' in Amrita Bazar Patrika, 5 July 1977.



#### CALCUTTA ADULTERATES MOONLIGHT

The autumnal full moon following Durgapuja is known as Kojagari Purnima when Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth is worshipped. She is supposed to take a round of the earth late at night and bless the worshippers who are still awake—ko jagarteetibhashineeh. The tradition of keeping awake is stronger in Upper India where it is known as Sharad Purnima. On this night one may observe the Marwari families gathering at Victoria Memorial and put out platefuls of kheer or condensed milk in the moon as long as possible. The idea is that moonlight converts milk into nectar, partaking which the family is blessed with health and happiness.

The search for health and wealth is today a matter of ecology and a fight against pollution, whether of air, water or environment. During the past centuries pollution had been small and could be absorbed within the cycles of nature. Today air gets polluted with overcrowding by people, larger energy consumption and the cutting down of trees. Water gets polluted by industrial effluents, city sewage and the demand for fresh water overtaking nature's ability to supply it. Our surroundings are polluted by garbage, solid wastes and generally by the discard of our consumption outstripping the customary methods of disposal.

The first step against air pollution was taken in this city by framing the Bengal Smoke Nuisance Act, 1905. It was done by Lord Curzon who had found archaeological structures and old historical buildings being soiled and weathered by smoking chimneys, the coal-fired ships and thousands of open air ovens. The Smoke Nuisance Commission have since then been working for the prevention of air pollution in Calcutta, Howrah and industrial suburbs, totalling 100 sq miles. On the water front Central and State Boards for Control and Prevention of Water Pollution have been formed in 1974.

## KEEP YOUR CITY CLEAN

from the large open vats on roads. This reminds me of an interesting reaction. In 1974 we issued a circular that the correct and statutory name of this civic body is 'The Corporation of Calcutta' and not 'Corporation of Calcutta' and that the correct name should be used in official communications, advertisements, contracts etc. A newspaper brought out a cartoon 'The change' with acuity, featuring two dustbins equally overflowing with garbage.

### SMILE A DAY



Amrita Bazar Patrika,  
dated 12 December 1974.

#### The change!

The Corporation services for the collection and disposal of domestic and trade wastes can be considered as three separate functions. The first is sweeping and transport, by hand, of wastes from about 1000 kilometres of streets to about 600 collecting points. The second is the transfer of wastes from collecting points to refuse dumps by heavy motor vehicles. The third is the operation of dumps or dumping grounds. An additional function requires to be mentioned too. It is the collection of night soil from over 30,000 pail closets serving a population of about 1,75,000. These services have to be supported by garages and workshop for the control and maintenance of a large fleet of road vehicles and some earth-moving plants. Now in handling these affairs, it has been brought to the fore that our conservancy directorate has to be put in a firm position and further strengthened.

We can say that it has been largely achieved. Previously the

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

matter of solid wastes disposal was a part of the Engineering department. The District Engineer, among his multifarious duties, used to supervise and control the people engaged in garbage collection and disposal. Now we have a Special Deputy Commissioner in charge of conservancy matters and under him several Deputy Directors and District Conservancy Officers. Instead of the four districts for engineering purposes, we have seven for the handling of conservancy. In other words, the three added areas or sub-districts of Cossipore, Maniktala and Tollygunge have been given the status of districts. For more intensive work, it is further proposed to increase the total number from seven to eleven conservancy districts. With the preliminary object of separating the conservancy wing being completed, we have to give it some teeth to operate properly, as we discussed with the World Bank under the aegis of CMDA in February-March 1977.

A proper implementation of the advice that we got for solid waste disposal would enable the conservancy directorate to gain in strength. For the cleansing of streets and the concentration of wastes at collecting points, the most important element is the construction of 80 ward depots. Calcutta has got one hundred wards, but for conservancy matters there is no ward-wise local point from where to operate administratively or functionally. So out of hundred wards in the present programme, 80 ward depots will be constructed for the mastering and welfare of about 6,500 sweepers and certain other workers and for the parking of their hand-carts, with which they collect the sweepings of the lanes and back-spaces and bring them on to the larger or communal collection points called vats. Another measure would be the construction of 400 masonry enclosures for vats in place of open heaps on the street. There will also be augmentation of portable containers or hand carts. Against the 3,000 or so we should ultimately have 8,000 hand carts many of which would be of improved design and facilitate the operation.

We have also a scheme to renovate the pail depots, that is the points where the collected night soil is brought in tankers and discharged down the gutter. There will be three such new discharge points, while four others would be repaired and given adequate provision for water. This would be a great benefit to the newer or added areas in the east abounding in unsewered pockets. For general cleanliness of the locality, a proper up-keep of the vehicles, plants and equipment is needed which in turn depends on prompt and adequate facility in workshops and garages. All these have been given attention in the programme we have in hand with the assistance from CMDA, Government and the World Bank.

The handling of solid wastes is not merely the hall-mark of muni-

## KEEP YOUR CITY CLEAN

cipal efficiency but also of the aesthetics and cleanliness of the people. In the strictest discipline of Japan, one will notice litter bins even on the slopes of the Fujiyama or Fujisan as the Japanese call the mountain reverentially. No one throws even a cigarette end or a toffee-wrapper on the grass. In our country dust bins placed in respectable localities or busy commercial districts are removed overnight. The carmakers dutifully put ash-trays on the back seats, but we are smug to make them sung underneath the cushion cover and flick the cigarette directly on to the road. In any campaign for the betterment of cities in our country we have therefore to cry hoarse: 'We have a beautiful city. Let's keep it clean'. It is precisely what greeted me last year at Hyderabad with the Char Minar forming the background of the poster. The pamphlet "Towards a Cleaner City" which I got from the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad opened with the words:

"Hyderabad, the like of which for beauty and cleanliness is not to be found in the whole of India, east, west, south or north" was what Ferishta, the historian of the Mughal era told. Ever since its inception nearly 400 years ago, Hyderabad has been so acclaimed. But the continual growth of industrial activity and population . . . threaten to mar its beauty and environment.'

This is also the concern of older cities like New York and London. The following piece 'London fights a losing war against litterbugs' is presented from a foreign newspaper at the end of 1975 as a matter of guidance, not consolation:

'Already beset with worsening economic problem London . . . is being "steadily immersed in a tide of filth". The condemnation came from Sir Brian Flowers, Chairman of the Royal Commission of Environmental Pollution. Come summer especially, the streets are littered with rubbish discarded . . . by street traders and . . . tourists. The worst areas are in West End, Picadilly Circus, Oxford Street. Receptacles are discarded and streets reduced to a melange of coke tins, bottles, wrappers, bus tickets, picnic remains and newspaper pages.'

The newspaper laments that the Litter Act 1958, although providing penalties of upto £100 for offences like dropping scrap paper and general rubbish, has become a law in name only, for the metropolitan police seem powerless to enforce it. The West Minister Borough which covers rubbish blackspots like Soho and West End was reported to have prosecuted only one litterbug in one year. The punishment: a fine of £2 with £1 costs for throwing down a cigarette pack in a street. No one has however, the newspaper added, been prosecuted under the Civic Amenities Act 1967 designed to punish dumpers of larger articles with fine upto £200 plus three months' prison.

The West Minister Council in the heart of London sweeps up 600 to 700 tons of rubbish per day with the employment of 330 street orderlies pushing barrows and handling brushes and shovels, 300 refuse collectors, 90 drivers and 90 night service

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

cleaners.' These facts and figures should ring a bell in the mind of Calcuttans. At least they did for Frank Flintoff, an ex-Conservancy Chief of London County Council and presently Associate Public Health Engineering Consultant who visited us first in November 1975 on behalf of WHO and then in 1976 and 77 as a member of the World Bank team. In making an appraisal of our urban development project for the 'solid wastes management component' and giving us some solid pieces of advice, he acknowledged the basic soundness of our system and the effective method of brushes and handcarts. He said that Calcutta, like London, could not eliminate the manual operation, but it was time for modernising and strengthening. The measures in hand that we recounted earlier are in line with this approach and as elaborated between the World Bank team and ourselves.

The per capita accumulation of garbage or rubbish is very much on the higher side in our city. Our way of life and an utter 'care-freedom' is responsible for it in a large measure. We have the problem of unlicensed markets which generate rubbish beyond all calculation and at all hours. Then we have our marts for fruit and green vegetables which bring trucks laden with leaves and straws as packaging material but unload them on lanes and shop fronts. Our phalpattis are a source of large nuisance with such rotting materials as are shells of green coconuts and juice extracted sugarcanes for main thoroughfares. In a bid to give special attention to the wholesale centres for marketing we have imposed a special conservancy charge at the rate of Rs. 25 per lorry, Rs. 15 per tempo and Rs. 10 per push cart.

On service stations and petrol pumps having servicing facilities, conservancy tax has been imposed from the 1st April 1977 at the rate of Rs. 50 to 100, according to the volume of work done. For removal of large refuse on request and that of prunings from gardens we have introduced a new service at the rate of Rs. 52.50 per lorry per trip. For marriage and other functions generating sizable refuse we have put a special levy of Rs. 10 for bustees and domestic units and Rs. 100 for pandals and hired houses. For the removal of solid wastes from nursing homes there is now a levy of 25 paise per bed per day.

We contemplate buying a wrecker van for towing away vehicles which would block roads or come to marketing centres at unauthorised hours. Presently lorries arrive and unload at all hours of the day. Controlling time is necessary so that roads are not barricaded. Police are not in a position to help for want of a wrecker. Unlike foreign cities our laws for the infringement of cleanliness rules are in name only. Section 424 of the Calcutta Municipal Act authorizes the Commissioner to direct all rubbish and offensive matters to be kept in receptacles and within

## KEEP YOUR CITY-CLEAN.

prescribed hours. In case of default he can file a case before a Municipal Magistrate, but only for depositing rubbish outside prescribed hours, and the offence is punishable upto a fine of Rs. 10 only! Sadly I remember an advertisement I got issued by the Commissioner in the middle of 1975:

### "Where do you throw Garbage?"

"On the street, where else? You are right. Throughout the working hours, you, your wife, children and servants constantly throw garbage and litter on the street. Your neighbour does the same. So why not you? But have you spared a moment to see what happens to the garbage? The stray dogs, crows, urchins and passing vehicles spread it all around. With a shower it becomes a stinking hell. You naturally blame us since it's our duty to keep the streets clean. In a way you are right, we do not deny our responsibility.

"In all sincerity, have you given us the opportunity of doing our duty? In the Corporation Engineering Manual it is stated that garbage and litter should be thrown at a predetermined place or into the requisite dustbin and vat between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. and again between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. In other words just before the actual cleaning by your staff.

"The same goes for those who while constructing houses or undertaking repair work wantonly litter the street for indefinite periods with building materials causing inconvenience to pedestrians and traffic. According to bye-law of Section 527(17) of the Calcutta Municipal Act, prior permission has to be obtained with an advance payment of a specified sum per sq. metre per day before occupation of a demarcated area.

"In other parts of the world offenders are penalised and there is provision in our Act also: but we believe that you love your city and will cooperate with us. Why not set an example to your neighbours, today! The change in your area may set a trend".

It hardly made a dent on the problem. What is worse is that conservancy service is something of a soft belly for a civic body and nature's vagaries or man's caprices can suddenly upset the arrangement in garages, workshops, house-fronts, communal vats and down to the dumping grounds. This is what has been proved once again in the wildcat strike at our garages on the morning of the 21st June 1977 and lifted on the 23rd after a personal request by the Chief Minister who had taken over only on the 21st. A few aggrieved employees staged a sit-in each at the entrance of our four district garages. No vehicles could come out and no clearance could take place from the vats and 2200 tonnes of garbage gathered daily. That is why discipline must be reckoned the most important tool and tackle in this game of cleanliness.

In the meeting of All India Council of Mayors at Nagpur in January 1977 we took a resolution to form a body called 'Council for Keeping Cities Clean and Green'. In moving the resolution the Mayor of Greater Bombay and Chairman of the Council wanted tree planting as a tool for fighting pollution and an aid to general

## ANATOMY OF A TOWN

cleanliness. He was 'happy' to report the planting of a lakh saplings in his city in the previous year and urged better interaction in this matter amongst the cities of India. In the next meeting at New Delhi in March 1977 we compared notes on the tree-planting or 'green' aspect. But the scope for inter-city or inter-Corporation exchanges is so limited that the problem for each has largely to be solved within its four walls. In elucidation, I presented another advertisement of ours issued in the rains of 1975 when we exhorted the commercial houses and city-loving organizations to take up the maintenance of parks and the planting of trees in a big way. But the response was limited and the scheme of prizes a non-starter!

### Calcutta is Green

"... the city was once famous for its greeneries, the maintenance of its parks and the splendour of its flowers. Some commercial houses and institutions have felt deeply about it and come forward to help maintain the parks and plants. . . . Offers are invited from them to participate in our scheme for the beautification of parks, squares and traffic islands.

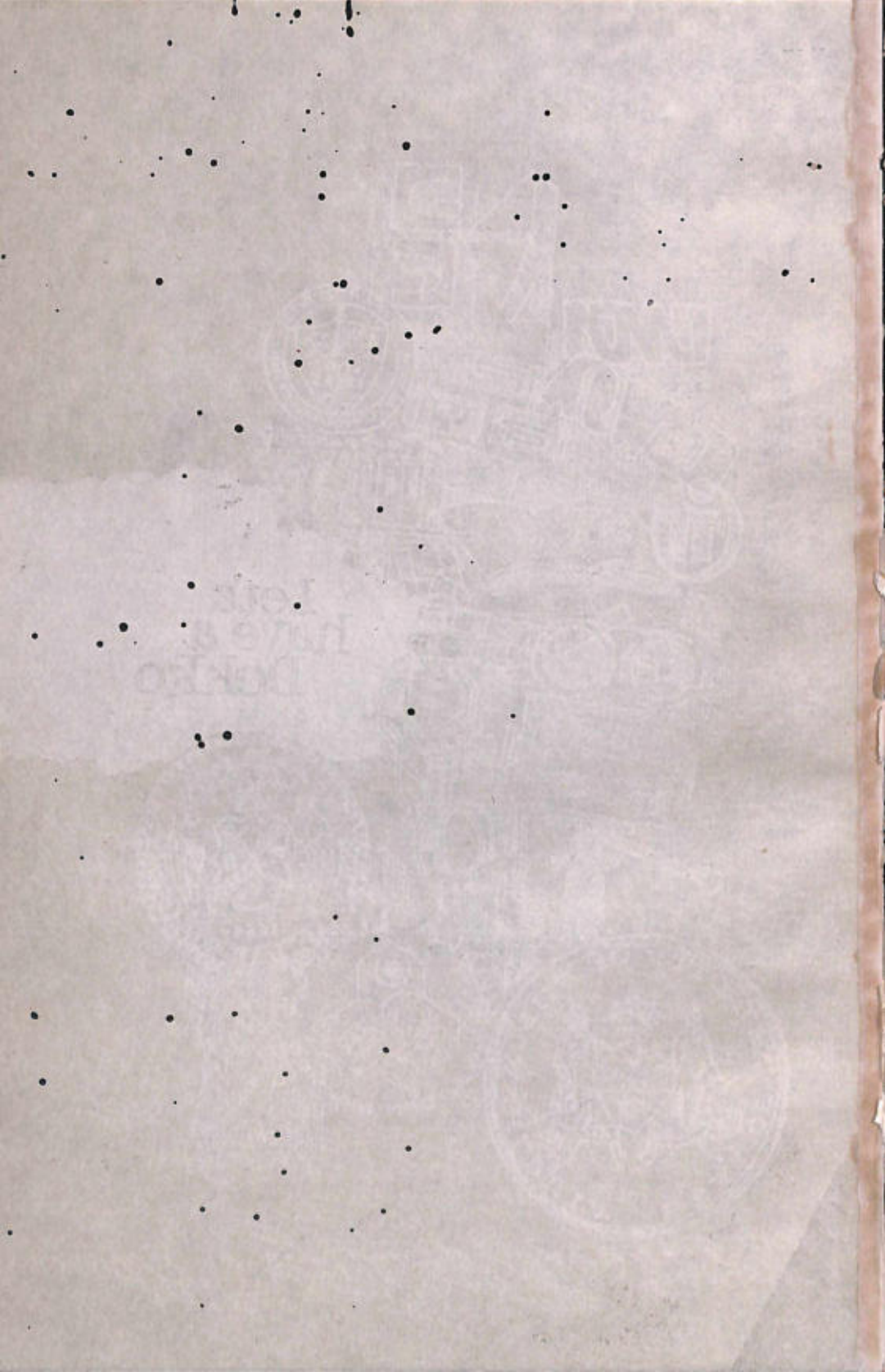
"Details . . . including those of a scheme for the award of prizes . . . may be had from the Chief Engineer or the Chief Valuer & Surveyor. The maintenance . . . may be either on permissive basis on a token fee of Re 1/- per annum or by entering into an arrangement by which the Corporation's resources would be augmented by the party's. The party is expected to put up railings and do the initial repairs and will be permitted to arrange illumination, construction of a fountain and the installation of benches, play-ground equipment, decorations etc. The Corporation will assist by labour, supervision and the supply of saplings and, where feasible, will be glad to offer from its stores old gas posts and similar other surplus pieces of decorative value.

"The parties taking over the parks . . . will be allowed to put up their names. . . . An annual prize of Rs. 5,000 will be awarded to the best maintained park and certificates of merit to the two runnersup. . . . We intend to extend the scheme on road sides and public lands too. Once Calcutta was very green . . . help us in keeping it green, by responding to our appeal when Vanamahotsav is still on".

We have talked of the infrastructure or the enabling provisions in respect of the employees and the authorities. Quite a few things require to be done from the side of the people too, because a city is clean to the extent the citizens can ensure it. It is not merely by administrative measures that we can be sure of the end result. We no doubt believe in friendly persuasion, educating the public and enlisting their co-operation. But with persuasion and education there should be an element of fear and adequate provisions for penal measures. The laws require to be strengthened in this regard. We want a good city and a good life for citizens and our motto should be 'Clean Calcutta, Green Calcutta.' We should therefore have people clean in habit and green in spirit, and our examples and percepts should converge to that end.



Let's  
have a  
Dekko



## HOW DELHI DELIVERS

As it is constituted today, the State of Delhi is served by three local bodies. Out of the total area of 575 sq. miles the Municipal Corporation of Delhi commands 550 sq. miles, the New Delhi Municipal Committee 16 sq. miles (in only a portion of to-day's New Delhi) and the Delhi Cantonment Board nine sq. miles in the Civil Lines area. When the capital of India was shifted to Delhi, Old Delhi was extended southward and a lot of virgin land, rocky soil and jungles had to be cleared and developed. The Raisina Committee was formed in 1916 to take preventive measures for labourers working in the jungles and in the unhygienic condition and to prevent epidemics. In 1935 the body was transformed into a regular municipal committee for all the new areas bounded on the north by the Delhi Gate. In 1958 when the Municipal Corporation of Delhi came into existence under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act of 1957, it was extended to the entire Union Territory except what was given to NDMC and the Cantonment Board. In the process, NDMC shed some of its area and took the present shape to comprise mainly Government colonies, offices and buildings. MCD on the other hand took over the outlying municipal bodies like Shahdara as well as some rural areas previously under the District Board which got urbanized. Because of the statutory provision the Corporation can, by an executive order, extend its activity to any further area in the Union Territory presently rural in character, whenever urban and municipal facilities are needed for it.

NDMC is a nominated body headed by a Chairman drawn from the IAS or similar cadre and two Vice-Chairmen. Under the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, it is responsible for the distribution of electricity and water and the collection of sewage within its area. NDMC purchases electricity and water in bulk from Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking (DESU) and MCD respectively and internally distributes the same. The collection of sewage from within its limits is similarly the responsibility of NDMC. The sewage trunks are then led into the perimeter and connected through the outgoing lines of MCD to the disposal or outfall points. The actual work for the bulk supply of water or the bulk collection of sewage on behalf of MCD, whether for NDMC or the Delhi Cantonment Board, is however given to an undertaking of MCD, viz. the Delhi Water Supply and Sewage Disposal Undertaking (Jal Praday evam Mal Vyayan Sangsthan).

\* Based on the author's visit to Delhi in September 1973 as Chairman, CMWSA and published in the Calcutta Municipal Gazette, 8 February 1975.

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NDMC arranges water from the Delhi WS&SD Undertaking on no-profit-no-loss basis. The supply of water to consumers is, unlike Calcutta, through meters on which water rates are collected. The other sources of income for NDMC are electrical charges, shares on motor vehicles tax, octroi, excise and entertainment tax as well as the earnings from its commercial projects, e.g. buildings, shops, hotels, cinema houses, markets and others.

### **The Municipal Corporation**

MCD discharges its responsibility for water supply and sewage disposal through DWS&SDU. This was created under Section 14(2) of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act of 1957 for providing filtered and unfiltered water supply as well as for collection, treatment and disposal of sewage. For the Corporation area it does so for the individual consumer or user, whereas for NDMC and Delhi Cantonment Board areas it does so in bulk. The internal distribution of water from the perimeter or the internal collection of sewage upto the perimeter is left with the respective body. DWS&SDU has, according to the statute, to provide potable water to the citizens of Delhi and to arrange for the disposal of sullage. Although not explicitly charged with the responsibility, the Undertaking is also looking after storm water drainage. The Government of India have also decided to get schemes of piped water supply in the rural areas and urban villages of Delhi taken up through the Undertaking. Its responsibility therefore encompasses the total requirement of potable water for the entire Union Territory.

On the deliberative side, the Undertaking is served by a statutory water supply and sewage disposal committee which is headed by an elected Chairman and three other Councillors drawn from the Corporation plus three members nominated by the Government. The Committee functions under Section 44 read with Section 213 of the Delhi Municipal Corporation Act. On the executive side, the Commissioner of MCD is the head of the Undertaking, but for day to day discharge of his duties there is a Deputy Commissioner (Water) with delegated powers so that he can function for and on behalf of the Commissioner. The Engineering unit of the Undertaking is headed by the Chief Engineer, while the Finance wing is directly under the control of the Chief Accountant of the Corporation.

### **Water Supply**

Being a small territory with only one source of perennial water, viz. the Jamuna, Delhi is not comfortably placed for water supply. The Jamuna has a flow of only 15 cusecs or 7.5 million gallons

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per day in the dry season when water supply has to be augmented by drawal of water from the Tajewala Headworks by special arrangement with the Haryana Government. The Jamuna gets virtually denuded at Tajewala from where the Eastern Jamuna Canal takes off for Uttar Pradesh and the Western Jamuna Canal for Haryana. The present supply of water is 188 million gallons per day, rising from 114 mgd in 1966-67. The two plants at Chandrawal produce 90 mgd and the two at Wazirabad 80 mgd, both being in the north. In the south, Okhla, which is destined to be closed down because of the deterioration in its quality at times owing to insufficient flow in the downstream and because of pollution in 1952 and 1970, produces today a much smaller quantity of 6 mgd. This makes a total of 176 mgd to which underground water sources add about 12 mgd through tubewells and Ranney wells. Tubewells are mostly in the outer areas numbering about 50 and producing 7 mgd. Ranney wells are shallow collecting wells near the Jamuna which obtain water which has percolated laterally from the river and does not require any elaborate treatment as required for surface water.

The census figures of 1971 put the population of Delhi at 36.3 lakhs for the urban areas and 40.6 lakhs for the entire territory including rural areas. The present population is estimated to be 44 lakhs. The per capita availability of water for Delhi comes therefore to 48 gallons per day on the basis of the population already reached by piped water supply, or to 40 gpd if spread over the entire population. This comes to about  $\frac{3}{4}$ th of the optimum requirement of 60 gpd per head, against which we can ruefully record that availability is only 30 gallons per day in Calcutta. The Delhi authorities, however, are planning in a robust manner for augmenting water supply in future on the assumption that 60 gpd of water should be made available for its population and on which basis it should have 282 mgd of water for 47 lakh people in 1974, 384 mgd for 64 lakh in 1981 and 600 mgd for 100 lakh in 2001. In any such calculation, they also start from the premise that Delhi population, on account of its higher per capita income and higher standard of living has to be ensured greater availability of water. Work is in progress on plans totalling an outlay of Rs. 100 crores for the augmentation of water supply.

By 1975, Delhi will get 100 mgd of additional water from the Ramganga Project in U.P. It has another project on the anvil for getting 150 mgd of raw water from Haryana. Both these supplies would be through closed conduits to reduce loss in transit. A 100 mgd water treatment plant is proposed to be constructed for the water supplied by Haryana and another 80 mgd plant in Old Delhi for ultimately handling the water from the Ramganga. The Undertaking has also several smaller schemes

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under consideration for speeding up water supply e.g. reduction of seepage loss in Haryana canals, exchange of sewage effluent for fresh water with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh and allocation of water from various dam projects in the surrounding States. For the technical examination of schemes and general assistance in water exploration, DWS&SDU gets the help of Delhi Administration through its Public Health Engineering Cell.

For the distribution of water, Delhi has been divided into eight planning divisions, viz. New Delhi under NDMC, Civil Lines under the Cantonment Board and six under MCD, viz. City Area, Karol-bagh, Shahdara, South Delhi, West Delhi, and North-West Delhi. Development schemes for water distribution are under preparation for New Delhi and Shahdara, while for the rest they have been worked out and are under various stages of construction. The schemes include the provision of underground reservoirs, booster pumping stations, pumping mains and overhead reservoirs. The Undertaking has a network of nearly 750 miles of pipelines which have undergone wear and tear and it is being considered how to replace and strengthen them.

### **Sewage Disposal**

DWS&SDU has sewage lines extending to 450 miles. It has the largest network of sewage disposal and treatment system in Asia. The sewage treatment plants are located at Okhla in the south, Keshopur near Tilaknagar in the middle and the Coronation Pillar in the north. Both for water supply and sewage disposal, Delhi has to take care of the ridge which runs from north to south throughout the length of the territory. The portion to the east of the ridge drains to the plant at Okhla, that to the south-west to the plant at Keshopur and the north-west part to the plant at the Coronation Pillar. The portion lying between the south-west and the north-west parts is to be drained to a new treatment plant to be set up at the extreme west of the urbanizable limits of Delhi. Okhla has a capacity of treating 66 mgd, Coronation Pillar 20 mgd and Keshopur 12 mgd. Plans are afoot to take action in time so that Delhi does not suffer from any environmental pollution. These include the augmentation of the capacity of the Okhla plant to 100 mgd and that of Keshopur plant by 20 mgd, so that the total capacity is raised to 156 mgd. In such a plan, the load in the sewage system will keep pace with the increase in water consumption, for about 80 per cent of water utilised in a house finds its way to the sewage system.

Delhi, by virtue of a hilly terrain and the presence of a ridge through its length, makes good use of gravity flow, at a calculated gradient, so that at least once a day water flowing in the sewer

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lines including the branch sewers attains a self-cleansing velocity. On the trunk sewers, adequate pumping stations are provided to give the necessary lift in the journey of the sewage towards the outfall.

The sewage treatment plant at Okhla brings out the flow-sheet and unit processes right from the beginning, namely the mechanical bar screen to remove coarse matter, through the detritor or mechanical grit chamber to remove finer matter, the primary settling tank to deposit organic matter and on to the final setting tank for purification of the clearer effluent. In the primary settling tank the sewage flows with a low velocity so that the organic matter deposits at the bottom and the clarified water is partly drawn out for irrigation and partly recycled through the process. The organic matter which is settled at the bottom is pumped into digestion tanks for undergoing natural decomposition and then spread out on drying beds to be turned into organic manure. The by-product of the digestion tank is methane gas which is sold at the rate of Rs. 2 per 1000 c.ft. to a nearby chemical factory, for burning it to raise steam and generate electricity. But the provision has not turned out to be economical. The route from the primary settling tank to the final is through secondary treatment which may be done in two ways: (i) bio-filter or high-rate trickling filtration and (ii) surface aeration or activated sludge treatment, both of which are adopted at Okhla. In the bio-filtration plant, sewage from the primary settling tank is filtered through a layer of stones by a rotary sprayer which operates under its own hydraulic head, also by spreading sewage water on the stones. As the sewage passes between the stones, green algae which have grown on the surface of the stones absorb organic matter in the sewage and the clarified water settles at the bottom to be taken away for irrigation or return to the river. In the aeration method, sewage is passed through tanks where rotary stirrers suck it from the bottom and spray in droplets at the surface. The oxygen of the atmosphere absorbed by the sewage purifies it to the extent of 98 per cent.

### Finances & Development Matters

DWS&SDU is by no means free from the usual headache of finance. Its current indebtedness is Rs. 42 crores against which NDMC owes it Rs. 46 lakhs and the general wing of the Corporation Rs. 5.4 crores. As in other production units, the immediate reason for such poor finances is ascribed to the fact that the cost of production for treated water has increased, whereas the water rate or tax continues at its existing level. On the sewage side,

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the scavenging tax is reported hardly to cover 10 per cent of the total expenditure, but there is no general fund or subsidy on which the Undertaking can draw for covering the deficit. It is also afraid that sanctioning free public hydrants to general public or religious places and implementing schemes like the supply of piped water to unauthorised colonies will take it more in the red. DWS&SDU has provided 4000 free public hydrants for general public. Water to pias (kiosks), akharas and religious institutions is supplied free of charge and domestic rate is being charged from washermen, barbers, betel-leaf sellers and schools for the blind. On the other hand, charges from colonies, even if wholly recovered, would hardly meet 40 per cent of the total expenditure. Water supply to rural areas is nevertheless being accelerated and a flat water rate of Rs. 3 only is charged.

The Undertaking is gearing itself up for works of a larger magnitude in water and sewage—for major schemes running into crores or rupees—by proper strengthening and reorganization of its administrative set-up. With a view to this, a zonal set-up has been introduced so that all needs of the people with regard to water supply and sewage disposal are met at one focal point and they do not have to run about. Each zone is under an Executive Engineer in charge of both water supply and drainage and assisted by four Assistant Engineers looking after water, drainage, construction and equipment (electrical and mechanical) respectively. The zonal office has in addition an Assistant Revenue Officer for the collection of revenue. The authority is also to take up the re-organization of its technical wing to ensure the construction of major projects in time. DWS&SDU has also formulated two building projects for housing its Central Office and smaller ones for accommodating the zonal offices. In addition it has taken up two housing projects for the employees near the pumping stations at Kilokheri and Wazirabad. Medical facilities are being augmented for them by providing more medical staff and equipment in the existing dispensaries.

### **The Delhi Development Authority**

Established under the Delhi Development Act, 1957, the Delhi Development Authority provides for the development of Delhi according to plan and programme. DDA is composed of 13 members, including the Lt. Governor of Delhi as ex-officio Chairman. Its three official members are the Vice-Chairman, the Finance and Accounts Member and the Engineer-Member. MCD contributes three members, namely the Commissioner and two by election. The rest are made up of three representatives each from the Delhi Metropolitan Council and the Government of India by elec-

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tion and nomination respectively. Currently in the former category is the Chief Executive Councillor himself and in the latter President of NDMC, Chief Planner of the Town and Country Planning Organization and a Joint Secretary to the Ministry of Works and Housing. DDA is being served by an Advisory Council for the preparation of the master plan and related matters in planning and development, headed by the Lt. Governor himself and comprising three Members of Parliament, four representatives of the MCD, one representative each from the Delhi Electric Supply Committee, the Delhi Transport Committee and the Delhi Water Supply and Sewage Committee and ten professional and technical people. The representatives of respective bodies are chosen by election, while the professional and technical members are nominated by the Central Government to represent town planning, architecture, health services, commerce, industry, labour and technical government departments.

The master plan for the development of Delhi, as drawn up by DDA, was approved by the Union Government in 1962. It was the first attempt of its kind to plan urban development according to the long-term socio-economic needs of the growing population. The master plan assessed the deficiencies in several fields—housing, community facilities, water, power, sewage disposal and transport, and estimated the requirements of the future. Some of the key principles of the plan spreading from 1962 to 1981 are the separation of the residential component of the city from large industries by shifting the latter in a time-bound programme to new areas, at the same time encouraging some selected industries in the city to give it a balanced economic base, the accommodation of petty and village trades on the periphery and the development of seven ring towns in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh as part of the overall Metropolitan area. The plan envisages an urban area of about 1,10,000 acres in 1981, as against the existing 43,000 acres. The developed areas will be for several purposes, e.g., residential covering 30,000 acres, industrial 4,800 acres, commercial 1900 acres, government offices 500 acres and institutions (educational, social etc.) and recreational (parks, public utilities etc.) 2,500 acres.

DDA was started with an initial revolving fund of Rs. 5 crores from Delhi Administration. Lands, after acquisition and proper recording, were handed over to the engineering group for development purposes which in its turn handed over the developed land for essential services to the respective organizations viz, CPWD for roads, DESU for electric connections and DWS&SDU for water and sewage connections. Apart from land management and sales including government khas or nazul lands, the work of the Authority is being organized under the heads: housing

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jhuggi-jhompri or slum clearance schemes, buildings, development or re-development of areas and villages, clearance of squatters and encroachers, horticulture and green development. In developed lands which have been disposed of, water supply and sewerage is looked after by DDA for one or two years after which co-operatives formed in the cluster or colonies have to take over from MCD.

The disposal of land is being done by allotment or auction. Smaller plots upto 200 sq. yards are originally disposed of by allotment so that the weaker section of the community gets the benefit. In this category again, smallest plots of 40 to 60 sq. yards are reserved for community services personnel like sweepers, washermen and barbers. People removed from badly congested areas under the jhuggi-jhompri removal schemes also get the benefit of such allotment under the Authority's re-development schemes. Apart from its earnings from Government khas land and the houses, buildings, markets and shopping centres constructed by it, DDA arranges its finances by raising loans from Government, market borrowings i.e. the floating of debentures, advances from the Life Insurance Corporation of India, lotteries and, last but not the least, deposits from intending buyers of houses at the time of registration.

The last category, although not officially intended to be a source of income, has now accumulated to a sum of Rs. 10 crores by deposits being taken at the rate of Rs. 5,000 from the middle-income group, Rs. 3,000 from the low-income group and Rs. 500 from the janata group for adjustment against future payments or return in case the application does not mature. Even paying interest at 7 per cent on such deposits, the Authority has a handsome margin at the current bank rate and the amount comes handy.

### **Some Thoughts on Metropolitan Development**

With limited water resources and situated in a leaner area of rainfall, Delhi is proceeding steadily to provide enough water to its growing population. It does so not merely by tapping the resources upstream in the neighbouring States but also by developing to the extent possible its own water by deep tubewells and by Ranney wells on the river front. The Jamuna does not have abundant water flow and, except for Shahdara, a few parts in the trans-Jamuna areas and South Delhi, water table is very high and the water brackish. In Calcutta we are more comfortably placed in regard to surface water. Even then a larger exploitation of sub-soil water is called for here and in any such plan, proper balance has to be struck between the shallow tubewells and deeper ones so that water is drawn within permissible

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limits of salinity. In areas like South Tollygunge deep, tubewell water contains 1500 to 2000 parts per million of salt compared to 250 (or at the most 500) which is the limit for potability.

Another lesson that can be learnt from Delhi is the supply of water through meters which on the one hand ensures reasonable re-imbusement of the cost of water supply and on the other is a curb on the wastage of water in domestic units. The problems of providing free hydrants in public places and bustees and of dripping hydrants on streets or for public areas are common for all capital towns, whether to a small or a large extent. As we have already discussed, DWS&SDU is quite critical of indiscriminate extension of free water connections and wants MCD and the Water Supply and Sewage Committee to be more punctilious before giving a free hydrant, whether outdoor or indoor. A dripping hydrant, arising out of carelessness or pilferage of parts, is a canker for any water supply system; it is estimated that a slow drip wastes 15 gallons of water per day and a 1/6th inch leak wastes 100 gallons.

The handling and treatment of sewage in Delhi is on a methodical and scientific basis. While Delhi's elaborate network for the collection of sewage is matched by several large treatment plants, Calcutta has nothing beyond primary settling tanks which are hardly for treatment, serving merely as a gravitational device for separating suspended solids from the effluent. The sewage, more or less in its raw content, then goes into the Kulltigang for its journey to the sea, polluting the system in the process. Again taking advantage of the estuarine situation of Calcutta, practically nothing has been done for sewage treatment. It is left to the running creeks, with the help of air and the sun, to do some natural oxidation of the sludge ! This will not, however, do any longer for the teeming population of Calcutta and that is why the Calcutta Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority has taken up the Tollygunge drainage and sewerage projects of which the sewerage treatment plant across Bagha Jatin railway station is an integral part.

The Delhi pattern for catering to metropolitan needs in water and sewerage cuts across the municipal boundaries. Although DWS&SDU is a creature of MCD, being linked to it in statutory and deliberative aspects, the former has nevertheless to function as an autonomous undertaking for day-to-day purposes and for managing its finances. The functional character of the Undertaking is further underscored by the fact that, apart from water and sewerage which are given to it by law, it has also taken drainage under its fold and that way, the three core subjects for healthy urban life, namely water supply, sewerage and drainage

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have been put under one functional body. This compares well with the objective of our CMWSA which, according to law, was charged with "the maintenance, development and regulation of water supply, sewerage and drainage services". It may, however, be added that the collection and disposal of garbage in the Calcutta Metropolitan District was added as an objective in the CMWSA Act when it was passed in 1966, perhaps because of its increasing impact on environmental hygiene. But it is a service of the surface type, requiring different organization and maintenance, and CMWSA has yet no plan to organize it despite the predilection of the law makers.

A fundamental question arises whether urban services of various types should be agglomerated for geographical areas under a municipality, or functional organizations should take up specialized work, cutting across the municipal boundaries. When urbanized services were first organized in the 19th century, the municipalities were small, the number of people served were known to one another, and municipal bodies with staff drawn from the locality proved to be the most convenient in looking after the day-to-day needs and in forging personal relation between the people served and those who were called to serve. Now the problems being more complicated, the dependence on science and technology being much larger, the areas of metropolitan municipalities being of gigantic nature, and a large proportion of the employees being drawn from down-town, municipalities on the old geographical model would be unwieldy as well as not in a position to render personalized service as in olden days.

It is in this context that the development activities for a municipal area also require serious attention of the planners and financiers as to how best it should be carried out. Apart from the core subjects as discussed above, there are various other activities for urban development like development of land, building complex, bustee development, roads and parks, many of which are beyond the competence and resources of a municipal body. In Delhi the work, although to somewhat limited extent (land, housing and green development), is given to the Delhi Development Authority, whereas in Calcutta the CMDA has a much larger canvas, bringing various types of development matters under its purview. In providing finances to the CMDA for various civic needs of the area, it is being examined today how to bring about better co-ordination among various executing agencies and to get the best out of the available resources. The problem of such development in so far as capital works are involved is only one aspect of the matter, and institutional finances from outside or from within the country may not stand in the way. The connected problem of mainte-

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nance and running is deeper and more sustained. It is here that the goals of specialized and functional bodies, vis-a-vis the municipal corporation and the suburban municipalities, are to be examined and a decision has to be taken on two fronts. First, whether for capital work, there should be total integration of the implementing agencies or their relevant wings including municipalities or a larger amount of co-ordination among them under what is now called the "umbrella concept". Secondly, who and when to take over the completed works and how to arrange for their maintenance and running on a sustained basis for metropolitan residents.

Finances for maintenance are always a problem, as known from the past experiences of the Calcutta Corporation and other municipalities. It is also a problem for local bodies or undertakings. One conclusion is however obvious. If there be specialized agencies for specialized and core work, a body, whether it is called an undertaking or an authority, should enjoy a reasonable degree of autonomy and have its resources assured to a reasonable extent by giving it powers of taxation, market advance, execution of commercial projects and other means of harnessing revenue and matching its rising expenditure.

## CALCUTTA LIVES ON IN ITSELF

"Calcutta is young and celebrates its 285th anniversary: 1690-1975. Calcutta is forever" cries the hoarding of a nationalised bank from one bank of the road recently widened by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority. In the repairs and improvement of the Calcutta Metropolitan Development District area, the CMDA has taken the major role and applies itself in a large measure to the areas under the Corporation; for in any programme for the 500 and odd square miles and 80 lakh people of the CMD area, the hard core is the 37 square miles and 33 lakh people under the Corporation of Calcutta.

Admittedly the Corporation has not been able to take upon itself much beyond the running and maintenance of the assets and services in hand. But assets, whether a newly widened road or a pumping station in perfect running order or a newly acquired and shiny truck for garbage removal, fall sick, advance in age and slow down in metabolism, in the same manner as the human body does. These assets require regular attention for upkeep and maintenance, and from time to time capital repairs and reconstruction. Unless such attention is given the system would not be equal to the needs, particularly when the needs are growing in the shape of larger civic services for the city. Here, as all over the country, the population goes up steadily and inexorably. More people means mere removal of garbage, more traffic on the roads, more thirst for water, more load on sewerage et al. These people will require more services which have to be extracted from an aging system. The system left to itself will therefore require more attention to give the same quantum of service.

The Corporation of Calcutta is hard put to it maintaining the services, thanks to the inelastic source of revenue and the inbuilt deficiencies in its system. The Corporation apparatus and working method were adopted in the remote past in a different atmosphere and with a different purpose. Those were the colonial days of the Britishers and the civic corporations were supposed to be the training grounds for local self government. Now as we enter the last quarter of the twentieth century, we find that the old motto and old modus operandi require a lot to be changed to keep the city in good shape. The city nevertheless maintains its cosmopolitan character and we may flatter ourselves by saying

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\* Specialist Administrator, November-December 1975.

that we are still going strong in the old Indian tradition of universality. It is our poet Bhavabhuti who propounded :

Avam nija parobeti ganana laghuchetasam  
Udara charitanantu vasudhaiva kutumbakam,

meaning, "It is the mark of meanness to court this man as my own and the other as an outsider. It is the virtue of the elite to take the whole world as his kin."

But the city Corporation has to fetch water and sweep the street and in this job it has not always been as adept as it should have been. For such defaults the management of the Corporation had been taken over by Government and some improvements followed. To give an idea of our improved activities, let us discuss about roads and garbage clearance. A vigorous programme is in hand for road repairs, after many years of mere patch work. The difficulty in road repairs, more than in any other item of work, is the dearth of funds. For 510 miles of roads in the Corporation area we get a paltry sum of Rs. 10 lakhs per year from Government. The Corporation has no earmarked or captive funds for road repairs, except perhaps what we get from parking fees. Still we have been spending annually Rs. 40 lakhs on actual repairs and another Rs. 30 lakhs or so on fixed overheads i.e. staff salary. Government have given us a special loan of Rs. 135 lakhs this year before the pujas and we have taken up a programme of repairs as evenly distributed as possible. In this work we have closely associated the union leaders who matter in our Asphaltum and road repairing sections.

Keeping Calcutta clear of garbage is a herculean task, as every day there is an accumulation of 2200 tonnes. We have formed a separate directorate of conservancy to tackle the problem. The novel element in this endeavour is that a top trade union leader who holds away over 22,000 of the 33,000 workers of the Calcutta Corporation has been appointed in January 1975 as second-in-command to the newly formed directorate and rallied manual workers as well as transport operators for a better working of the conservancy department. In the removal of garbage or in the repairs of roads is thus reflected the improved atmosphere in the Corporation by which trade union leaders have reposed faith in the administration and taken the risk of committing themselves to the establishment.

In financial matters the Corporation has not yet been able to make conspicuous improvement, although in the last budget forwarded by the Administrator to Government, a few radical proposals have been made for augmenting financial resources. These are in the form of (i) commutation tax for close to a million

people who transit daily between Calcutta and suburbs for earning their livelihood, (ii) employment tax for those who earn more than Rs. 6,000 per annum and (iii) more rationalised taxes on houses and lands. Government is giving serious attention to the proposals and will see to what extent the Corporation can be allowed to raise taxes in the present context of rising prices and the large proportion of the refugees, the poor, the slum dwellers and those on the pavement. The Corporation, it may be noted, cannot impose any new tax or raise the old ones without Government sanction. Government has therefore to examine the matter carefully and take a decision in the first instance.

Another thing Government is doing is a comprehensive amendment of the Calcutta Municipal Act. It was enacted in 1951, shortly after Independence, when an experience of a balanced body for civic services was still in infancy and we were suffering from the hang-over of British days. The act of 1951 was in the circumstances a rehash of the old Act of 1923 and in some aspects even a repetition of some old and out-moded aspects in buildings, conservancy, water supply, sanitation etc. Now some comprehensive studies have been made for a new Municipal Act which should cater to the newer needs and give us a viable system by virtue of which planning and executing responsibilities can be decentralised and fiscal arrangements laid down within centrally articulated goals and overall targets.

Upto the Second World War Calcutta's industrial growth and diversification kept pace with its population growth, and its port and transport facilities with its industrial activities. Calcutta had an abundance of industrial water, power and human skill. The war converted Calcutta into a major forward base and attracted large activities and legions of labour force for war supplies. This started the straining of metropolitan water supply, sanitation, sewerage and general municipal infrastructure. The gap between the population and industrial growth accelerated with the influx of refugees from East Pakistan, for the country's Independence in 1947 split Bengal into two, the major portion including the hinterland for some major raw materials going to Pakistan. By 1951, about 1.5 million refugees had settled in Greater Calcutta including industrial or metropolitan region. This urban poor, who were joined by the rural poor pouring in steadily from other States of India in the eastern region could not contribute anything much to the primary or secondary sector for the production of wealth, but merely filled the tertiary sector for miscellaneous and domestic services for the growing and impoverished population itself.

The second factor was that immediately after Independence a

series of labour welfare legislation improved the lot of blue collar workers, while the white collar workers, normally recruited from a higher cultural and educational level and mainly sons of the soil, fell behind and developed a distorted attitude towards productivity. The immigrant blue collar worker had less stake in the city and, being more intent on sending savings home, was unconcerned in improving the surroundings. A large number of industries moved away from Calcutta to other cities and regions in the sixties. Since 1972 the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority came to fill in the gap. But the question remains whether by spending Rs. 110 crores in three years, as it has done, on an average of Rs. 35 crores a year, CMDA will be able to make the leeway Calcutta has lost since the fifties. The sum is small indeed compared to what has been continuously invested on Delhi since 1940, or even on Bombay since 1947. According to some calculation an investment of a thousand crore of rupees in the next ten years would be necessary to render the Calcutta Metropolitan Region viable again.

In the context of the reconstruction of Calcutta and the new capital works vis-a-vis the best utilisation and the cost thereof, we chose two sectors, viz water supply and lighting, and carried out an exercise how from the Corporation side we should take up OMR, i.e. the operation, maintenance and running of these new assets. CMDA has till 31 March 1975 sunk and commissioned 21 big diameter or giant tube wells within the city and would have another 30 such tubewells ready for commissioning by 31 March 1976. For improved street lighting CMDA put up more than 1500 high powered mercury vapour lamps on important streets and junctions at a cost of about Rs. 65 lakhs. For giant tubewells the capital cost was around a lakh of rupees each which will now go up to about Rs. 1.4 lakhs, while OMR will cost Rs. 30,000 per annum. For mercury lamps OMR, including replacement of fused lamps, defective fittings, damaged chokes etc. would require more than Rs. 10 lakhs per annum. According to the current programme of CMDA, improved lighting would be doubled in a year with OMR up by Rs. 20 lakhs. This will mean extra cost for the Calcutta Corporation, for the savings from OMR of the discarded general service lamps will be no more than Rs. 8 lakhs per annum.

The problem of OMR will come up again and again and cannot be wished away. When CMDA was formed to do capital works and development in the city and CMD area involving an investment of say Rs. 110 crores, a fund of Rs. 11 crores, or 10% per annum would require to be provided for OMR. (It may be added that for certain units like parks and playgrounds, the annual maintenance cost is as high as 33% of the

capital outlay.) The Corporation is the only or most suitable organization for the purpose in the city, and has to be given the wherewithal for raising the extra fund. Even today it runs on a deficit budget. The extra amount has to come partly by the collection of more revenue and partly by larger Government grants. Augmentation of own revenue depends on a change in the Calcutta Municipal Act authorising the Corporation to levy new rates or revise old ones upward. For, the Corporation is a creature of the statute and, as already stated, cannot raise more funds, unless authorised by the legislature and Government. The increased revenue supplemented by Government grant can only put the Corporation on a self-sustaining basis for OMR work. Larger taxation by a local body is however becoming increasingly difficult to impose and collect, as also the management of civic affairs by the elected elements and the old style apparatus of the civic bodies. This is a world wide phenomenon as evidenced in the current financial crisis of New York or the Government takeover of cities in our neighbourhood, e.g. Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Lahore, Karachi and Dacca. Government have therefore to come for a direct rescue operation or devise a suitable method for direct participation in OMR by the community.

Some thoughts on this line have been expressed in a recent article "Problems of Calcutta Metropolitan Region" by Asok Mitra (ex-Secretary of the Planning Commission and now of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi) which are worth recapitulating here: Two things emerge in the given situation. One is the availability of funds from national and international sources. The other is to build an adequate municipal infrastructure to take care of development programme and to press into service the new assets created for the people. For the latter too, adequate revenue resources are required which again is a question of funds. The running and maintenance of civic services must have, at the command of the appropriate municipal body in the region including the Calcutta Corporation, an adequate share of grants, loans and realisable taxes; otherwise an improvement accomplished becomes nobody's business to maintain and nobody feels called upon to regard it as his own. It has therefore to be thought out seriously how on the one hand to marry the metropolitan civic bodies to the improvement agencies like CMDA and Government and on the other to inculcate a sense of involvement among local men and women. The most important thing is to think anew about the type of an urban renewal process that will suit our economic and social condition and be self-sustaining. We are today beset with the by-products of urbanization in an increasing crescendo, viz. pollution, congestion and choking of circulation. We have

to work out a system, financially and administratively which will restore the equilibrium at a level and in a manner which will sustain a human settlement more intensively and more extensively. A vast network of well-knit and contented urban villages, with low levels of pollution but with greater degree of decentralised community participation, may well be India's answer to urban growth for poor countries.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale said in the beginning of the century, "What Bengal thinks today, the whole of India thinks tomorrow." One could add that Calcutta Corporation was the experimental ground of Bengal politics and thus the cradle of the nationalist movement in India. We had such stalwarts as Surendra Nath Banerjee, Chittaranjan Das and Subhas Chandra Bose moulding the Calcutta Corporation in their own hands. Surendra Nath took over as the first Minister for Local Self Government. Those were the days when the Britishers condescended to hand out what they considered a few unimportant departments to appease the national spirit of Indians. He made Local Self Government an effective instrument for bearding the British lion in its den and enlarging the struggle for fuller powers to the nation. At the same time he was the Chief architect of the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923 under which Deshabandhu Chittaranjan became the first Mayor of Calcutta—a true extension of his activities as 'Friend of the Nation'. Almost simultaneously Subhas Chandra became the first Commissioner, for his predecessor was there for two months only on a stopgap arrangement. We have today moved a long way from Local Self Government. The whole country is self governed. On the other hand the ideals and strivings for service to the people have to be uplifted and spread among those who have to organize and execute. That is why the department is now renamed as Municipal Services. Services to *daridra-narayan* or 'God in the poor' was the motto of Chittaranjan, and "Service to the humanity is service to God" is what is enshrined in our Upanishads and invigorated by Swami Vivekananda. We in the Municipal Services Department have to believe in the motto and we in the Calcutta Corporation have to give it a practical shape.

In 1932 Buddhadev Bose wrote a splendid eulogy of Calcutta :

"In the last few years what an extraordinary spread of Calcutta and at what speed! Calcutta will grow more. It is still the capital, because it is the seat of commerce. Today the merchants are kings. Calcutta is marvellous for its pomp and dust, for its discharge of filth and array of lights, for its sickness, ennui, craze, wanton gaiety and promiscuousness. All this is a rapid stream of life, without a break.

"Our Rabindranath never looked upon Calcutta with love in his eyes which, whenever I recall, gives me pain. Among the new Bengali writers a few have cast their eyes back on Calcutta. I am one of them. I love this city. I love Calcutta—not as one loves one's mother but one's mistress: Calcutta is like a young woman who does not give in easily. First she turns away her face and keeps to herself the secret of her heart. To get her is a matter of earnest endeavour. But once she gives in—her femininity knows no limit and she has no comparison. The poor enchanted will then breath a high and say to himself, 'I have nowhere else to set my mind—I am eternally yours!'

"Calcutta is awaiting its poet still—a poet who will bring out the complete beauty of the city, the beauty wrapped in mystery and romance. Calcutta is complex, tossed in self-contradiction and dazzling in beauty. The city appears to be eternally lonely and manifests itself everyday in its lonesome character. In the evening when one stands on the Chowringhee crossing and watches lights being lit one after another, the traffic in its noise, the uninterrupted stream of people, the city tearing itself to pieces in the mad rush, the stars up above in the coppery sky gazing quietly in twos and threes—one is dead and dull if one's heart does not throb in ecstasy and excitement. Then, on a summer noon when one walks in the foamy current which is the moving multitude of Clive Street, one has to have a tingling sensation sometime or other unless one is dead in feelings. Where is the poet to describe the smell of Calcutta streets—a mixture of coaltar, petrol and human sweat? Again, on a rain washed evening when the atmosphere is crystal clear and replendent with lights; or on the gloomy morning with several patches of cloud and tramcars running with headlights on; or in the early hours before dawn which spread a splendid illusion of quietude; or in the dark nights on the Ganga with its dark waters seen through the bizarre silhouette of the ships with the mysterious sounds around and the smell of the far away sea—will none see, hear and smell them and paint them in words followed by more splendid words, so that the posterity belonging to a more majestic metropolis would read them to take a long breath and say, "What a beauty was Calcutta in olden days!"

This was his 'Hathat Alor Jhalkani'—a sudden flash of light! We wish we could, close to half a century afterwards, sing a

## Calcutta If You Exile Me



Calcutta if you must exile me wound my lips before I go  
only words remain and the gentle touch  
of your finger on my lips

the headless corpse in a Dhakuria bylane  
the battered youth his brains blown out and the silent vigil  
that takes you to Pataldanga Lane where they will  
gun you down without vengeance or hate

Calcutta if you must exile me burn my eyes before I go  
they will pull you down from the Ochterlony monument  
and torture each broken rib beneath your upthrust breasts  
they will tear the anguish from your sullen eyes  
and thrust the bayonet between your thighs

Calcutta they will tear you apart Jarasandha - like  
Calcutta flex the vengeance in your thighs and burn  
silently in the despair of flesh

wait for me outside the Ujjala theatre and I will  
bring you the blood of that armless leper who went mad  
before hunger and death met in his wounds

and I will show you the hawkler who died with  
Calcutta in his eyes

Calcutta if you must exile me destroy my sanity before I go  
*by Pritish Nandy*

The Corporation of Calcutta in the Life of Calcutta.

PRITISH NANDY (1947- )

Born in the year of Independence, Pritish is a product of Calcutta. As a National Science Talent scholar he joined B.Sc. (Honours) course in the Presidency College, changed from physics to statistics, dropped out and took a job in a Punjabi shop. He had tea to serve and letters to post. At the age of 19, his first book of poems (Of Gods & Olives) was published from Mexico, closely followed by 'On Either side of Arrogance' and 'From the Outer Bank of the Brahmaputra'.

Then in 1970, suddenly one summer morning, when Pritish was seriously considering to leave the city and settle elsewhere, he wrote 'Calcutta, if You Must Exile Me' in 15 minutes. It was published in the special issue on Calcutta by the Illustrated Weekly of India for which the lead article was by Dom Moraes. The poem is acclaimed as the best in his collection 'Riding the Midnight River' (1975) and one of the finest in the past decade written by an Indian. This poem, as his many others, is a tantalising look into the concerns of a generation that celebrates its sense of loss and loneliness.

Pritish is a member of the advisory board of the Sahitya Akadami and one of the youngest Padma Shri. He is the Public Relations Officer of Guest Keen Williams.

## CALCUTTA LIVES ON IN ITSELF

louder praise of Calcutta. Instead we quote our own poem to the city after the withdrawal of a general strike :

Where twenty-two thousand out of thirty-three thousand  
get jobs on heredity,

Where conservancy lorries should number two-hundred fifty  
but only fifty are on the road,

Where for daily supply of hundred million gallons of water  
Palta does not always get twenty tonnes of alum,

Where enemies of roads running five hundred and ten miles  
are footpath invaders and dearth of stones and pitch,

Where eleven hundred and thirty miles of sewerage  
overflows, and in rains the city floats and sinks ;

There the real assets of the Corporation are  
your good wishes and our realisation of general weal.

That is why the morning strike is wiped out  
by the evening resolution to return to work,

That is why my doubt is dispelled and I find  
Calcutta lives on in Calcutta itself.

## CALCUTTA IS CALCUTTA

Knowing his way in the world of words, Hamlet appears to have identified 'being' with taking arms against a sea of troubles and 'non-being' with taking an unkind fortune by sufferance. In short the choice is between the active and the passive. We have already subscribed to the active voice, as also the historical present form of the verb 'to be' in the heading. By bringing ourselves under this banner we not only affirm our faith in an active Calcutta which should demand and get the best of our activities, but also in the city's historical virility which will build a bridge from its founding, across the present, into the future.

### Literary Calcutta

When the Metropolitan Transport Project took upon itself the colossal project of an underground railway connecting Dum Dum and Tollygunge, the citizens of Calcutta became resigned to the prospect of living with dug up roads for the next decade, although for any inconvenience, real or imagined, big or small, they are apt to make a hue and cry. It is to prepare the people for the despairing and dismal sight today and to conjure a vision of glorious future that MTP had to dig deep into the past of Calcutta. It has brought out a brilliantly conceived and neatly executed sequence of advertisements on the city: "The Calcutta of Kaliprasanna"; "Calcutta in the pen of Rajnarain"; "Ramtanu Lahiri and Calcutta" and "The Calcutta of Vidyasagar." The running theme is that it is today as difficult to walk with ease along a street as in the beginning of the nineteenth century and thereafter. MTP underlined the theme in the advertisements by presenting extracts on the account of Calcutta penned successively by Kaliprasanna Sinha in "Hutom Panchar Naksha" (sketches by the Big Owl), by Rajnarain Bose in "Sekal Ekal" (Times Past and Present), by Sibnath Shastri in "Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bangasamaj" (contemporary Bengali society) and Binay Ghosh in "Vidyasagar O Bangali Samaj". MTP now plans to come forward in time to the beginning of this century through Satyendra Nath Tagore and Rabindra Nath.

Going backward in time in order to come forward is something of a luxury for us in the Corporation of Calcutta, as we are eternally concerned with the present, with the problem here and now, and at best with the hot repairs on the running line. We have to

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\* The Statesman, 31 January 1976.

## CALCUTTA IS CALCUTTA

keep ourselves busy almost exclusively with the day to day activity and we can hardly look beyond our nose. That is by the nature of our existence, a domestic and housekeeping agency as we are. We have also our troubles and legions of them—the paucity of funds, rising costs of men and materials, the weaknesses of an aging system, the absence of an iribuilt code of discipline, too many people at places and too little at others, particularly for the skilled jobs and supervisors.

### Municipal Calcutta

When about two years ago we had some large differences with some leading trade unions of the Corporation, we thought that the people of Calcutta should be taken into confidence. We resorted to some extensive insertions in newspapers. The headlines would speak for themselves! "To whom does Calcutta Belong—33 thousand Civic Employees or 33 lakh Citizens?" "Quo Vadis Calcutta?" "Which Calcutta: Your choice?" and "Who's There to stop Calcutta?" By this time the Corporation and the city saw a tremendous procession of events culminating in a lock-out and general strike. Fortunately however the turmoil subsided on the day of the general strike itself and, in a mood of gratitude to the workers and citizens mixed with a sense of confidence in the city, we brought out an advertisement "Calcutta lives on in Calcutta itself". The workers and the management have been living happily, if not ever after, at least for the present and with a unity of purpose, that is to say, to afford reasonable service to the citizens.

In this period of consolidation we made out a few more declaration of our efforts and objectives in the form of advertisements, to wit: "Square Peg in a Round Hole" (about the rationalisation of the 33,000 workers), "Path, Who owns You?" (about the removal of encroachment from roads and footpaths), "Plus Minus Into Divide" (about starting meenabazars for the rehabilitation of footpath hawkers and stall holders), "Where do You throw Garbage?" (about throwing garbage into vats in the mornings and evenings only and generally keeping the housefront clear) and "Calcutta is Green" (about tree planting on roadside lands and adopting municipal parks for beautification by private parties). It is our latest advertisement in the series which evoked critical comments about the exact form of the verb "to be". According to those critics the word 'is' is misplaced and should, if at all, be 'will be'. Well, we believe Calcutta is. It may be greener or greenest, but we believe in the present tense, of course reposing faith in the future:

For sustaining such faith, credibility is to be created first in the

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

agencies that serve the city. Foremost among them is the Corporation, while others like CIT, CMWSA, and CMDA are mostly for the new capital works. To give an account of our tasks and achievements, we might speak of a few selective sectors, viz. road repairs, garbage clearance, water supply and the rationalization of staff.

### No Royal Road to Repairs

Roads of Calcutta have been badly neglected since the closing years of Councillors' regime in the Corporation. Since 1972-73, that is to say from the period of supersession, all that we could spend annually was about Rs. 25.5 lakhs including Rs. 5.5 lakhs in Government grant and Rs. 10 lakhs as our share of the motor vehicles tax. This for the upkeep of the city's 510 miles of roads can only be called a proforma amount. CMDA however came forward to take up large repairs to some 100 miles of arterial and important roads at a cost of Rs. 80 lakhs or so. Faced in 1975-76 with the very sorry state of affairs we budgeted Rs. 30.5 lakhs for repairs to the remaining roads as against Rs. 10 lakhs of our own money for the past several years. This coupled with the Rs. 15.5 lakhs in Government grant and our share of the motor vehicles tax gives us Rs. 46 lakhs. The value of work done with this amount would come to Rs. 75 lakhs or so if we add overhead and supervision charges. Even then the maintenance cost per lane mile per annum for our city comes to about Rs. 2500 or so as against Rs. 3000 to Rs. 5000 for Madras, Delhi or Bombay.

Government have given us after the Pujas a loan of Rs. 1.35 crores for road repairs. We are in the thick of the job now, mainly through departmental labour and to the extent of 30% through contractors. We have planned to repair with this money, by the end of February 1976, 90 roads involving 100 miles. Till the middle of January 60 per cent of the work has been completed.

### Does Cal Still Stink ?

Accepting the recommendation of the Chopra Committee (Calcutta Garbage Collection, Transportation and Disposal Committee) appointed by Delhi, we formed a separate directorate of conservancy in 1974 to give adequate attention to the work. Apart from the Director, we inducted a top trade union leader as his deputy and gave the directorate the backup support of the district garages and municipal workshops. The experiment paid off and, even with the depleted fleet of some 65 garbage lorries today against the prescribed strength of 250, we have been keeping the city clean. There are no doubt occasional accumula-

## CALCUTTA IS CALCUTTA

tions here and there, particularly in the rains when the roads to the dumping grounds become impassable. But we have reduced our dependence on contractors by 30 per cent.

The separation of the conservancy directorate could not however be completed down the line: The field staff including conservancy supervisors were separate and now is the top of the directorate. But in the middle, at the level of the district engineer, the directorate formed a Siamese twin with the engineering department. For various reasons we could not undertake the surgery till the 15th of January this year. Seven selected assistant engineers have now taken over as the heads of the field staff for the four districts and the three sub-districts of Cossipore, Maniktala and Tollyguge. They have been designated district conservancy officers and will make the district engineers and assistant engineers free to give undivided attention to engineering matters including roads, parks, trunk sewerages etc.

### The Ganga—the Purifier

We are also making steady progress in water supply. It is realised now that the city's water needs have ultimately to be met by the Ganga whether by the renovation of the Palta Water Works or by the early completion of the new Garden Reach Water Works. The drawal of water from deep as well as shallow tubewells will at best be a local augmentation and at worst a palliative. The south of the town including Tollygunge which depends mostly on tubewell water knows to its discomfiture the problems of high salinity, iron content and the choking of pipes by suspended materials.

Palta used to supply 100 million gallons of purified water per day. By virtue of some essential repairs, the removal of bottlenecks and better maintenance, we get now 120 million gallons or above. By arrangement with CMDA we have now stationed there an officer of the rank of Chief Engineer and ex-officio status of Special Deputy Commissioner. A few officials of the rank of executive engineer would also be put under him. Previously we had only an officer of the rank of senior assistant engineer, while CMDA was pursuing the capital works by itself without any coordination with us. The present head of Palta who also has the Talla Pumping Station under him has the dual advantage of coordinating CMDA works with the Corporation's running and maintenance and of exercising financial and administrative powers almost at par with the Commissioner of the Corporation. Various improvements are contemplated in the city's water management including a viable sector of water supply which will fend for itself through the imposition of appropriate water rates and the gradual

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

agencies that serve the city. Foremost among them is the Corporation, while others like CIT, CMWSA, and CMDA are mostly for the new capital works. To give an account of our tasks and achievements, we might speak of a few selective sectors, viz. road repairs, garbage clearance, water supply and the rationalization of staff.

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The separation of the conservancy directorate could not however be completed down the line: The field staff including conservancy supervisors were separate and now is the top of the directorate. But in the middle, at the level of the district engineer, the directorate formed a Siamese twin with the engineering department. For various reasons we could not undertake the surgery till the 15th of January this year. Seven selected assistant engineers have now taken over as the heads of the field staff for the four districts and the three sub-districts of Cossipore, Maniktala and Tollyguge. They have been designated district conservancy officers and will make the district engineers and assistant engineers free to give undivided attention to engineering matters including roads, parks, trunk sewerages etc.

### The Ganga—the Purifier

We are also making steady progress in water supply. It is realised now that the city's water needs have ultimately to be met by the Ganga whether by the renovation of the Palta Water Works or by the early completion of the new Garden Reach Water Works. The drawal of water from deep as well as shallow tubewells will at best be a local augmentation and at worst a palliative. The south of the town including Tollygunge which depends mostly on tubewell water knows to its discomfiture the problems of high salinity, iron content and the choking of pipes by suspended materials.

Palta used to supply 100 million gallons of purified water per day. By virtue of some essential repairs, the removal of bottle-necks and better maintenance, we get now 120 million gallons or above. By arrangement with CMDA we have now stationed there an officer of the rank of Chief Engineer and ex-officio status of Special Deputy Commissioner. A few officials of the rank of executive engineer would also be put under him. Previously we had only an officer of the rank of senior assistant engineer, while CMDA was pursuing the capital works by itself without any coordination with us. The present head of Palta who also has the Talla Pumping Station under him has the dual advantage of coordinating CMDA works with the Corporation's running and maintenance and of exercising financial and administrative powers almost at par with the Commissioner of the Corporation. Various improvements are contemplated in the city's water management including a viable sector of water supply which will fend for itself through the imposition of appropriate water rates and the gradual

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

installation of water metres for preventing wastage and helping the collection of larger revenue. A strengthened setup at the Palta-Talla complex, as we have taken in hand in collaboration with CMDA, is the sine qua non for any such venture.

### Man Power & Man Rationing


In the matter of staff rationalisation we have travelled some way, starting with the formation of a centralised personnel department in November 1974. Appointments, maintenance of seniority, promotions etc. are now being done, taking the Corporation as a single unit, although in a limited manner. Previously these were done separately for each department. We have fixed 60 as the age of retirement for the labour who were, believe it or not, hitherto allowed to work as long as they could. There was some controversy about the correct age and retirement benefits but we have, thanks to the general support from the workers and their leaders, been able to retire about 1700 old workers from the 1st of January 1976. Simultaneously we took a firm decision that there would be no automatic replacement to the retired hands, but only where the job necessitates.

Related to this is the problem of ghost, double and babu employment. A ghost is a non-existent worker whose wages are split among the wizards of the Corporation. A double has a double life in another organization on full wages while a commission may be charged on the original wages here. A babu or a babu mazdoor, as he is generally called, is a sahib's babu—the sahib having been high up in the Corporation echelon—and allowed to earn on a clean job, although officially on the dirt brigade called conservancy. We have just appointed a high-powered Committee under the Chairmanship of a retired Secretary to the Government of India to go into such cases and recommend the rationalisation and proper utilisation of staff.

### The Calcutta Way

In addressing the Central Council of Local Self Government on the 23rd of October 1975 Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi gave a call to rejuvenate, energise and reform local bodies. She said she did not underestimate their difficulties nor the problems arising from the growth of the urban population, the influx of rural people and the inability of cities to provide the very basic amenities. She was worrying: 'For example take Calcutta. With all the experts coming from different parts of the world, nobody can really figure out how Calcutta can be saved. Our problem is to see that similar situation does not arise in the other cities.'

## JESUS OF CALCUTTA



The red lights did not forbid,  
Yet the city of Calcutta stopped suddenly  
in its tempestuous rush ;  
taxi and private cars , vans and tiger-crested  
double decker buses  
stopped precariously in their tracks,  
Those who came running and 'creaming  
from both sides of the road—  
porters, vendors, shopkeepers and clients—  
even they are now like still life  
on the artist's canvas.  
Stunned they watch  
crossing from one side of the road  
to the other, with uncertain steps,  
a child, completely naked.  
It had rained in Chowringhee a short  
while ago,  
Now the sunlight has pierced the heart  
of the clouds  
and is descending like an overlong shaft ;  
Calcutta shines with an eerie glow  
I sit next to the bus window  
and look at the sky and you :  
the child of a beggar-mother,  
Jesus of Calcutta,  
you have mesmerised all traffic to a stop.  
You pay no heed as the crowd howls and  
the drivers impatiently gnash their teeth.  
You walk uncertainly  
between the eager jaws of death.  
As if you are the essential man,  
in the pleasure of your first steps  
you want to grasp the whole world,  
So you march unsteadily from one end  
of the world to the other.

: *B. Surendra Nath Chakraborty*

: *Translated by Manish Nandy*

: *Issued by the Corporation of Calcutta*

NIRENDRANATH CHAKRAVARTI (1924- )

Nirendranath was born on 19 October 1924 in a village of Faridpur. He had his education in Calcutta, partly at Bangabasi College where his father was the Vice Principal and then at St. Paul's College from where he graduated. He is an assistant editor in the Ananda Bazar group of publications, presently editing the children's monthly Ananda Mela. Primarily a poet, Niren has also some critical writings on literary subjects to his credit. He was Vidyasagar lecturer of the Calcutta University for 1976.

The poem overleaf was written on 12 September 1969. A collection of poems under the same title was published in December 1969. It is one of his most favourite poems and in the poet's own words this is how it was born: 'It was a rainy afternoon about eight years ago. I was returning home from office when the bus in which I had been travelling came to a screeching halt, and from the upper deck of the bus I saw the naked child crossing Chittaranjan Avenue. The poem came to me in a flash'.

## CALCUTTA IS CALCUTTA

Calcuttans will hardly have felt flattered by the remarks, as a newspaper commented editorially shortly after. It went to the core of the problem by saying: "More serious is inflation: if Calcutta is virtually bankrupt, so is New York. Yet over others she seemed unduly pessimistic. ... At least there has been some planning and there is now a Metropolitan Development Authority ... may not be perfect, but ... better than anything the city had before. Much remains in all conscience to be done; in particular, civic welfare will hardly be possible without general economic revival."

This shows the depth of the problem and the hard task ahead of us. It will be not for us, Calcuttans, to lament that the problems cannot be readily resolved, nor merely to look back and watch whether others are following us or not. We have to put ourselves to the task of reconstructing the city; we cannot run away from the responsibility.

And we are determined too. For, echoing Shakespeare we might say that 'to be or not to be: that is the question' for Calcutta.

## COUNTDOWN FOR CALCUTTA 2000

The British establishments came on the three coasts of India, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The first urban body was in Madras in 1687 and a rudimentary municipality came into being in Calcutta in 1727. It was rudimentary in the form, for urban work and the raising of necessary resources were entirely dependent on the establishment, although there were Justices of Peace to look after certain works for urban necessities. But in the real form, i.e. with the elected element and linked to resources, the municipalities came to be established in Bombay in 1873 and in Calcutta in 1876. At the time of Independence we had only these three municipal Corporations in the three presidency towns.

### Growth & Weakness of Urban Bodies :

Today we have a formidable number of urban bodies : 1400 municipalities including 34 corporations. The municipalities are mostly superseded by Government ; all in Haryana, Rajasthan and Karnataka and most of them in Madhya Pradesh. Out of the 34 Corporations, only 10 have not been superseded and of the three metropolitan towns only Bombay has still got the elected regime. The 10 are mainly on the west coast, in Gujarat (Ahmedabad, Baroda and Surat), Maharashtra (Bombay, Pune, Nagpur), and Kerala. On the one hand, the growth of urban bodies and municipal administrations and the catering of services to the people have become complex and sophisticated, naturally throwing a larger burden on the urban bodies. On the other hand, they have ills which have to be remedied from time to time by supersession. Supersession has to be an ad hoc measure. How far this measure takes us and for what purpose, and whether it tones up the fiscal condition we have to consider in depth. Now, coming back to history, the urban bodies had a very significant role to play in our struggle for Independence and in organising the swadeshi spirit, whether it was in thought or in actual support to industry or any indigenous effort. Then politics became intertwined with the running of local bodies.

We should first review the weakness of the current municipal legislation—the existing and in-built weaknesses—keeping in view the new development objectives. We talk of changing the law. It has to be changed from time to time, for we have to correct

\* Observations in chairing the workshop on 'Calcutta 2000—Organizational & Fiscal Preconditions' on 9 & 10 April 1976 in Calcutta.

deficiencies to the extent the law has become out of step with the current aspirations and efforts. There is also the aspect of promptly handling the law and the procedure i.e. how the court and the legal profession move.

In 1951 after a lot of agitation and cogitation the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923 was changed. In a way the 1923 Act had a larger element of popular participation like the Mayor in Council. On the other hand the 1951 Act might have been modelled around the American City Manager. Thus 25 years ago the powers and duties were given in clear-cut compartments, but even then no Commissioner of the Calcutta Corporation worth the name could function strictly according to his conscience. Gradually the Act had become out of tune with the requirements of the day. When I first joined the Corporation as Commissioner, I was surprised to find that under the Calcutta Municipal Act power could be delegated by the Commissioner only under the strictest surveillance imposed by section 34 which lists out a score of sections which cannot be so delegated.

#### **Supersession of Calcutta Corporation—48 & 72**

Independence was a watershed for us. In municipal matters too, certain things had to be done and certain efforts undertaken. For example, within a year Calcutta Corporation had to be superseded by no less a person than Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy who was for two terms the Mayor and five times an alderman, and who was, in the latter capacity, actively involved through the standing committees on works, finance etc. On March 24, 1948 he had to supersede the Corporation. One reason was that it came to a low ebb because of erosion in discipline and the other that there were difficulties in finance from which it had to be salvaged. The elected elements were sent home and Government appointed a senior civilian as Administrative Officer (as the Administrator used to be called then). He had to discharge the functions of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, 90 Councillors, 5 Aldermen and the Standing Committees.

In about four years Government produced a new Act, that of 1951, under which the new Corporation came into being on May 1, 1952. The administration now worked in a way in tighter compartments, its business being organised in three tiers, i.e. the Corporation, the Standing Committees and the Commissioner. The Commissioner is the chief executive and head of the official hierarchy. The idea was that in financial matters as well as in matters of discipline, there should be clear demarcation, and the deliberative or policy-making parts should, to certain extent, be separated from the executive. But the separation was not always

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

adequate or rational, for larger executive powers were given to the Corporation and standing committees for large works and purchases. The arrangement had inbuilt inconsistency and inadequacy but functioned close to a quarter century. Then there were difficulties—both real and political—and a second supersession was resorted to.

### **Developmental Matters & Metropolitan Agencies**

This supersession came on March 22, 1972, and we have already crossed the four year limit within which the new Act or the new Corporation was brought into being last time. I do not think this will come about shortly, for the authorities will have to make up the mind about the complexities of and the larger demands made on the civic bodies to keep going such an intensive human settlement. Then the planning units which were set up have to take a very large share of the quality and the direction of work of these urban bodies. That is why in the early sixties the Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organisation came into being and in the mid-sixties the Calcutta Metropolitan Water & Sanitation Authority. Then in the seventies when the situation became somewhat hot and rescue operation had to be started, the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority was created.

After that CMDA has been clothed with some functional and administrative powers, so that it can truly execute the most important segments of the overall planning made by the CMPO. The legal acceptance of the CMDA has so far been through several statutes. For the Calcutta Metropolitan area the Land Use and Control Development Act of 1965 and the Calcutta Metropolitan Water and Sanitation Authority Act of 1966 came earlier than the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority Act of 1972. These would be indicative of the efforts in matching the planning and development part with the day to day activities of a municipal body viz. operation, maintenance and running.

While we talk of the overall development of the Calcutta metropolitan district or the C.M.D. area, we have to remember that there are various other bodies in the associated field or even on a different plane, and they also have a stake in the matter. Some are Central, some State and others private organisations. Naturally in the Calcutta metropolitan district, the Centre have serious involvement, as also agencies through whom they operate, e.g. the Calcutta Port, the railways, the national highways, the airport, Calcutta Telephones etc. At the State level we have different agencies like the Housing Board, Public Health department, P.W.D. (Roads), Fire Services, Education department, the Calcutta State Transport Corporation and the West Bengal State Electricity

Board. There are also the Oriental Gas Company and the Calcutta Tramways, two private sector companies which came to be state-managed. The deficiencies on the communication and transport fronts, particularly those of the CSTC came to be largely discussed in a preceding workshop. It is only natural, for the mobility of man, whether of the mind or of the body, is essential in any human settlement. Then there are the private organizations or companies which have important roles e.g. the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation and the various Chambers of Commerce.

Now there are several other functional matters like protection and security, law and order, police, environmental public health and pollution. For the last item we recently had the State Board as well as the Central Board for prevention and control of water pollution and for the Calcutta Metropolitan area the Smoke Nuisance Commission. Special mention may also be made of the Calcutta Improvement Trust which has an interesting history dating back to 1912 when the capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. It did most of the significant developments in Calcutta, on which line, but in a much smaller scale, the newer body of Howrah Improvement Trust works for neighbouring Howrah which has the distinction of being one of the dirtiest towns in the sub-continent. On planning and execution, we are concerned with the works of various government departments and other agencies and organisations, and it becomes necessary to dovetail them and evolve an orchestrated urban system or method of working. At its formation CMDA experimented in functioning through the Calcutta Corporation for contracts and works and the latter formed a CMDA cell. But from last year CMDA has directly taken the work in its own hand under the one umbrella concept.

#### **Financing Municipal Services**

Between CMDA and the Corporation the question that looms larger and larger with the passage of time is the taking over and maintenance of newly created assets. Suppose it is a newly renovated road. It is quite likely that its width has been doubled by adding areas on the flank, but leaving the service lines where they were. When the first four or five years are over and the new shine is totally gone, our maintenance charges will easily be doubled and in the meanwhile attention to the service lines will be costlier. We do not know, however, whether the life of the road will be even four years. The maintenance guarantee in Bombay and Delhi is for five years, while our contractors, who do this job manually, guarantee the quality of the work for six months only. So maintenance becomes a larger burden whenever the road is improved and widened.

Two points have been thrown up in the workshop discussions. One is that Municipal revenue should be related to or tied with specific services and, the other that we should diversify our activities and see whether some commercial enterprises could be handled by us. There are some past instances in both these areas which did not yield satisfactory result. Our present thinking is that we should have, for major services, either captive sources of fund or that the services should earn for themselves. The two ideas are complimentary. There are two major services—water and conservancy—which come to mind. Our share of conservancy from house tax is of the order of Rs. 2 crores but the actual expenditure is Rs. 5.5 crores, taking the cost for the brigade of conservancy workers. In respect of water services what we spend is much more than what we earn by means of the notional share of house tax.

In this regard certain line of action and ideas are being worked out. The World Bank team came and had discussion with us and the CMDA. Government have also accepted in principle that water service should pay for itself and that is why at a later stage it might be metered. But immediate metering might be difficult. Water element of the tax is to be separately shown on the bill and on our books. But it cannot be put into a separate account, until the Act is amended. When new areas are given water supply by CMDA, water metering can be resorted to. Later on similar treatment might be given to drainage and sewerage services which however cannot be directly measured for a holding. It is ofcourse known that such services have an approximate ratio to the water supply and may be charged pro rata on the metered water.

On road repairs we have given some specific suggestions from the Corporation side. Calcutta roads suffered about a decade's neglect, except for what CMDA did for arterial roads. Nothing much could be undertaken by us for the lack of resources. We have now asked for the imposition of a new tax, viz wheel tax for ourselves or a larger share of motor vehicles tax, strictly on condition that the income should go to a separate fund, exclusively for road repairs.

Even for this the law requires to be changed. In the olden Act it was said that there should be one municipal fund maintained in the Imperial Bank of India which has now been substituted by the State Bank of India, but not by any other nationalised bank, nor has any relaxation been given to us for opening separate accounts for specific services. We are therefore forced to keep one fund and cannot really stop any reappropriation or, if you prefer to call it, misappropriation of fund from the specific service to the general

and vice versa. A separate fund for road repairs is the sine qua non for larger attention to roads. Similarly there may be captive funds for certain other important services:

#### **Commercial Enterprises**

Commercial enterprises are no doubt a tricky proposition particularly when we know how State and Central Government undertakings fare in this regard. But I think in certain areas, by virtue of our ownership, expertise and the availability of services or raw materials, we are placed in a pre-eminent position for undertaking such ventures. Things which come to my mind are: (a) mechanical composting, (b) mechanical brick production and (c) some modernised multi-storied buildings with marketing centres. The municipal markets still number only 10 out of 150 for the whole of the city. Both these numbers are totally inadequate and that is what has been reflected in the encroachment to the roads and footpaths by hawkers and all.

For making a mechanical composting plant we are collaborating to the extent possible. We were toying with the idea of joint sector partnership with the Agro-Industries Corporation of West Bengal or a private party, but it could not be done. We have given land and assurance of garbage supply to both. In March 1976 the foundation-stone was laid in Bantala for a plant of 100 tonnes a day capacity by the Agro-Industries Corporation. That will take care of only 200 tonnes of garbage out of the 2,200 tonnes which is removed every day from the city.

Similarly we have taken up projects for brick production at Palta where water is drawn from the Ganga into initial settling, pre-settling and final settling tanks. They get filled up quickly with mud which is a good material for brick. Our first experiment has not yielded much result. The Brick and Tile Board (now renamed the Directorate of Brick Production) of Housing Department was given enough land, but due to some bottlenecks they are operating only at one-third the rated capacity. If better time comes, we might give further thought and take the risk of such or other commercial ventures. But the trend is distinctly the other way. Many municipalities started with electric generation, transport services etc., but gradually they had to part with them.

#### **Markets & Hawkers**

Several questions have been raised about the hawkers' problem in Calcutta. The problem is also being tackled by the Police and CMDA. From time to time we made attempts to clear the city of the hawkers and to lighten the load on the streets, so that

traffic and environmental matters improve and there is better maintenance of roads. The basic question is the lack of growth of buying and selling facilities in the city in organised places. The oldest of the ten municipal markets is the New Market which was built in 1874, having been designed by the architect of the East Indian Railways (look for the unmistakable touch of a railway station at the porch and the towers). Then it was a place of pride between Constantinople and Tokyo. Even now people coming from outside are quite happy at first look. Seven other municipal markets came to be established till 1940 and two after Independence; New Alipore market in 1963 and Manik-tala in 1972. Of the 140 private markets in this town some are wholesale and others cater to the needs of the common man. Still hawkers come to the sidewalks near the Sealdah and Howrah stations as well as other crowded areas like Gariahat, Chowringhee and the five-point crossing at Shyambazar. Sporadic attempts were made to clear the pavements, but there was not much success and the matter it is not merely one of law and order.

Recently I had the experience of attending an international seminar at Kuala Lumpur, and there many countries from South-East Asia came to a consensus that the problem could not merely be looked at from law and order. They adopted a liberal resolution in this regard, saying that authorities should establish places for hawking or limited operation of stalls and also give facilities for the integration of hawkers in the life and business of the community. It was felt that hawkers were an important fact of Asian life where the solution did not lie in departmental stores or things like that. All the administrative and regulatory matters relating to hawkers might therefore be put under one umbrella and there should be a continuous effort so that a man who starts as a hawker could in future be a shop-owner. Here in Calcutta a direction was given to the CMDA and the Police to find out jointly various vacant places as well as surplus areas under the Urban Land Ceiling Regulation where temporary accommodation could be afforded to the hawkers. But the question remains how, in the face of acute unemployment, we can contain or control them who will again be knocking at the door.

#### **Inadequate Municipal Earnings**

Now to come to finance and the difficulties we face. A point has been asserted again and again regarding the gradual weakening of municipal corporations as an institution in so far as their tax-raising capacity is concerned and consequentially their inability to cope with increase in the demand for services. I would say that for a local body the source of revenue is rather

inelastic. The major source is the house and property tax. Under the Calcutta Municipal Act it is called consolidated rate and comprises about half of our total earning. This consolidated rate or house-tax is again not always paid in time. There is often some backlog, and for the Central Government properties the position is even worse.

The Government of India Act of 1935 made these properties tax-free, no local body being allowed to tax them. After Independence the position had to be reconsidered, for urban bodies or village institutions found it difficult to get going, being totally deprived of Central Government contribution. Suppose there is a big railway junction in a village area. The Union Board or Village Panchayat would naturally expect help from the railway authorities in running the local body in its limited services. The railway may on the other hand feel that it has nothing to do with the environs. After a lot of discussions and persuasion a guideline was evolved by which the Union Government, although not legally obliged to pay any consolidated rate or house tax on the properties, agreed to pay some service charge. It is fixed in an arbitrary manner—half or one-third of the house-tax as calculated in a base year which is supposed to be the equivalent of the actual cost of services. In effect this means freezing the dues with reference to the book value of the properties i.e. as in 1937 or the actual year of construction or acquisition and depreciated from time to time. The upward quinquennial re-valuation of properties, as is done for State Government and private properties, do not therefore apply to the Central Government. This is how the rate becomes much lower for a cluster or colony of Government buildings. What is worse, the amount is not paid in time, and quite often disputes are raised with local bodies.

Only about one-tenth of this Corporation's earnings is by way of licence fees on professions, taxes on entertainments, car parking fees and from specific services like markets, water supply to shipping etc. The remaining one-third of the income comes from Government in the shape of octroi or entry tax on goods in the metropolitan area and subvention for 80 p.c. of the cost of dearness allowance to employees. This had been committed by the Government in 1944 and whenever there is a rise in the pay of State Government employees, we are bound to increase our salary bill.

It is felt that large national cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and Madras should have adequate support from the Central Government in addition to the State Governments. The city institutions have very often to compete in the same field of resources for finance with the Central and State Governments.

Besides the municipal bodies are to function strictly within the statutes, not having much power for increasing an old tax or introducing a new one. It is all the more necessary that their burdens are shared by Government. The metropolitan and the cosmopolitan cities make large contribution to the nation's economy as the seat of commerce, shipping, industry etc. and have a large role to play for the development of and attention to the extensive area in the hinterland. This feature should qualify such a city for the special treatment.

The Calcutta Corporation gets Rs. 11 crores from property tax, about a crore from fees on trades, professions and callings, another crore from markets and miscellaneous collections, Rs. 3.5 crores from 2½% of the net collection of octroi and Rs. 3.9 crores from Government as 80% subvention on dearness allowance. Octroi or entry tax is a larger source of income for CMDA, its share being double of the Corporation's. We claim that elements like wheel tax or octroi duty should be ours, although Government have taken them away from us from time to time. Time has come when we should have a Municipal Finance Commission or one like the Zakaria Commission which can go into various aspects of the question—how to raise taxes, how to see that they are not misappropriated or diverted and how best to utilise them.

#### Assessment & Building Cases

Two things in which delay hurts rate payers most are assessment and hearing of building cases where objections have been raised on constructions or demolition is demanded. We found that 10,000 assessment and 2,000 building cases were pending. Nobody except the Commissioner could hear them. When the Municipal Act of 1951 was framed it was perhaps felt that the administration would not be able to bear with the pressures if the discretion were left with lower authorities. In recent years we amended the Act for both these provisions. Even now the delegation is in a round about manner, for any officer not below the rank of Deputy Commissioner, if he is specially authorised by the Government for the purpose of the particular chapter, can only be delegated the powers. One particular section was then introduced—Sec. 380A—saying that a Deputy Commissioner may be deemed to be the Commissioner if he is so authorised by the Commissioner. But no general delegation was allowed. The office of the Deputy Commissioner or the Commissioner will still be vulnerable to pushes and pulls if that is what worries the lawmakers. But I submit I do not subscribe to the view of concentrating all powers in one hand.

Talking of delay in administration, one finds that the time lag

between the requirements of the day and the performance is 'always' there. If we give some suggestion to Government it has to get it examined in the administrative department, then in Finance and Legislative departments and finally in the Cabinet. These things take time, although certain progress is made.

I shall talk for a while about the parameters we propose to introduce in the new building regulations. The height and the extent of coverage of a building on a piece of land is controlled by three factors: the floor area ratio or FAR, the open space on side, back and front and the road angle. The road angle stipulates that no building can be built which is more than  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times the width of the road including some public places like parks, squares, tanks etc. This gives a larger scope to a building to go upward. So road angle controls the height and that way the occupancy load.

Then the space all round the building. In our building regulation we say that it has to be some percentage of the plot dimension but the minimum is 3.5 meters in front and 7 meters on the sides as well as at the back. As you have seen, some of the buildings which have come up in Camac Street and Loudon Street are plump on the road with very little arrangement for parking or open space. We want to change such building activities which stifle the town. CMDA and the Town and Country Planning Department are having a last look at the draft regulation and we hope it will be enacted before long.

The third and most important concept in regulating the size of a building is the floor area ratio. This is comparatively a new concept. It is the summation of all floor spaces divided by the plot of the land. In other words, the floor area ratio multiplied by the plot of the land is equal to how much you can build in different floors and the maximum ratio proposed in our regulation is 4.5 for the roads, 36 metres or more in width. So you can only build 4.5 times the area of a plot on such a road for a multi-storeyed building. The older buildings in the city built on the existing regulation have got floor area ratio as high as 18. But the floor area ratio of 1.0 (for the narrowest road) to 4.5 is ideal for the quantum of occupancy, traffic load, control of pollution and many other things including air, adequate light and open space for the children to play or the people to turn around. By the combination of these three tools we would be able to see that there is no undue crowding or congestion in the city.

#### Urban Land Ceiling

A doubt has been raised that Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act which has been recently passed by the Union

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Government will cramp our building activities confining the people only to small plots of land and would lead to a deterioration in the quality of life in urban centres, by way of more congestion, more pollution and what not. There is no doubt that the Act was a hurried piece of legislation, and we can give a judgement only in the light of actual experience. The Calcutta Metropolitan area is under A category and the ceiling for land-holding is 500 sq. meters, i.e. about eight cottahs of land or 1/6th of an acre. Other categories of B, C and D, have got 1000, 1500 and 2000 sq. meters respectively. In our State there are no B or C category towns or areas. Durgapur-Asansol, a D category area will have got 2000 sq. meters, i.e. 30 cottahs or one and a half bighas. I think this provision cannot by itself lead to any deterioration or worsening of living condition, because there is some inbuilt provision for organised housing activity, through cooperative societies, housing companies and all that.

There is some inbuilt provision for relaxation too, but the actual working procedure and guidelines are still being settled. In Delhi on the 30th March 1976 there was a conference in the matter. A special committee was formed, including the three Municipal Commissioners of Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta. It was felt in that conference that the Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act left quite a few loose ends which required to be tied up. Although the basic thing has been set, there may be difficulty or cumbrous features in implementation, and some quicker methods of disposal or processing have to be evolved. Some authorised officers or competent authorities have also been appointed e.g. subdivisional officer, the land acquisition collector, additional district magistrate in charge of land reforms and management. Let us hope that the procedure gets settled and the working and treatment of this Act becomes businesslike.

### **Some Thoughts on Municipal Restructuring**

In giving serious thought to the structural changes necessary for municipal government, we may note that originally maintenance was the principal function, but today metropolitan planning and development are essential adjuncts. We have therefore to spell out the future functional role for the city government. Another question which rewards examination in our context is how the numerous constituent units within the CMD area may be reconstructed and made to function so that either the economic viability of the small units is ensured or the area is spread out so as to ensure homogeneity and the efficiency of administration.

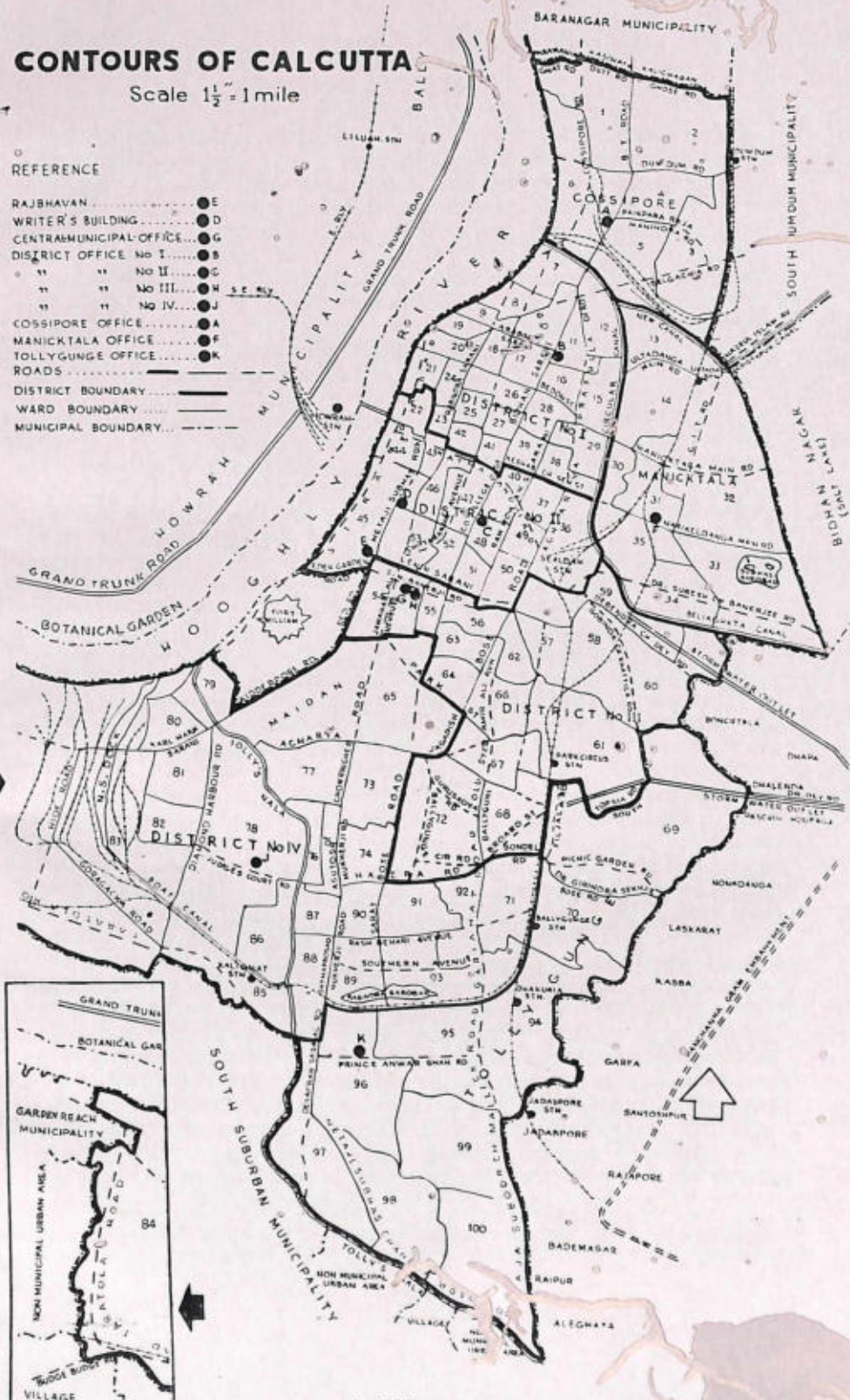
Now, in this matter, there are no doubt two opposing trends. One is that the area should be homogenous and intimate, so

# CONTOURS OF CALCUTTA

Scale  $1\frac{1}{2}$  = 1 mile

## REFERENCE

- RAJBHAVAN ..... ● E
- WRITER'S BUILDING ..... ● D
- CENTRAMMUNICIPAL OFFICE ..... ● G
- DISTRICT OFFICE No I ..... ● B
- "    "    No II ..... ● C
- "    "    No III ..... ● H
- "    "    No IV ..... ● J
- COSSIPORE OFFICE ..... ● A
- MANICKTALA OFFICE ..... ● F
- TOLLYGUNGE OFFICE ..... ● K
- ROADS ..... ———
- DISTRICT BOUNDARY ..... ———
- WARD BOUNDARY ..... ———
- MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY ..... - - - - -



### MISS CALCUTTA ?

Have you missed these vital statistics of Calcutta ?

Situation : 22° 32' North of Equator & 88° 20' East of Greenwich  
Sea board : Bay of Bengal—48 km (30 miles) to the south  
Altitude : 5.3 metres (17 ft) above mean sea level  
Temperature : 48.3°C (maximum) & 10°C (minimum)  
Average annual rainfall : 1605 millimetre  
Area : 104 square km (37 square miles)  
Total number of households : 6,35,257  
Widest road : Southern Avenue (150 feet)  
Longest road : Acharya Jagadish Bose Road (4 miles)  
Bustees : 1015 Nos, 1516 acres & 10 lakhs population  
Widest building : Writers' Buildings (700 ft frontage)  
Tallest building : Chatterjee Intl Centre (24 storeys, 280 ft)  
Total population : 33 lakhs (1977 estimated), 32,000 per sq km  
Floating population : 2 lakh pavement dwellers & 10 lakh commuters  
Consolidated rate (Rs. crores): annual valuation 43.5 & gross demand 11  
Street lamps : incandescent 50,171 ; fluorescent 23,745 & mercury vapour 5000

that people living there can work for the urban bodies. The civic service day in and day out may then be closely connected with the population, as might be operating to certain extent in the 33 municipalities ringed round Calcutta. The other trend is that municipal administration, service and planning have to be done today on a large canvas. They have become sophisticated and the functional requirements are more rigid. That is why we have several functional authorities like CMDA, CMWSA, housing department and other agencies. I think a debate on the small compact units versus the large functional will continue, but a via media may be found.

Let us consider the example of water supply and how it should be related to water generation. Would it be better to leave the head-works and the bulk pumping up to the perimeter of the municipal body in one hand? Our head-works for water generation is at Palta, near Barrackpore, which is about 15 miles away and in travelling from Palta to Calcutta one crosses the boundaries of at least half a dozen municipalities. Now, if this water system is strengthened for Calcutta and also for the Calcutta metropolitan district, is it better to leave it to another body which will be engaged in the bulk treatment and selling of water? This might more usefully solve the problem of repair and renewal of the system. The Calcutta Corporation is however too reluctant to part with this historical property. There comes the opposing trend and the need to evolve a new organizational arrangement.

Greater Calcutta is still struggling with the old pattern of small municipal units, unlike the Corporation of Greater Bombay which has absorbed and integrated all municipalities around. Calcutta Corporation is yet confined to 37 square miles with a population of 33 lakhs only, compared to the total population of 8 million in the Greater Calcutta area or 12 million in the larger area of the Calcutta Metropolitan District comprising 500 and odd square miles. We have also to consider what functional segregation is necessary for the different levels of management of metropolitan affairs, that is to say the metropolitan, intermediate and local functions, then what should be the various levels of metropolitan government, considering the new needs of maintenance, planning and development. There is a need for consideration of the number of administrative and local bodies as well as other functional agencies for different levels for metropolitan functioning vis-a-vis the role of the Calcutta Corporation. All these considerations have a large political overtone, viz what should be the political concept of the metropolitan government.

As regards the political consideration, the metropolitan body at

the seat of the federal government, whether it be Washington or Delhi, has in a way to be subservient and an appendage to that government. For that it also derives large benefits. For example in our last budget I pointed out that, for education and malaria eradication including mosquito control, much larger funds were needed. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has had more than a crore of rupees on this count while we had a few lakhs only. So we submitted that, along with the metropolitan cities of Madras and Bombay, Calcutta should have the same consideration from the Central Government because of the special and national character of each. Now, the point is, in determining the organisational character, to what extent are the political masters prepared to go, to what extent financially and organisationally the local body will have its own strength and where a political balance will be struck.

#### **Bombay Metropolitan Regional Development**

We may have a look at what is happening in Bombay. It has the Bombay Metropolitan Regional Development Authority, a newly constituted forum bringing several agencies and authorities in a four-tier arrangement. The four tiers are (i) the Authority itself, (ii) the Standing Committees, (iii) the Executive Body and (iv) the Functional Body. In the Authority there is representation of the people through eight ministers viz. Minister and Minister of State for Urban Development, Minister and Minister of State for New Township, Minister of State who is the Chairman of the District Planning Board for Greater Bombay, Minister of State who is the Chairman of the district Planning Board for Kolaba district, Minister for Industries and Minister for Housing. There are also the Mayor of Bombay, the President of the Thana Zilla Parishad adjoining the Greater Bombay district and the President of Kolaba Zilla Parishad.

Then there are the Standing Committees on Improvement and Development of Electricity, on Transport and a few others. These Committees are for specialised work and finance. In the Executive Committee, they have a lateral infiltration and strengthening by seasoned Government officials like the Chief Secretary, the Metropolitan Commissioners, the Secretary of Urban Development, the Commissioner of Bombay Municipal Corporation, the Managing Director of State Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra (SIDCO) and the Chairman of the three functional boards. At the fourth tier are the three Boards. The first is for Transport and Communication, the second for Water Supply and Sewerage and the third for Housing, Urban Renewal and Ecology. We might keep

this pattern of development in mind in coming to think of the organisational set up for the Calcutta Metropolitan district.

#### **To Separate Executive from Deliberative**

Prof. Devraj of the Indian Institute of Public Administration has raised a pertinent and vital question about combining the executive function with the deliberative, or what I call, the so-called legislative. May be it has been a historical hang-over. In olden days we used to call our local bodies local self-government. The question is why can't these local bodies evolve a system by which the business is divided and done in the same manner as between the Lok Sabha and say the North Block i.e. the Central Secretariat, or as between the Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) and the Writers' Buildings at the State level. While a Secretary to Government and the departmental officials can take care of certain things like awarding a contract or starting some disciplinary proceedings, the popular representatives in the legislature can get the policy and broad lines of execution determined. This system of sharing will also be one of check and balance because any body can raise a question on the floor of the House or can ask for a probe to be made into an affair which the Minister-in-charge has to take care of. But the initial decision is left to the executive for day to day administrative matters, say granting any increment or special pay or starting a departmental enquiry or awarding a contract.

There is another aspect regarding by-laws and regulations. Normally an Act states what are the different authorities and how the power for rule making and the framing of regulations is delegated to the executive, the administrative department or ministry. But in certain legislation including the Calcutta Municipal Act this is not the case. Most of the by-laws and rules are part of the Act, for example, Schedule XVI which deals with the building regulations. So even if it is called a regulation, we have to go the Legislature for any change through the Government. But Government is a multi-dimensional character involving administrative, finance, legislative and other departments. That is how there comes a time lag often beyond tolerance.

#### **Computer that Cheers**

A paper has been presented by our Data Processing Officer about the establishment and functioning of our unit recording section, commonly known as IBM after the suppliers of the machines (International Business Machines). We had to overcome a lot of suspicion from workers and teething troubles from the machines. Fortunately the working of the unit recorders is

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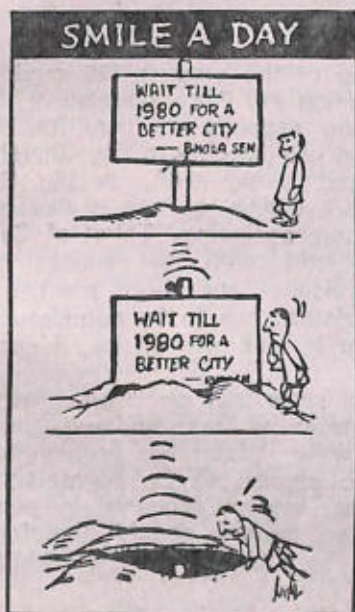
stabilised by now, although they are working only as an aid to the assessment department, i.e. preparation and posting of rate bills. We hope that this will be our base for further mechanisation, accelerating our accounting and also expanding it into the related regions. We lose a lot of time, collecting data for public health and various other things. We have got a form which has got as many as 30 columns. All these can be mechanised and put into the data machine. Let us aspire that in future we expand from the mechanical to the electronic stage—from these machines to the more versatile computers.

That brings me to the end, and I should like to narrate something which appeared in today's paper. You may call it a controversy between astrology and futurology, the latter in the company of computers. The futurologists say that there would be a collapse in world population after it reaches the peak of 25,000 million in 425 years from now, and following a process of what they call biological distillation, man would be quite another creature by the year 6000 A.D. It will all be due to the bad influences of the abominable brain child of the scientists, viz. the computer. The computer of the National Institute of Natural Resources at Mexico City, which was fed the birth rates, mortality trends, existing food resources and future forecasts, ruled on the other hand that the human race would annihilate itself on Friday, November 13, 2026 A.D. One futurologist however alleges that there was an error in the computer and that none of the gloomy predictions would come true.

Whatever the denizens of the younger world and the third generation computers may say, in this country, imbibing the true traditions of the Vedas and inheriting the wisdom of thousands of years, we can claim to say better, aided by the Hindu astronomy. Assuming that the planets were in a line of mean conjunction with the first point of Aeries at the beginning of a Mahayuga and that these planets would occupy the same position at the beginning of the next Mahayuga at a place on the equator whose longitude is 76 degrees east of Greenwich and calculating the period of Mahayuga to be 4,32,000 years, we may come to three predictions. One is that the doomsday is still half a million years away; secondly, there was no prospect of a deluge or the annihilation of the earth in our lifetime or in that of even our great, great etc. to the n-th degree grand children; and thirdly, which is more relevant to our discussion, is that the world population would have stabilised itself by 2000 A.D. with food and health for all. Do not ask me for the details of the calculation but let me stop on this merry note.

## CALCUTTA IN THE EIGHTIES

In April this year a one-week conference was organized in the city on "Calcutta 2000: Some Imperatives for Action Now" by a leading Chamber of Commerce. The study was in three workshops: Economic opportunities and Infrastructure for Development; Spatial Planning for old and new Calcutta; and the Organisation and Fiscal Preconditions. Then and repeatedly thereafter questions have been asked of me: "You are thinking of Calcutta 2000. What of Calcutta 1976? How are you tackling the basic problems and what is the out-look for the immediate future? What are you doing to give relief and improve services here and now?"



Amrita Bazar Patrika  
dated 1 December 1976

Here is a piece of loud thinking on behalf of the Corporation. The activities of the Corporation truly extend from the cradle to the grave; from the maternity homes through children's creche, primary schools, roads, lights, parks, garbage clearance, public health, anti-epidemic measures, water supply, markets,

\* Business Standard, 6 November 1976

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

building regulations and taxation on property down to burning ghats and burial grounds. From such a wide spectrum we intend to pick up a few important and significant bands to get a picture of the state of services, and then give an idea of the measures currently in hand for development and beautification, in so far as some concrete result is expected in about five years.

### A Bird's Eyeview

Before we take such a hard look let us take a bird's eyeview of the city in the eighties. We have reason to believe that in five years from now the traffic situation will perceptibly improve. Apart from the widening of roads and the construction of Howrah (Brabourne Road) and Sealdah flyovers in the hands of CMDA, the new building regulations and the prescription of street alignments will stop the choking of roads and be an antidote to this exercise in claustrophobia.

We shall have more water then, getting 160 million gallons a day from Palta water works in place of the present 120 mgd. This will be possible by the renovation of Palta coupled with the augmentation of Talla's pumping capacity as per the Master Plan. Supply from deep tubewells ought to be merely an emergency and standby arrangement by then, as the Garden Reach Water Works with its 60 million gallons a day should substantially be on its way to commissioning. Thirst of Calcutta can not be met by tubewells and, with the Farakka supply making Ganga water sweeter, cleaner and more plentiful, this vital project for the south of Calcutta has to be completed with external assistance if possible, or by our own efforts, if not.

A concomitant to all these activities is that we improve in water management both in checking losses by leaks and wastages and in making the supply pay for it fully. Water has been statutorily accepted now as a measurable service to be separately paid for, and the installation of water meters accepted in principle. A substantial number of water meters should therefore be installed by then, not merely in the suburbs but in the hard core of the Corporation area.

In the conservancy sector not only two of compost plants for which lands have been allotted at Bantala and Kadapara, to a Government undertaking and a private party respectively, should be in production by then, but also two or three others. Substantial mechanisation would have taken place by then in the collection and transportation of garbage. There would also be improvement in communal vats and on the inside and approach roads of dumping grounds.

We believe that there would be, at the beginning of the eighties, more marketing centres and stalls and the existing municipal markets would be renovated as per action already initiated by CMDA and the Corporation. There will be wider and stronger roads because of the new Road Repairs and Maintenance Wing to be established in the Corporation under a separate Chief Engineer and a separate and adequate fund to be given to it. There will be less pollution because of the ban enforced since last year on certain new activities whether manufacturing, servicing or storing, as are recognized to be pollutant, obnoxious or creating health hazards. We believe that this trend would be strengthened by the orderly growth of buildings, whether squat or tall, as per new regulations being framed by Government and by the larger attention to parks and trees.

Now for our 'hard look', we intend to focus on liquid waste disposal, building activities and environmental comfort. We have purposely chosen a few which are engineering oriented, for in a modern city any orderly growth and giving reasonable comforts to the dwellers can only be ensured by reaping the fruits of science and technology. These might also be sound parameters to study the city's development.

#### Liquid Waste Disposal

Conservancy service of a city is essentially in two parts: garbage clearance or solid waste disposal and drainage and sewage comprising the disposal of city wastes in the liquid and semi-liquid stage. Drainage is the removal of storm or excess water and other wastes in water. Sewerage is the removal of excrementitious and other solid matters which have to be flushed out with water. Two fundamental deficiencies in the city's system is that by and large it has no separate system for the two and no sewage treatment plant worth the name. As a result the common drains have largely to perform the function of sewerage round the year and of drainage for rain water during the rainy months. The absence of a modern treatment plant for sewage has in the past decades led to the choking of water-streams on the east like the Kulti and the Bidyadhari into which partially treated sewage is poured or pumped. A modern plant is however being erected at Bagha Jatin Colony by the Calcutta Metropolitan Water & Sanitation Authority.

It may be remembered that, though the city was founded at the end of the 17th Century, it has still about 45% of the total area lying unsewered. Those are mainly in the added areas of Cossipore, Maniktala and Tollygunge and have to make do with existing nikashis, nalas or surface drains. Even in the sewered areas there

are unsewered pockets because of improper development or low-lying pockets which are subjected to severe waterlogging. To improve the drainage system in the sewerage area, the Corporation prepared schemes as per Master Plan by providing storm-water over-flows and executed quite a few of them. Subsequently in 1974 the incomplete schemes were transferred to CMDA who are at present executing them through own agencies. Besides, several other schemes were also prepared by CMDA to improve the drainage congestion of the unsewered and low-lying pockets. Some of these schemes have been completed, giving relief to these pockets by minimising the duration of waterlogging, and others are on way to completion.

Total elimination of water logging is not possible, for no gigantic sewer can be laid so as to clear instantly the heaviest precipitation of the season. Even to give significant relief, the trunk lines have to be renovated and relaid. Sewer lines have to be completed from the beginning to the end and pumps in the pump houses have to function properly for drawing the larger volume of liquid. The people of Calcutta, we are afraid, have to wait for a few more years until schemes are completed down the line as explained.

Added to this inadequacy is the problem of siltation, i.e. a hard crust formed inside the drains because of the deposit of silts, coal, ash, cowshed wastes and garbage. The only method employed was to clean the manholes and gully-pits manually. These could somehow keep the sewers flowing in olden days, but also led to disasters, as in the story of Nafar Chandra Kundu in the thirties. This is an occurrence of tragedy mixed with romanticism in which the man laid down his life to save a gully-pit boy from being choked to death down the sewer. According to one estimate the capacity of the drains is already reduced by as much as 25% because of silts and deposits and the old method is no longer effective, nor hygienic, nor very dignified. Mechanisation is the only answer to clean the drains and sewers. The introduction of sewer cleansing equipment in 1974 and stepping it up now with larger gully emptiers mounted on truck chassis will go a long way in modernising the maintenance of our sewers and reducing water-logging.

#### **Building Activities**

The skyline of Calcutta is changing fast. Housing is a problem in all urban agglomerations, more so in Calcutta where 30 per cent of the surface is under registered bustees, and perhaps in an equal area conditions are no different. When there is not much scope for horizontal expansion the emphasis is necessarily on vertical. Builders try to develop floor areas to the maximum per-

## CALCUTTA IN THE EIGHTIES

missible limit under the Calcutta Municipal Act. The existing provisions in the Act can hardly curb such pernicious trend. Buildings more than 60' in height which are "tall", according to the Act, were very rare in pre-Independence days. Now, however, tall buildings are the most popular. The builders who invest money in such buildings sell out the flats and get a fair return on investment. They try and make a maximum coverage of open areas at the cost of the health and hygiene of the occupiers and the city. In view of all these, we have already suggested some new building regulations for immediate enactment. If these recommendations are accepted by Government, the city will have buildings with more open spaces all round, larger floor area ratio and more inbuilt safety and comfort.

Because of the acute land hunger and the excessive rent any construction would fetch, the owners of buildings do not hesitate to build illegally, and this creates the problem of unauthorised building activities. Government changed the law a few months ago, giving powers of entry into premises between sunset and sunrise in order to prevent unauthorised building activities which are rampant, specially in the night. The amendment has also made a new provision by which police can arrest a person engaged in an unauthorised building activity in defiance of municipal requisitions to stop it.

There has been a recent trend to secure an order of injunction from a court of law against the service of a notice under section 416 by the Calcutta Corporation directing a person to stop unauthorised constructions. The party, instead of complying with the order of the Corporation, goes to the court and gets an ex parte order of injunction against the municipal authorities. From the date of such order to the next hearing there is usually a long gap and the builders take full advantage of the situation to push through construction. Instances are not lacking when a full floor is cast and completed in three or four days. The builders of multi-storied buildings are really resourceful both on technical and legal fronts, engaging the best brains available in the field. On the other hand we struggle through our retained lawyers on moderate fees. We no doubt move with alacrity whenever a prayer for injunction is filed against us, but harsher laws are needed against unauthorised constructions.

The problem of insecure buildings is no less acute. In 1972 we proposed to Government the formation of a Building Repair and Re-development Board for the city in order to prevent house collapse causing death, injury and loss of properties. In Calcutta there are about 1,50,000 buildings. After 1908, there has not

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO


been any street-wise survey of buildings and lands. The Corporation has no authentic data about the exact number of insecure houses and their degree of dilapidation. The Survey of India conducted the last survey from 1902 to 1908 and got the report published by the Government of India in 1911. These survey plans came to be known as Smart's plan. The Building Repair and Redevelopment Board we have in mind is to be a statutory body comprising nominees of the Corporation, CIT, CMDA, CMPO, PWD (Housing) and LIC as well as those representing bodies like owners and tenants associations. The Board will cause total streetwise survey of buildings in the city and take up the repairs and redevelopment of insecure houses with its own funds which might be organised through LIC, Housing department of Government and the Government of India undertaking of Housing & Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO). The occupiers to be displaced might be rehabilitated during the period of construction in a block of flats which the Board might arrange either itself or through the Housing Directorate. On the completion of the work the tenants will move back to the earmarked units and repay to the Board in 20 years the amount spent for capital outlay plus interest.

We strongly feel that such a Board should be formed without further delay. This would achieve the following results: identification of insecure buildings and subsequent removal of insecurity condition; facelift and aesthetic improvement of the city; more open space within the premises; widening and more traffic carrying capacity of roads; repair, renovation or rebuilding without financial burden on owners; and easier realisation of municipal taxes.

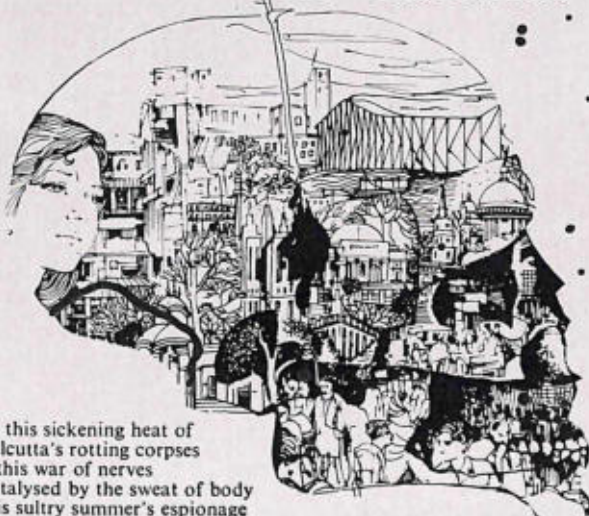
### **Open Space & Beautification**

Open space in the city of Calcutta is too inadequate for the density of population and, percentage-wise, too meagre compared to other cities in India, not to speak of those abroad. In the United Kingdom there is 6 acres of open space or park per 1000 people. For our 33 lakhs people we have only 1500 acres of green including 750 acres of the maidan. The space works out to an acre per 1000, if the maidan is included, and half an acre, if excluded. In that context, it is an imperative necessity to open many more spaces, parks or lakes within the city itself and if necessary action for acquisition of suitable sites should be taken, providing funds therefor. Any permanent allotment of land or space to any club, organisation or institution should be prohibited by proper legislation. Government's feeling is also on that line. It has given a direction that no land can be allotted to such bodies either temporarily for more than seven days or permanently for putting up structures

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# Wash the Sores of Calcutta



banish this sickening heat of  
calcutta's rotting corpses  
crush this war of nerves  
catalysed by the sweat of body  
kill this sultry summer's espionage  
this total weariness  
and this unceasing distress  
of coca-cola music

ocean—bengal the ocean of our bengal  
let us forget all

and sail down the hooghly  
down the rupnarayan  
mathabhanga and matla  
across the bay into the  
vastness of the ocean  
athwart haldi and rasulpur  
into the blizzard of south pole  
or the churning storm of mainak  
break into pieces

the putrid taboos of calcutta  
take them to sand and water  
in dinghies and on foot

take them on a long voyage  
on the schooner of seven winds  
on the water and the sail  
into the far and fragrant  
island of spices

in that wonderful mixture of  
• blue green and turquoise  
wash the festering sores of calcutta  
dry in the breeze the taboos  
which flourish in her sickening sweat  
chasten the mind with frothy breakers  
baptise the body in the  
chilling brine of waves  
the swift sonata of sea breeze  
and waves swinging in your arms

From Bishnu De's

*Naam Rekhechhi*  
*Komal Gandhar Mane Mane*

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The Corporation of Calcutta in the life of Calcutta

BISHNU DE (1909- )

Bishnu De was born in Calcutta in 1909. He taught in the city in the Presidency College and then as Head of the English department in the Maulana Azad College until a few years ago. He has more than a dozen collections of poems, well known among which are *Urbasi O Artemis* (1933), *Smriti Satta Bhabishyat* (1941), *Anwishta* (1950), *Tumi Shudhu* 25 Baisakh (1957), 22 June, *Sei Andhakar Chai* and *Naam Rekhechhi Komal Gandhar*.

The last mentioned book was most probably published in 1950 and was named after the last but one poem in it, namely 'Naam Rekhechhi Komal Gandhar Mane Mane'. It had been an oft-repeated process with the poet to quote from his favourite Tagore—as he had done for this heading—to create a contrast or to lend diversity and depth or just to sharpen the imagery. Bishnu dedicated the poem to Jyotirindra Maitra, a renowned exponent of Rabindra Sangeet in a musical mood, vide expressions like 'meed', 'Mian-ki Mallar', 'Malkosh' and 'Kanada' pervading the poem. 'This war of nerves . . . the sweat of body' in the opening sentence of the poem may also sound an echo of his another favourite Eliot: 'Here is no water, but only rock/Rock and no water and the sandy road,' (Waste land). The line, 'this unceasing distress of cola music' has added significance today in the context of coke and the drink '77'.

## CALCUTTA IN THE EIGHTIES

or otherwise. It is for us now rigidly to follow the directive and to go ahead.

Going by its procedure and rules, CMDA can finance the improvement of existing parks but cannot spend any money on the acquisition or purchase of land for the establishment of new parks. As a result they as well as ourselves (we for want of finance) have occasion to throw up hands in despair when there is representation from fringe areas like Tiljala of Tangra or Garia against bits of open land which, after serving as the playground for local children, disappear one by one to make room for new building activities. There is already a move that the general revenues of the Corporation are augmented. When that happens or Government steps in directly for taking over such plots, the newer areas of the city will be prevented from being an unbroken agglomeration of cement and brick.

Under Sections 356 to 363 of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 the Corporation can prescribe a road alignment or a building line, to control and stop construction beyond the limit of the prescribed line. A committee of officials from the Corporation, CMDA, CIT and Police are going into the details of existing street alignments and development schemes likely to be taken up, and to recommend the width of such streets for prescription of the alignment by the Corporation. It has also been decided to amend the relevant provisions of the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 for better working facilities to the Corporation. It is expected that two to three hundred such street alignments will be prescribed in phases in course of the next four years. The width of the important roads is being enlarged fast so as to bear the stress and strain of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Attention is also being given to roadside footpaths, the planting of trees on the flanks, wherever possible, and beautification of median strips. We have to have more breathing space by way of parks, road islands and gardens. Commercial houses or other organized bodies in the city have now come forward to help the Corporation in the maintenance of parks and squares, or in the planting of trees. Special mention may be made of the commendable work done by a hospital, a women's club and the Calcutta Beautification Society. Their efforts have to be emulated by others. In this connexion the responsibility of citizens in keeping the city clean and beautiful is of paramount importance.

### Cooperation and Finance

The provisions of the Calcutta Municipal Act 1951 are not enough to ensure all we want, nor are our present resources adequate to

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

the purpose. But Government have not only passed some laws against unauthorised construction and encroachment on public places, but also taken the first steps to augment our resources. We therefore believe that this civic body should, by the eighties, be substantially self sufficient. An assurance has been given by Government to the Central Government as well as World Bank that water and sewage, the two most vital services would be self sufficient. Our Government have also agreed to form a Central Valuation Board for proper assessment of urban properties, to raise the rate of taxation on houses, professions etc to the extent possible and to close the gap in municipal budget, if there be still any, by suitable grants and subvention.

We believe that the Corporation must be given the power for strong and quick penal measures and the police must have the authority to move against any action fouling up the city and its life. Not that such powers have to be used heavily or invariably. Once a general awareness, including an element of fear, is installed among the people, they will think twice before indulging in maltreatment or injury to the city. And such an awareness catches on, as has recently been demonstrated in metropolitan agglomerations in this part of the world, like Hongkong, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. Here also we are sure to get the ungrudging cooperation of people if they are properly motivated.

## TAKING A TALLY OF TOLLYGUNGE

Tollywood, the wonderland where dreams are made and marketed! This could have been the tally-ho on which we could begin our voyage of Tollygunge. Unfortunately this Hollywood of Calcutta is no longer in the prime of youth, merely dazzling with studios, movie cameras, flood lights and stars. Its other face of refugee colonies, water logging after a shower, inadequacy in water supply and gaps in transportation is showing up.

Tollygunge dates back to 1775 when Warren Hastings was the first Governor General of India. Gangasagar nullah which was also called Gobindapur Creek took off from the Hooghly and meandered through the area. It silted up and Colonel Tolly of the Royal Engineers decided to desilt it as a commercial venture. He got a 20 year lease from the East India Company and literally struck fortune. Profit from toll was a fabulous 4300 rupees every month. Commerce followed transportation and a bazar grew up beside the canal. Recognition of Tolly was not far behind—the canal was renamed Tolly's Nullah and the area got the Indo-Anglian name of Tollygunge.

In today's tally 200 years later, let us start at 1953 when Tollygunge was physically integrated with Calcutta. It had been a municipality. Within a year of the restoration of elected elements to the Corporation as per the Calcutta Municipal Act 1951, the merger took place, and Tollygunge is the latest accretion to Calcutta. The seed had been sown in the new Act, vide section 594: 'The State Government may, at any time by notification in Official Gazette, declare that the area comprised within the Municipality of Tollygunge shall be included within Calcutta and shall be administered under this Act and thereupon Schedule I to this Act shall be deemed to be amended accordingly'. In the next section, 595 the effect of inclusion is set out, the main features of which are that the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932 would stand repealed in the area so included and that all rules, order, powers etc under the Calcutta Municipal Act, 1951 would apply in lieu.

Before this, another larger accretion to the city was as far back as 1923 when Cossipore and Maniktala Municipalities got merged. The existing municipal offices were converted into local offices and started functioning semi-independently, although tagged on to Districts I and II respectively. When Tollygunge came in, it was first an added area to District IV, but later on, in a redistri-

\* Tollygunge Development Council Bulletin, 19 December 1976.

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## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

bution, made a sub-district of III. Tollygunge added 4761 acres or 7.44 sq. miles to 18,868 acres or 29.48 sq. miles of Calcutta proper. At the time of merger Tollygunge was still somewhat open with 14,000 premises and tanks and greeneries abounding.

Under the West Bengal Government's Notification No. M. 1M.79/52(1) dated the 31st. March 1953 the merger was effected, but the switchover to the Calcutta Municipal Act from the Bengal Municipal Act, 1932 was not instantaneous. For five years valuations of holdings and the levy of municipal rates continued under the old Act. Colonisation was however going apace, for it was a favourite and convenient spot of settlement for East Bengal refugees. By 1958-59 when the first general revaluation of lands and buildings was done under the Calcutta Municipal Act, the number of premises almost doubled to 27,000 which by 1970-71 became about 36,000. The demand was however on low side only about Rs. 11 lakhs per quarter, compared to Rs. 2.07 crores for the one lakh premises of Calcutta proper.

The Tollygunge area comprises nine wards out of the hundred for the whole city. These wards (among which slight additions have since been made to the areas of 69 and 70) correspond to two Assembly constituencies in part and one in full as in the Table below :

Wards	Assembly Constituency
69 (Tiljala, Topsis) and 70 (Picnic Garden Road)	Ballygunge (part)
94 (Kasba), 95 (Jodhpur Park, Lake Gardens) and 96 (Bangur Hospital areas)	Dhakuria (part)
97 (Moore Avenue, Regent Park), 98 (N. S. C. Bose Road, Raipur) 99 (Jadavpur) and 100 (Ganguli Bagan, Naktala)	Tollygunge

On an average each of these wards has 500 acres of area and 40,000 people. The figures as per 1971 census and 1974 voters' list are given in the Table below :

Ward	Acres	Persons	Literate (in '000)	Voters
69	944	44	18	24
70	522	33	21	21
94	390	41	27	24
95	600	49	31	28
96	502	37	25	22
97	438	27	18	18
98	509	40	30	25
99	411	36	27	26
100	525	38	28	25
Total :	4,841	344	227	213

## TAKING A TALLY OF TOLLYGUNGE

Calcutta is defined in the Calcutta Municipal Act by section 5(11) read with Schedule I. Obviously there is no definition for Tollygunge for which we may refer to part of Schedule I tracing out the boundary in Tollygunge area and to Schedule V which, under the authority of Section 172, gives the boundaries of wards. It will be interesting to quote these:

### Schedule I

"... thence southward along the eastern edge of Russa Road to the point where it meets Tollygunge Circular Road; thence along the southern boundary of Tollygunge Circular Road to the point where it meets the southern boundary of the Port Commissioners' land acquired for the purpose of constructing King George's Dock and its connected works . . ."

### Schedule V

Ward	Boundaries
69	On the north, Tiljala Road, Topsia Road South, Topsia Road North, Tangra Road South and a private road running East to West near the Chinese Club and the southern boundary of Boinchtola Union Board; on the south, Dr. Girindra Sekhar Bose Road and Picnic Garden Road; on the east Topsia Road South and the western boundary of Boinchtola Union Board; on the west, the Eastern Railway and Hughes Road.
70	On the north Picnic Garden Road and Dr. Girindra Sekhar Bose Road; on the south, Bosepukur Road, R. K. Chatterjee Road, N. C. Chowdhury Road and Baikuntha Ghose Road; on the east Dr. Girindra Sekhar Bose Road, western boundary of Boinchtola Union Board and Banku Bihari Chatterjee Road; on the west, the Eastern Railway.
94	On the north Baikuntha Ghose Road, N. C. Chowdhury Road, R. K. Chatterjee Road and Bosepukur Road; on the south, Rajdanga Road, Sarat Ghose Road, northern boundary of Haltoo Union Board and Garfa Road; on the east, western boundary of Boinchtola Union Board, Kasba Road, K. P. Roy Lane, western boundary of Haltoo Union Board and Jheel Road; on the west, the Eastern Railway and Banku Bihari Chatterjee Road.
95	On the north, the Eastern Railway; on the south, Jadavpur Station Road, Jadavpur Central Road, Prince Golam Hossain Shah Road and Prince Anwar Shah Road; on the east, the Eastern Railway; on the west, Prince Golam Md. Shah Road and Dr. Daudar Rahman Road.
96	On the north, the Eastern Railway and Prince Anwar Shah Road; on the south, Graham Road and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road; on the east, Dr. Daudar Rahman Road, and Prince Gholam Md. Shah Road; on the west, Deshapran Shasmal Road.
97	On the north, Circular Road Tollygunge and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road; on the south, Tolly's Nullah; on the east Deshapran Shasmal Road, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road and a new road in continuation of Raipur Road upto Tolly's Nullah; on the west, Tolly's Nullah.
98	On the north, Graham Road, Minapara Road, Raipur Road and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road; on the south, Khanpur Road and Tolly's Nullah; on the east, Minapara Road, Naktala Road, Khanpur Road and the road from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road upto Tolly's Nullah; on the west, the road in con-

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99. continuation of Raipur Road upto Tolly's Nullah and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road.
100. On the north, Prince Goham Hossain Shah Road and Jadavpur Central Road; on the south, Raipur Road East and Minapara Road; on the east, Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick Road; on the west, Minapara Road and Prince Goham Md. Shah Road.
- On the north, Raipur Road East and Khanpur Road; on the south, Tolly's Nullah, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road and Raipur Road; on the east, Raja Subodh Chandrá Mallick Road; on the west, the road from Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road upto Tolly's Nullah, Khanpur Road, Naktala Road and Raipur Road.

It is interesting to note that there are several references to old names like Russa (now renamed Shyama Prasad Mukherjee) Road and King George's (now Netaji Subhas) Dock and to Union Boards (since abolished). The reason is that any change in the Schedule which is a part and parcel of the Act can only be done by the Legislature which has somehow been overlooked till now.

It is gratifying to learn that the people of Tollygunge under the leadership of the Tollygunge Development Council are making conscious and concerted efforts in developing the area and improving services. In going through a recent study made by them on developmental works in Tollygunge-Jadavpur area, I was glad to see that cleanliness, beautification, environmental hygiene and sanitation form its running and connecting theme, although the study adumbrates various sectors like water, drainage, traffic, area development, open space, education, industries, roads, tanks and what not.

The study has pertinently brought out the similarity between the rivulet Coom on the north of Madras and our Tolly's Nullah on the south. Coom, a dead drain and dumping ground a few years ago, has been resuscitated to form a pleasant waterway and a source of beauty to the city of Madras. Some excavation was done in the lower reaches of Tolly's Nullah but the sources of pollution and semisolid disposal are so numerous that no improvement worth the name is noticeable. The water course has the respectable name of Adi Ganga but unless pollution is checked, the name would remain a mockery. The West Bengal Prevention and Control of Water Pollution Board has not done anything in the matter except issuing a few warning notices on us and perhaps a few others.

One sure way of preventing such pollution is to expedite the replacement of service privies by sanitary ones. C.M.D.A. arranges it free of charge for bustees and by providing three-fourth of the cost, Rs. 900/-, if the householder arranges the balance of Rs. 300/- The scheme has not yet proved very popular, partly because of the inadequacy of flushing water, and partly for the prejudice

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which still lingers. The Council's study has rightly drawn attention to the matter, suggesting compulsive methods which in its turn would mean a change in law. The suggestion should be examined by Government.

The Council suggests a crash programme for the shifting or relocation of industries now located all over to newly started industrial estates. This is an essential suggestion for ecology, but livelihood is also involved. In this connexion it would be useful to refer to the decision by the Corporation of Calcutta to regulate and control industries, to start with the new ones only, in an effort to prevent pollution, nuisance etc. We issued a notification in the Calcutta Gazette dated November 28, 1974 prohibiting certain trades in terms of section 437 of the Calcutta Municipal Act and permitting some others depending on the area and surroundings.

In 68 wards, including 96 to 100 of Tollygunge, certain trades are in no way permitted, besides storing, packing, processing etc. of certain articles in excess of the prescribed quantity. Also prohibited are the keeping of horses, cattle or birds and storing of timber, coal, straw and other combustible materials. The permissible trades are domestic gas and fuel, wheat crushing, dry cleaning, tailoring, ladies home products etc. In 15 wards, including 94 and 95 of Tollygunge, the trades of book-binding, petrol selling but without motor vehicle repairing, small scale industries (with less than 10 persons if run with power and less than 20 if without) are allowed. In another 15 wards, including 70 of Tollygunge, the only restriction is on rubber industry and the storing or business of animal origin like blood, catgut, offal etc. In the remaining two, 69 of Tollygunge and 61 outside, there is no restriction.

Cleanliness on roads has also been stressed in the Council study. Regular sweeping of roads is no doubt a necessity, but no less is the prevention of haphazard dumping of garbage, kitchen wastes and garden refuse on the roads. To make the people conscious of their duty in this regard and to shame them into disposing of such material in a regulated manner, we issued an advertisement last year: 'Where do you throw garbage? On the street, where else? You are right. Throughout the working hours . . . etc. But we do not yet see any indication of change in the people's attitude and habit.

The point has since been stressed by us again and again. In our 'City Welfare Programme for the Good of Calcutta' we gave the message more succinctly as below:

- F or throwing garbage avoid 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- A esthetics demands no writings on walls,
- R oads are arteries of the city—their maintenance is a must.

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We thought we should ask for restraint at midday also. That is why despite the Engineering Manual we ask for no throwing of garbage till 3 p.m. And there is really speaking no direct provision of penal nature in our Act against those who mess up the street—only protracted harassment under Police Act, if we choose to go that way. We daresay the fight for cleanliness is still being fought by us essentially in a non-violent manner. But we may have to ask for prompt punishment on the model of many developed and affluent countries. They keep their housefronts and roads spotlessly clean, and the secret is that any one fouling up the surrounding, may be even with a cigarette end or a toffee wrapper, will run the risk of hundreds of dollars of fine and in default imprisonment. But few have to be punished, for there is no such violation. Will that stage be FAR to reach?



১  
ওরে ওরে শ্রীনিবাস  
চালাস নি আর মিনিবাস।  
লোক পড়ছে চাপা,  
অতঃপর হে বাপা  
হাজতে যামিনী বাস।



২  
নাইবা থাকুক মন্দফরাস  
ধাঙড় এবং জমাঙ্গদার,  
কলকাতা সাফ রাখেন একা  
শ্রীযুত শিবু সমাঙ্গদার।

'Mini Chhara' by Amitabha Chaudhuri, in Ananda Mela, the children's page of Ananda Bazar Patrika., 24 February 1975. Chhara in Bengali means both 'a doggerel verse' and 'a thin solution of cowdung in water sprinkled over a swept area for purification'.

The first verse runs as follows: 'Hullo, hullo Srinivas/Ply no more the minibus/A man has been run over/You are to therefore/ Spend the night in lock-up.' If it is an indirect indictment of the city's roads and traffic the second verse comes more pungently to the core of civic problems: 'Let there be none to carry the dead/ Let there be no scavenger or sweeper/Clean—Calcutta must be kept/By Shrijut Shibu Samaddar.'

## CALCUTTA'S CRI DE COEUR

Every day you read news of chaos in the Corporation. No water, no lights on the streets, garbage heaps ail over the city, pavements occupied by hawkers, bald parks without a patch of green where children can play. This is the picture of the Great City! You do not get the municipal services, yet you responded ungrudgingly to our appeal and paid a record amount in rates and taxes this year: Rs. 11.14 crores or Rs. 2 crores more than last year. I put below a statement of our revenue and expenditure:

Revenue	Rs. crores	Expenditure	Rs. crores	Unpaid at the year's end	Rs. crores
House-tax incl. charges on India Govt. properties	8,58	Pay	9.07	Provident fund	0,17
Fees on trades, professions etc.	0,94	Allowances, ex-gratia provident fund	3.40	Livery/livery allowance	0,20
Other municipal receipts	1,62	Servicing of loans	1.18	Annual dues to CIT (excluding old arrears of Rs. 1,55 crores)	0,72
Govt. subvention of 80% d.a.	3,46	Water supply conservancy	1.36	Rabindra Setu tax	0,18
Govt. grant and advance	0,20	Other public services (lighting, health, sewerage, roads etc.)	1.71	Outstanding to contractors & suppliers	0,30
Entry tax	2,33			Ways & means refund to Govt.	1,45
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,13</b>		<b>17,13</b>		<b>3,02</b>

Four years ago our total income was Rs. 12.00 crores and expenditure Rs. 13.50 crores. Out of this the establishment charges cost the Corporation Rs. 8.50 crores which have today gone up to Rs. 12.47 crores. It is you, the citizens of Calcutta, who pushed up the income by paying more and more in rates and taxes and you, the people of the State, who bore the burden of larger Government grants, but the increased amount has all been spent in pay and allowances of the Corporation employees. Besides, the new assets created by CMDA, CIT etc. by spending crores of rupees in the form of roads, drains, parks, tubewells

\* Souvenir of West Bengal Journalists' Conference, 30 July 1977.

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

etc. cannot be taken over by the Corporation and pressed into service for the citizen, for it cannot spend 10 lakhs in the running and maintenance of an asset costing a crore. If on top of this, the employees have to be paid more in pay and allowances, if they are to be promoted to higher posts for the sake of promotion only, we are afraid, the minimum services that we are still rendering—by the supply of water to premises, by the removal of storm water and sewage, by the maintenance of street lights, by the collection and disposal of garbage, by the running of primary schools and hospitals—all will come to a halt. Payment of wages will eat up all our revenue.

So we propose: Whatever may be the intensity of agitation, however it may hit the civic life, no amount meant for public services should be spent by the Corporation for any other purpose. Now you tell us.

No, dear reader, you need not start in your seat. It is not the start of a new trouble in the Corporation, nor the joining of battle between the civic employees and the Calcuttans. Please go through the passage once again and you will realise that we took you back by three years. It is no war of worlds, like the one whose live broadcast 40 years ago brought panic in America from coast to coast. You may recall that the entire piece was an advertisement by the civic body on 9 April 1974 when the battle clouds started gathering. The heading was: To Whom does Calcutta belong—33 thousand Employees or 33 lakh Citizens?

The message was repeated in Bengali, Hindi and Urdu newspapers too. It was in a style of which people immediately took notice. The Bengali heading 'Kolkata Kar' rolled from mouth to mouth, so much so that the famous humorist-author Sibram Chakravarti gave a paragraph in his page on a Bengali daily. He reframed the question by adding a suffix to the slogan: "Kolkata-ta Kar' and pointed out that the answer was in the question: 'Kolkata takar'. We agreed, but after many turbulent months, when comparative peace and systematic work returned to the Corporation. Precisely money is a major problem, as author Sibram established by the displacement of the suffix. Time has come when the Corporation has almost reached its limits and, for better working, its infrastructure has to be fed with money.

Apart from the unprecedented response that the newspaper insertion brought from the people at that time, one tell-tale sign is still there in the shape of a hoarding fronting the St. Paul's Cathedral. 'Calcutta Everyman's City/No Says this Calcuttan/Whose Street Whose City?' cries the hoarding with a rickshaw

## CALCUTTA'S CRI DE COEUR

puller in the foreground. The question mark is big enough to gobble up his rickshaw. In the background is the city's skyline made up with the steeple of the cathedral, the minaret of the Nakhoda mosque, the cupola of the Kali temple as well as the outlines of Victoria Memorial and the Howrah Bridge.

As people voiced their feelings against the employees the latter responded by calling a general strike on 25 April. We therefore came out on the 22nd with a sequel to the advertisement. This time we make a presentation with the correct mechanism of quote and unquote :

### Quo Vadis Calcutta

"To our question, 'To Whom does Calcutta belong?' we have received many letters and telephones and the reply is that the city is for its citizens.

"We abide by the decision. If 33 thousand Corporation employees want to strike, let them. Ours is the sole resolution: funds for urban development and services shall not be diverted to employees. I would remind the employees of the Corporation: Your challenge of a general strike is to get your demands by striking at the daily life and needs of 33 lakh citizens.

"I would appeal to the citizens: Please lead us. Please remove the garbage with your own hands. Please light the lamps in your own wards. Those of you who can handle the water pumps, please come forward and provide at least the few drops to drink. You may note that many workers of the Corporation will welcome your leadership. They keep quiet as they do not get it. I shall remove garbage myself. Each of my officers will do so.

"I am fully conscious that this is not enough to revive this Great City—but we have no other path open. We have to build a just movement, however small it might be. Will you please form groups in each locality to start a new satyagraha? We shall serve and assist you to the best of our ability. Calcutta has to be kept alive, if we are to live."

Our path finding was still not easy. At the end of April there was a truce in the Corporation, thanks to the intervention by Minister and a few concessions given here and there. But by July the gathering clouds thickened and there was continuous turmoil in the Central Office. Our collection of taxes fell perilously low.

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

We had therefore no alternative to conducting the argument in public between the management and the employees. We started submitting our problems to the Calcuttans through the press and the radio. Here is the next large specimen in the first week of September 1974.

### Which Calcutta—Your Choice ?

"Eight and a half months ago I joined the Corporation as Commissioner with a hope that I would have a fair chance to solve the problems of drinking water, garbage and dilapidated roads. But the three evils can be fought only if 33,000 employees of the Corporation are roused into the joy of action. It is our experience that most employees want to work, but only a few stand in the way.

"I render an account of the agitations we faced. In January Jamadars and Peons started gherao and followed it up by cease work. Then came Corporation teachers. Their hunger strike for a week disrupted studies in the primary schools. Then by turn came demonstrations and mass squatting in Palta water works, district engineer offices and garages for garbage lorries. Meanwhile the ambulance unit staged a hunger strike and the Boral TB Hospital a general strike. The Corporation staff of the CMDA cell then made their debut with relay hunger strike. For a while the burial grounds and burning ghats also came to a halt due to the workers' agitation.

"The latest agitation is by the Clerks' Union, first by demand deputation and staging of demonstration and then stepped up by continuous dharna, work to rule, token cease work and last of all by mass cease work—undeclared from the 17th August and on declaration from the 23rd. The cease work is continuing.

"In the result, collection of taxes and rates came to a halt. At this time of the year, our daily collection used to be Rs. 3 lakhs against which we are getting only Rs. 27,000 since the middle of August. You know quite well the financial problems of the Corporation. We have no money. How many times should we go abegging to Government? Therefore the current decision that we must collect from municipal rates and dues, at least the amount required for the payment of wages. Every month the civic employees start receiving their pay from the first of the month. This time we could not start disbursing for want of funds. Whatever little we have we shall spend for labour and factory workers. Others will not get their pay, neither the clerks, nor the Commissioner.

## CALCUTTA'S CRI DE COEUR

"Every year an agitation is mounted up before the Puja. The apparent target is the Corporation authorities. But a discerning eye will find the real target to be the 33 lakh citizens whose taxes run the Corporation. Today you have the right to know the truth and nothing but the whole truth. The city belongs to you and you have, in its overall interest, to decide what is the best way to bring back discipline in the Corporation offices and make them workworthy.

"If this rickety and dilapidated town has to be made a masculine metropolis, all of us—the citizens and the working employees of the Corporation—have to put their shoulders to the wheel. To face the difficult days ahead, I beseech every one's co-operation. I appeal to the agitators too to think for a moment about this city. It is not the personal property of the Government or a Minister or the Commissioner. You, the upset employees of the Corporation, are co-sharers of Calcutta, and if for one reason or other it dies, you can not live. I want an answer from you all. What is your choice: a healthy and strong Calcutta or a decadent and dead Calcutta?"

### SMILE A DAY



Amrita Bazar Patrika  
dated 12 September 1974

Better leave that choice to our  
great grandsons.

The West gave us the adage 'Silence is golden', and according to their book of etiquette certain things are best done in silence, like munching a juicy piece of mutton or lapping up a steaming cup of tea or releasing the internal air. We in the orient were not however so finicky. Any reader of the unexpurgated edition of the Arabian Nights will find examples galore of the sounds of sherbert swigging

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as well as of the last type. Then, the hallmark of satisfaction in our feasts used to be liberal sounds like a steaming engine's over the various courses on the plate and a full mouthed belching to mark the successful end of Operation Intake. That is why the child prodigy of Rabindranath made his debut in poetry by describing a hearty 'dessert' of milk, mango and sandesh as one abounding in hapush-nupush sounds till the last morsel, so that even an ant had to cry in despair over the plate, left absolutely clean.

We also developed the theory of crying by objectives. An infant in swaddling clothes is not supposed to get its feed of breast milk unless engaged first in the exercise of lungs. 'Even a mother will not give milk, unless the child cries'—is the saying in our mother tongue. Every morning, or rather night according to my watch, for it is closer to three o'clock than four, our little grand daughter lets out a siren for her breakfast from the mother, acting also as my alarm clock for early morning work, but alas without a cup of the bed tea. My dear wife sharing the bed with the new mother and the baby can no longer be bothered, as in my days of masculine chauvinism.

We acted on the same principle and asked for our share of milk from the citizens of Calcutta. By the middle of September, 1974 when, with delayed payment of employees' salaries, our coffers became empty, and the recalcitrant employees would not allow collection even by officers in the municipal office, we opened a second front—in the Writers' Buildings. That advertisement dated 20 September is now reproduced :

### **Who's There to stop Calcutta ?**

"Who is there to stop Calcutta ? Whatever be the intensity of agitation, the city's garbage will be removed, water will be supplied to houses and lamps will be lit on the streets. Please bless us, help us and stand by us.

"A section of Corporation employees wants to stall its activities by stopping the collection of municipal taxes. They have also served a notice of total strike in the Corporation from the 1st October. On the other hand, if taxes are not collected, sweepers will not get broomsticks, baskets and handcarts for cleaning the city, nor the contractors get their payment and run the garbage lorries. If taxes are not collected, alum, chlorine and other essential materials will not be procured and water supply will stop. If taxes are not collected, bulbs will not be bought and streets have to go without lights. If taxes are not collected, the rickety roads of Calcutta will

not have even a coat of pitch before the Pujas. Result citizens will be fed up and ask the Corporation authorities to compromise with the agitators.

"A wishful thinking indeed! Citizens know all and feel all. This city belongs to you, me and us. We, the Corporation employees, are on your payroll and are your servants. We have to serve you, so long as you give us our daily bread.

"Please come forward one and all, and deposit your tax. We shall take care of light, water, garbage clearance and road repairs. We have taken a firm decision that the employees who shun work will not be paid. We have opened emergency counters for tax collection in the Writers' Buildings (Information office on Ground Floor East) to operate daily from 12 noon to 3 p.m. upto the 30th September.

"Will you kindly pay up your dues early and be our co-participants in the struggle."

Our programme of collection was till the last-day of September, for the 1st of October was the D-day when all unions of the Corporation led by the Sangram Committee were to launch an all out general strike. The people of Calcutta are aware how there was an unprecedented move by us at countdown one on the 30th September in the form of a lock-out and how it contributed largely to the dramatic collapse of the general strike next day in less than 12 hours. The lock-out notice, although not publicised through newspapers but only by pasting on the locked out gate of the Corporation, is worth presenting in this series. It is also instructive in the sense that the main notice was pasted at 6 a.m. and we came out with a corrigendum at 12 noon to make it clear that the lock-out was not of the entire Corporation but only of the Central Office and that too against a section of the employees. Look out for the corrected lock-out notice:

**Lock-out Lock-out**

Central Municipal Office partially locked-out

"As all concerned are aware, the Corporation of Calcutta Clerks' Union in its letter of 16 July 1974 submitted a charter of demands and also indicated the programme of agitation in case the demands were not met. Although the matter was taken up by the Commissioner, four members of the Union started demonstrating before his office by way of 'dharna'.

"Following a series of negotiations between the Commissioner

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and the Sangram Committee, it was agreed at a meeting on 17 August 1974 that the Clerks' Union's further programme of movement and the Commissioner's earlier order of pay cut on the four Union officials for absence from duties would be kept in abeyance. It was noted with regret that the Union did not keep to its commitment. The Union even called upon its members to resort to indefinite stay-in-strike from 22 August 1974, as per its original programme. The clerical employees also interfered with the work for assessment, presentation of bills and collection of cash, and prevented others to do their work, obviously with the intention of paralysing the administration. A situation was reached when the normal functioning of the Central Office became impossible, while work at the outlying offices was much affected.

"Since the Corporation is a 'public utility service' and also an 'essential service' under the Defence of India Rules, the Corporation authorities exercised a lot of patience. In a bid to resolve the difference several meetings were taken with the Clerks' Union and the Sangram Committee by the Commissioner and other senior officials, and at a later stage by the Minister of Municipal Services. But no solution could be reached.

"It appears that the officials of the Clerks' Union and the Sangram Committee are using pressure tactics on the Corporation, taking advantage of the impending Puja festival and are determined to continue with the present stay-in-strike. There are a large number of loyal workmen who are prepared to do their duties but prevented from doing so due to circumstances earlier explained. In the overall interest of the community, such a state of affairs cannot be further allowed to continue. The authorities are hereby forced to declare a lock-out of the Central Municipal Office at 5, S. N. Banerjee Road, Calcutta-13 with immediate effect from 6 o'clock in the morning on Monday 30 September 1974.

"This notice will apply in the first instance to all workmen as defined under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 (Act No. XIV of 1947) who come under the clerical and associated cadres and/or to the Calcutta Corporation Clerks' Union. Following declaration of the lock-out any workman entering the premises shall be treated as trespasser and will be exposed to appropriate action. Those workmen, who do not like to participate in the present movement launched by the Union and the Sangram Committee, will be required to give

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individual declaration to that effect at the main gate and will no doubt be permitted entry after verification and identification.

"Apart from following the principle of 'no work no pay' for the period of strike and lock-out, the authorities of the Corporation reserve the right to take disciplinary action against those responsible for having committed or who would commit acts subversive of discipline.

"The authorities sincerely regret to have been compelled to take this step which is likely to cause further inconvenience to public. At the same time they beg to enlist public support and co-operation in tackling the problem facing all of them, determined as they are to keep civic services running to the extent possible."

This exercise in communication will remain incomplete if we stop as soon as the battle drums were muted. There was much of consolidation and conservation after the event, and we must proclaim truthfully that the management and the employees, though not living happily everafter in the style of nursery or teen-age tales, have been cooperating with each other and rendering civic services to the best possible extent. The peaceful atmosphere in the Corporation offices and fields and a seriousness in tackling the problems came to us not in June 1975 after the declaration of emergency in the country, but nine months earlier when the general strike was called off.

During this period we came out with various advertisements in a bid to reach the people and buck up ourselves. Some of them were in a poetic series, some in literary vein and some to highlight the diverse nature of our services and the need for constant attention. The first in the series last mentioned is now presented.

### **To Serve You Round the Year**

The Corporation of Calcutta  
Despite dozens of difficulties

- : Tries its best to give you civic service.
- : Supplies you drinking water in all seasons.
- : Removes garbage for the hygiene of the city.
- : Lights lamps to remove darkness from your path.
- : Protects you and your children from attack of epidemics.

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For your further comforts and convenience  
This Corporation

- : Has taken up expansion of waterworks at Palta and Talla.
- : Is reorganizing the conservancy department for quicker removal of garbage by a larger fleet of vehicles and mechanical equipment.
- : Has stepped up the modernisation of drainage pumping stations for quick removal of storm water.
- : Has installed data processing units for sending rate bills for your premises correctly, quickly and regularly.

What you demand of us and how you cooperate with us  
will decide  
how we keep to the path of dedication to deeds.

This was brought out almost simultaneously with the withdrawal of the strike. Four more in the series were 'Calcutta Lives on in Itself', 'City Welfare Programme for the Good of Calcutta', 'Striving to Serve—Every Time Everyday' and 'Death rides an unauthorised Building'. The last one is an exhortation to the people to desist from illegal construction, vide below :

### **Death Rides an Unauthorised Building**

Structural cracks are the signs of cancer to a building. Like cancer it takes life—but many, not just one.

If you want to commit suicide, why take the trouble to go to a druggist? A surer way is building an unauthorised house which may take your life and a few more. It may also maintain a regular flow of death and suffering in the neighbourhood, for it will :

- : Generate germs and diseases with restriction in the passage of air and light.
- : Increase fire hazards and block the passage of escape from fire.
- : Increase the traffic generating capacity in buildings and at the same time decrease the traffic taking capacity on roads; the result: traffic jams and accidents.
- : Overburden and occasionally disrupt the existing services for water supply, sewerage, drainage etc.
- : Weaken the building, loaded over the safe loading capacity, and may cause its collapse leading to loss of lives and properties.

If you choose a journey to death and want co-passengers, take to unauthorised construction to your heart's content. If not, ask us. We are here to help you with a century's experience.

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This was published by us at the end of 1976, but before that in the middle of the year we came out with another advertisement with the theme of continuous service. Although not a passionate cry, it may be accepted as a finale to this account. By this time we also acquired a tail for our appeals, as you will see at the end. Whether it is an under-statement or no statement at all, it is for you to decide.

### **Striving to Serve—Every time Everyday**

Efforts to serve continue at Calcutta Corporation  
for 24 hours of the day

- : Drawing water from the Ganga and treating it at Palta.
- : Pumping and storing potable water in the overhead tank at Talla.
- : Removing storm water and sewage by means of sewer lines and drainage pumping stations.
- : Keeping burning ghats and burial grounds open throughout day and night.
- : Sending ambulances to patients as soon as a telephone call is received.
- : Keeping the T.B. centres and the maternity homes ever ready to serve patients and mothers.

Some of the recent steps to improve city life

- : Keeping Calcutta green by taking help of private organisations in the development of parks and squares.
- : Completing the repair of 85 miles of roads and lanes in three months.
- : Giving land at Dhapa for a mechanical plant for compost from garbage—what the city can recycle to the country.
- : Sinking of 18 deep tubewells in areas like Kasba, Tollygunge, Tiljala—12 more to be commissioned shortly.
- : Stepping up the anti-adulteration drive—doubling of cases and fines in court.
- : Proposing a thorough overhaul of building regulations—especially with a view to strengthening water supply, ventilation, fire fighting etc. in multi-storied buildings.
- : Expediting assessment of municipal taxes and forming a special cell for the recovery of arrears.

Now is the time for your co-operation in mind and in deeds.  
Success is the name of this great effort.

**The Corporation of Calcutta in the life of Calcutta**

## SOME CITY HALLS ABROAD

With the establishment of the new Municipal Corporation in 1924 by the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1923, it has become a popular civic institution administered on democratic lines. The new Act has incorporated many provisions of the County Council of London, created under the Local Government Act 1888, for the administration of bigger London regarding water supply, drainage, sewers, lighting, town planning, education, transport etc. . . . The formation of the District Committees of Calcutta with District Engineers and District Health Officers gives an idea of the working of the Burrough Councils in bigger London. My experience in Calcutta and London tells me that our administration of these four districts is in no way inferior to that of Burrough Councils in London.

In England town-planning has got a special peculiarity in improving the town, because the Town Planning Act of 1925 has compelled every rural or urban town, for the purposes of its improvement and recreation, to place before the Parliament a town-planning scheme on the lines of the Act by which the zones should be specified. These zones consist of (i) special residential, (ii) general residential, (iii) general business, (iv) special business, (v) general industrial, (vi) special industrial and (vii) undetermined.

My experience in the Calcutta Corporation as its Chairman of the Roads and Bustee Committee for three years is that to improve bigger Calcutta it is desirable that a town planning Act should be passed on the basis of the British Act by which we can make Calcutta stand on a footing equal to a European or American city.

(From 'Calcutta & London—a Study in Contrast' by M. Daud, Alderman in Calcutta Municipal Gazette, 26 November 1932).

In having a look around, I quote the above by way of a prologue. In an urban local body, the chief has however to focus his vision constantly on the current problems. Its works are of daily house-keeping nature and to look backward and forward may appear to be a pastime. But such a relaxation is needed, as much as the reactions from citizens and organizations whenever they are aggrieved or pleased. Such communications and mental excursions I accept as sustenance in my working world.

A letter was written to me by a top executive of an essential service organisation at the end of 1974 when we had just left behind the phase of cease-work and strikes and were on the threshold of peace and work. In that friendly and re-assuring letter he added that he had been to Philadelphia at the end of 1970 and was charmed by the quality of civic service and the efforts at beautification, especially in the sphere of roads, buildings and markets. Its Kennedy-Centre, he said, soothed the eye,

\* Mayors' Newsletter, New Delhi, October-December 1977.

## SOME CITY HALLS ABROAD

although only in the fifties that American city of glorious traditions bore slums and ugliness as well as the sins of an inept civic administration. He also informed me that the advancement of Philadelphia was such a remarkable affair that in the sixties the US Magazine "National Civic Review" had published an article to present how a city that had been a blot on the landscape once again became an ornament to the American scene. The friend enquired of me, "Could we not also assemble some such Calcuttans in our country who could be induced into waging a similar war for gathering energy, beauty and adequate service in this moribund city?"

### The Triumph of the Angry Men

Over a luncheon table in Philadelphia, advertising executive Harry Batten looked round at a group of his businessmen friends, searched his own soul and came up with a remarkably candid confession. "The trouble with this city," he told his companions, "is us." This was in 1948—and something certainly was drastically wrong with Philadelphia. The city was choking to death on its filthy slums, its tangle of traffic, its civic inertia and political corruption. Batten's thoughts that day were inspired by a meeting with a manufacturer planning to put up a new plant in the eastern part of the country. "Why not in Philadelphia?" Batten had asked. His client laughed. "We surveyed 20 of the biggest American cities," he said, "and Philadelphia would be our last choice."

Out of their luncheon grew the Greater Philadelphia Movement, a civic organization which can stand proudly alongside the groups of eighteenth-century businessmen and artisans who in this city planned America's independence and wrote its constitution. In 1948, however, GPM's task seemed hopeless. It was difficult in Philadelphia to put up a new building without paying graft to representatives of a political machine which held City Hall in a highwayman's grasp. The police were known to take bribes from gamblers and bootleggers; they stole apples and beefsteaks from the corner store. The water was foul. ("It's not that the water's bad," went a local saying, "It's the sewage they mix with it.") Refuse was collected by horse and cart and hauled to a burning dump whose stench spread over half the city.

The first thing the city needed, the group decided, was a new charter. Philadelphia's form of government was obsolete for a modern city of two million. The political machine, of course, resisted. The incumbent mayor tried to pack the charter-writing committee with party hacks. But determined and influential GPM members put on so much pressure that he changed his

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mind—and an outstanding committee was appointed. Once the charter was written, Philadelphia's bosses schemed to put it up for a yes-or-no ballot in the off-election year of 1951, thinking that the machine could easily defeat it. They reckoned, however, without the 34,000 eager people, mostly women, who marched from door to door drumming up enthusiasm for the charter. Said one puzzled canvasser, "Here I am trying to beat the charter, and every day my wife and children beg me to vote for it."

The charter was approved by a rousing 119,970 majority. Under the old form of Government Philadelphia's laws were made by a city council of 22 members, all elected from districts. "Each councillor represented only his own constituents," Batten said, "Not one represented the city." Under the new charter the council was streamlined to 17 members, ten elected by districts and seven by the city at large. A reform mayor, Joseph Clark, was elected; he had returned from the war determined to dedicate his life to public service—and Philadelphia was on its way.

One spectacular change has been the elimination of an eyesore which plagues most American cities—the produce market where fresh fruit and vegetables, shipped in by long-distance truck and train, are sold to local grocers and carted away again in lock trucks. As in most cities, Philadelphia's produce market grew up from a little horse-and-cart affair near the wharves and downtown railway lines. Over the years it expanded into a sprawling, inefficient and incredibly confused operation. Traffic jams in the old narrow streets were colossal; truck drivers sat futilely at their wheels, waiting hours for a path to open.

But what was to be done about it? The men who ran the Dock Street market paid low rents; they did not want to move. And where could room be found for a substitute market? One day Harry Batten looked out of one window of his office towards the Dock Street market, then out of another window towards the burning dump that polluted the air of South Philadelphia. An ambitious notion flashed into his mind.

Because of that vision, the Dock Street market has been torn down; in its place will soon rise a group of fine 30-storey apartment buildings, a ten-minute walk from downtown offices. And on the site of the former city dump there now stands a 388-acre modern wholesale market, with broad streets and ample parking space, from which most of Philadelphia's fruit, vegetables, fish, poultry and meat are distributed with exemplary speed, efficiency and cleanliness. Philadelphia's new food-distribution centre is paying for itself. It cost the city 15 million dollars to buy and improve the land—but this and more will come back in taxes.

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A mere 17,800 dollars a year was received in taxes from the old eyesore; the new market will bring in 1.5 million dollars, or more a year.

### Let Brotherly Love Continue

The foregoing narration is condensed from the National Civic Review. A few words about the background of Philadelphia will not be out of place. Philadelphia, the capital of the state of Pennsylvania on the east coast of America is approximately at the midpoint between Washington and New York. William Penn, the Chief of the Quaker sect took a charter from Charles II, King of England and founded the colony. He reached the coast of America in 1683. A year or two ago, the survey and preliminary activities had begun. On arrival, Penn concluded a treaty of co-existence with the Red Indians, which according to Voltaire, is "the only treaty without an oath which was never breached."

Pennsylvania was named in honour of the pioneer Penn. His idea had been to leave behind the old world with its religious bigotry, intolerance and infights and to build a new world in a free atmosphere. It has been enshrined in the municipal motto: "Philadelphia Maneto" which means 'Let brotherly love continue'. Besides this, the seal of the city shows a coat of arms supported by two women who hold in their free hands a charter of freedom and a sheaf of grains. Above it there is a mannikin with a pair of scales, signifying justice.

The town of Calcutta was established about the same time (1690) by Job Charnok, the 'factor and favourite servant' of the East India Company. Philadelphia is a centre of commerce and industry, one of the biggest ports on the coast of the Atlantic and the second largest city in US in population and business. Its similarity with Calcutta is also reflected in population. Philadelphia had a population of 2 million in 1960, while Calcutta had 2.9 million in 1961 and 3.15 million in 1971.

Currently the Calcutta Municipal Act of 1951 regulates the civic services in this city. On the other side, the charter in Philadelphia, as we discussed, was also adopted in April 1951, providing for a powerful executive at the level of the Mayor. The powers and responsibilities which were previously with the City Council were mostly given to the executive department under a newly appointed Managing Director who takes orders directly from the Mayor. Besides, the Mayor is to appoint the Director of Finance. The new constitution formed a Cabinet or advisory body which would have the Mayor, the Managing Director, the Financial Director, the City Solicitor and a representative from the municipal body

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as members. Simultaneously the first three would form an administrative board which would analyse and send upwards the different regulations and working principles recommended by the different administrative wings of the municipal body. The Cabinet is to act as adviser to the Mayor. It has become a tradition now to coopt in it, from time to time, experts or senior executives from municipal administration.

The Mayor is elected for a term of four years. Election for the third time in a row is prohibited. The first two Mayors Joseph Clark and Richardson Dealworth had both been determined public servants. The pay-scales in the municipal body were much increased so that top specialists could be attracted. For drafting a long-term project for the renewal of Philadelphia, a top planner named Edmond Bacon was brought as the Executive Director of the Town Planning Committee. The new countenance of the city is a product of his master plan.

Philadelphia was to become a green country town. Every house was to have a plot of green land and a small orchard, as dreamed by William Penn. But, in haphazard expansion of the city, windowless walls of bricks and hundreds of stone and wooden frameworks lined the roads. Today all this has changed. At the start of the 18th century, the town plan of Penn had nearly 30 percent of the built-in area as roads. Today's Broad Street is 113 feet in span which gives 22 feet sidewalk on each side and a carriageway of 69 feet. The carriageway in Market Street also is 69 feet wide. With each sidewalk of 19 feet, the total width of the road comes to 100 feet. When the CMDA has renovated and broadened some of our roads, they will also come upto that standard. But, the inadequacy of footpaths, the displacement of pedestrians from what little is left by stalls and hawkers and the melange of unloading lorries, push carts and rickshaws on the road cut down the capacity of carriageways and bring traffic to a halt quite often in Calcutta.

### WEAKENING & TAKEOVER OF CITY HALLS

The debility and decay of municipal bodies has become a world-wide phenomenon in recent years. This is a feature common in this part of the world too. To cope with managerial or financial difficulties, Government have therefore to take over the management temporarily in own hands, whether at Singapore or Dacca or Lahore. For example, Dacca Municipality (population 10 lakhs) in Bangladesh which was to be converted shortly into a Corporation in 1975 had an ex-army officer as Administrator and no elected element. (The conversion into a Corporation has not however taken place yet, due to the traumatic developments

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since Mujib's murder.) The Municipal Corporations of Lahore and Karachi in Pakistan had then senior civilians as Administrators. To understand the genesis and aftermath of such action by Government, we may go a little more in detail into the working of a few more of these municipal bodies abroad and high-light some relevant features.

The City Government or the municipal corporation of New York in the United States of America had larger revenue than the State of New York. The municipal body had all along been giving financial assistance for various city affairs which were the concern of the State Government, as also cash grant to the State. There has been reversal of the position in recent times and New York municipality suffers from deeprooted and chronic financial illness. One might recall how, in July 1975, the city faced an unprecedented crisis from paucity of funds and a lightning strike resorted to by the civic police, firemen and garbage collectors.

It is reported that the city's economy like the economies of many other cities elsewhere was growing sick. For New York this might have done due to great changes which occurred to the city after the Second World War. Firstly, there was an influx of impoverished immigrants and secondly, the tax-revenue-producing industries left it in increasing numbers. The citizens, however continued to demand more services, qualitatively as well as quantitatively. It was calculated that, to cope with the larger demand on the civic services, the budget had to grow at the rate of 10-15 per cent annually, while the revenue grew only 5 per cent. This is precisely what happened in our Calcutta too. Close to 1.5 million refugees poured in from East Pakistan to Calcutta since 1948 i.e. shortly after the partition of Bengal, and recently also during the Bangladesh struggle of 1970-71 Calcutta and suburbs were the mainstay for the incoming stream of the uprooted humanity. Due to law and order and various other reasons a flight of capital and industrial establishments from the city occurred in a large measure from 1967 to 1971.

This leads to an imbalance in the city budget, which has normally to be balanced. In actual practice, balancing may be only a myth—as happened in New York as per several competent analyses made in American journals. These pointed out how by some mathematical jugglery, called expense fix, revenue fix, capital fix and outright deficit fix, more money was shown in the coffer than it could actually be. For example, in expense fix the current costs are shown as next year's and in revenue fix the next year's revenue is shown as this year's. The transgression of budgetary principle or financial sanctity became more pronounced where revenue expenditure was met by the diversion of funds raised for construction programme and this is called capital fix.

Outright deficit fix is, of course, an outright borrowing and running institutions on a deficit budget—an old trick. It is because of such imbalance and more money being required for the existing services as well as for increased welfare measures that the great city of New York got such a jolt in 1975, and we do not know whether the question of municipal resources vis-a-vis the national Government finance could yet be effectively resolved. More about it later.

#### South East Asia

In such a backdrop of weakening municipal system, several Governments have, for all practical purposes, done away with the elected form of city government and several have suspended them. In the former category we find city governments in South East Asia, like Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia and Singapore, as part of Government. In Indonesia, Jakarta the federal capital (population 50 lakhs) has a city Governor and under him four nominated Mayors for the four sectors of the city with separate municipal offices. All the city governments or the departments are financed heavily by the national government. Their own income from entertainment, fee car parking, horse racing, gambling and several licences are comparatively of minor nature.

Hong Kong is a small country of 4 million, the island city not being larger than 60 sq. miles. In the rear is the Kowloon region of the Chinese mainland on a leasehold for 99 years which will expire in 1999. It has an area of 400 square miles of a completely hilly terrain. The island of Hong Kong is connected with Kowloon by a steamer ferry service and now also by a tunnel under the sea. When I visited Hong Kong in 1966 it appeared to be untidy and the roads not free from rubbish. But it was on my way back from Japan which was really spick and span, and the cobwebs or patches on the lift or a solvenly pedestrian spitting on a sidewalk offended my eyes, although accustomed to much larger dirt, filth and garbage on our home ground.

By 1973 however the face of Hong Kong changed, owing to the imaginative leadership of the new Governor Sir Murray MacLehose and a small frail man named Lap Sap Chung who started a three-month campaign for clean-up. It was by press, poster and t.v. publicity and ruthless prosecution of 8000 offenders. The new anti-litter laws were put across to the people. Those caught littering were issued discredit cards with pictures. The natives and the Britishers were dealt with alike. A Chinese woman was fined 50 dollars for allowing her dog to ease on the pavement and an Englishman for throwing a cigarette end on the street. Six factories were fined for not keeping premises clean and two

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British companies for not keeping the office front tidy. There was a general mobilisation of 10,000 government employees and an estimated 10% of the city's population in a massive assault on the piles of garbage. The result was that from November 1972 to February 1973 more than 250,000 tonnes of garbage and junk was removed and black-spots converted into beauty spots.

Kuala Lumpur, the federal capital of Malaysia was declared as a city on February 1, 1972.<sup>3</sup> Since then the responsibility of the municipal body vests with the Mayor or Datuk Bandar, appointed by the Government. On February 1, 1974 the federal territory of Greater Kuala Lumpur was formed with 94 sq. miles and brought directly under the control of the Prime Minister, and Tan Sri Yakub bin Abdul Latif appointed as the Datuk Bandar, on retirement from the Foreign Service as Ambassador to Indonesia. There is an advisory board to help him, consisting of one government official, two non-government representatives from the surrounding state of Selangor and ten members from the general public. The Government member is the Secretary General of the Local Self Government and Environment department. The duties of the Mayor are divided into six main branches, viz. public health, engineering, treasury, assessment, town planning and architecture.

The emblem of the city of Kuala Lumpur is in three hexagonal cellular forms at the extremities of interlocking involute spirals within a circle formed by the letter 'Kuala Lumpur' on top and 'Maju Dan Makmor' at the bottom. The bottom expression means 'progress and prosperity'. The top hexagonal cell contains the star and crescent in gold yellow against a blue background. This symbolises the Malaysian flag and the seat of Government. The right cell in golden yellow has an abstract design of the dollar sign and suggests the gold standard as well as commerce. The segment on the left is in green and contains the atomic emblem over an open book to symbolise the growth of learning and culture. The significance of the cellular forms turning to hexagons is that the man-made elements of urban environment spring from the spiral of natural elements but cannot be separated from it. The two together is therefore an interaction of nature with man-made components resulting in the growth and vitality of a city.

When I visited Kuala Lumpur and Singapore in September-October 1975 I found both cities beautiful, the thoroughfares excellent, open areas lush with vegetation and not a sign of garbage anywhere. The Government in both places appeared to be much involved in the matter of civic service and the people most co-operative with the regulations regarding civic service

and the checking of pollution. Taxes imposed by the civic bodies were on the high side compared to ours, it being quite easy to increase municipal rates and fees there. I also observed that the legislation, though backed up by deterrent penal measures, did not require repetitive use, and the people would adhere to the directives out of good sense and, also, they knew that any violation of the law would be dealt with strictly.

### The Lion City

Singapore is a one-city State of only 225 square miles. It is also an island like Hong Kong, being separated from the mainland of Malaysia by a narrow passage of the sea. Singapore was a Crown colony under the British when Malaysians became a minority due to heavy influx of the Chinese. After the withdrawal of the British, Singapore and Malaysia merged for a while, but the latter called it off in 1965 after two years. Today the Republic of Singapore has the ethnic Chinese constituting 80 per cent of the population (2 million) and the balance made up of Malaysians and Indians, more or less in equal proportions. Indians are mostly Tamils. In cultural and geopolitical aspects, the Chinese of Singapore claim to belong to the Malaysian region. They have even added the Islamic symbol of crescent and star on their national flag. In fact, the Chinese are by nature realistic and pragmatic. They want to prove that they are subservient to the area they live in and are respectful to its culture and civilisation. It is in such a spirit that they have, after adopting English as their official language, given equal importance to Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia (in Roman script) and Tamil to cover the major linguistic groups. Bahasa Malaysia has a heavy component of Sanskrit, as will be evident from the native name Singapura—derived from singha (lion) and pura (city).


Like the Americans, Singapore too calls its municipal office as City Hall. There is no elected Mayor or Councillor there since 1969. All the officials are appointed by the Government. The topmost executive is the Civic Commissioner, designated as Commissioner of Environmental Health and Hygiene. The national Government have disbanded the old system of functioning through local self government and entrusted most of the job to three ministries: Public Works, Environmental Public Health and National Development. Apart from buildings and road repairs, PWD liaises with other ministries and obtains grants for the city. The ministry of Environment looks after garbage removal, crematoria, mosquito control and other public health measures. The National Development ministry works through its Park and Recreation (Horticulture) branch. The city is divided into several districts which have direct access to Government in several

# WE NEED A POLLUTION-FREE SINGAPORE



我們要一個  
不受污化的新加坡  
KITA PERLUKAN SINGAPURA  
YANG BEBAS DARI KEKOTORAN

நாம் விரும்புவது ஒரு  
தூய்மையான சிங்கப்பூர்



### SINGAPORE TRANSPLANTED IN CALCUTTA

Some apprehend that the Calcutta maidan is a vanishing green, the way it is made to harbour the hawkers and settle the statues. Still it is the lung of the city having 750 acres or half of all that is green in Calcutta and is the largest antipollutant for the city.

Recently a small portion of the maidan was enclosed to replicate an obelisk which Netaji raised in front of the City Hall of Singapore in 1945 in memory of those who laid down their lives for the Indian National Army. The replica, comprising a white base and a brownish column, is situated at the triangle formed by Mayo Road (named after Viceroy of India, 1869-72 and renamed on 8 January 1961 as Guru Nanak Sarani) joining the Red Road. It was unveiled on 8 July 1975, the 30th anniversary of the original memorial and bears the following inscription in Roman Hindustani which Netaji advocated as the lingua franca of India

ITTEFAQ ITMAD KURBANI/ARZI HUKMAT-E AZAD HIND  
AZAD HIND KE SHAHEEDON KI YADGAR/KA YEH BUNIYADI PATHAR  
8 JULY 1945 KO/NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE NE RAKHA

## SOME CITY CALLS ABROAD

matters. The change in the style of civic administration has been carried out to such an extent that the City Hall in front of which Netaji Subhas used to hold INA parades is now transformed into a government office, municipal functions being carried out from elsewhere. There is another department called Urban Renewal which demolishes slums and old houses with corrugated iron or tile roofs or of one storey, builds tall buildings and brings out open spaces which, within a short while, will be converted into green fields of grass and lush vegetation.

How is this done? They have botanical divisions which nurse saplings on the outskirts of the city where pollution is less and growth is quick. Selective plants are grown as rise upto four or five feet in three to four years and spread branches all around after a rise of six to ten feet. A three or four year old plant is dug out with plenty of earth which is wrapped in plastic covers, transported carefully by cranes and fixed on previously prepared ground right inside the city. These grown up plants are more immune to city pollution and other urban hazards. Besides, there is no problem of marauding hordes of goats, cattle and buffaloes, merrily browsing the growing trees. Stray dogs are shot at sight and stray cows and buffaloes slaughtered in the slaughter houses. There is no cowdung or garbage on the streets.

Litter bins are supplied in plenty for depositing refuse, rejected papers, cigarette stubs, toffee wrappers et al. Throwing litter on the streets attracts a spot fine of 500 dollars by the police. Once the fines are imposed there is no way out, even if one has a friend at the top in the Police Headquarters or Government. Strictness pays. Once upon a time the Chinese were as loose in habit as ourselves, spitting and throwing refuse ad lib. During my stay at Singapore for five or six days, I found only one person indulging in the luxury of spitting—at the steamer jetty from where the ferries operate, into the South China Sea and not on terra firma.

On my tour of the city, I observed a solitary policeman on duty at a road junction where the speed limit is 55 kms per hour. In case of breach, the driver will be given three minus points in his driving licence and on earning twelve minus points in a year the licence will be suspended for a year. That is why accidents are fewer there. In the initial stages a few had to be flogged—a few licences had to be cancelled and a few fined 500 dollars. Now the people realise that there is no respite from punishment on the spot, but the stick has hardly to be used.

In Singapore a prominent enactment is 'Environmental Public Health Act 32'. It is a compendious piece of legislation to take

care of various omissions and commissions in the matters of pollution, smoke nuisance, solid wastes and other matters of public health and ecology. There are various subsidiary legislation, for example about crematoria, hawkers, markets, night markets and pollution. These are meant to be fully enforced and availed of. The statutes for the control of environmental pollution in Singapore prescribe that greens should not be burnt. Any offender is fined heavily. Mosquito control regulations are also very stringent. If there is any stagnant water in any ditch or depression, the owner of the land will have to fill it up without delay or suffer a heavy fine for breeding mosquitoes. The responsibility of keeping clean upto five feet in front of the house devolves upon the occupier.

I paid a visit to their old crematorium. Formerly only 10 to 15 per cent of the population used to burn the dead—the Indians and a few of the Chinese Buddhists. But, of late, cremation has been popularised. Within a period of three to four years, nearly 45 per cent have adopted the process of burning the dead. They have plenty of gas from petroleum refineries and operate gas crematoria. The process could not however be introduced for Muslims, as they cannot work out any religious sanction for such a disposal of the dead. The Singaporeans feel that they have a small area which will be covered by grave-yards if they continue burials. The traditional way of arranging funeral pyres with firewood, as in our country, is still prevalent which they desire to discontinue on anti-pollution grounds. The Indian community has serious reservation against this complete switchover from traditional pyres. But initial adverse criticisms will surely subside, as in our city of Calcutta where the non-denominational gas crematorium of old has been followed recently by electric crematoria for the Hindus in the north and the south.

#### No Funds for Fun City

"If you don't know the buck, you don't know the job". On this slogan Abe Beame became the Mayor of New York in 1973 at the age of 67, after years of wandering anonymously in the wilderness in the city's books. But to others, the slogan of the Beame administration was as at a musical show where City Hall reporters lampooned Beame and his deputy Cavanagh as two aging bureaucrats crooning, "We run a billion dollar city/like a corner candy store".

This pair administered the municipal body for the first year on the mentality of the "corner candy store". Then the main obstacles on the way became manifest. The new Finance Controller, Harrison J. Goldm said that the deficit of \$430 million shown

## SOME CITIZIANS ABRQAD

by Beame in the annual budget was incorrect. In reality, it was more than \$650 million. Beame retorted by saying that he could draft a balance budget for 1973-76, but 50,000 employees would have to be temporarily retrenched, or new taxes levied. The game of brinkmanship!

The conservancy workers suddenly resorted to a well organised wildcat strike in July 1975 the like of which was not seen before. It became a hundred percent spontaneous cease-work and resulted in mountains of garbage here and there. Although the strike continued for only two days, it made the State Senate Majority Leader Warren M. Anderson to withdraw his note of dissent to the imposition of new taxes. The municipal body collected a total tax of 330 million dollars. By this bounty thousands of retrenched workers were brought back. A week rolled by for Beame, the Budget Bureau and the municipal officials to mark and regularise the absentees. The city's bureaucracy had become too sprawling for Beame—himself a product of that bureaucracy—to control. In an attempt to tighten the belt Beame imposed a wage freeze with the concurrence of the majority of workers, increased transit fares to 50 cents, slashed the City University budget by so much that free tuition there seemed in peril and abolished a range of city programmes.

But is it enough to do only such unpleasant jobs? As the month of August began they were found to be inadequate. Felix G. Rohatyn, a leading banker and his co-directors on the board of the newly formed Municipal Assistance Corporation fully realised that unless the municipal administration was thoroughly overhauled to increase its productivity and eliminate waste, the raising of funds by MAC or the City Hall would come to naught. The MAC authorities also advised Beame that a budgetary ceiling for three years should be imposed.

It is now to be seen whether, by the adoption of these measures, the faith of the investors in municipal funds should be restored. If it is not, the city will drop to the bottom year after year and the financiers and the government have to salvage it.

### New York & Calcutta

At the end of the seventeenth century Job Charnok cast anchor at the village of Sutanuti on the eastern bank of the Hooghly. To its south was a sleepy village named Calcutta which is to-day's Dalhousie Square and Chowringhee. To the further south was the village Govindapur. In 1698 Prince Ajim-Ush-Shan, the Subedar of Bengal issued a charter to the East India Company, empowering it to purchase the villages of Sutanuti, Dihi Calcutta and

Govindapur from the landlords. Accordingly the English purchased the three mauzas from the Zamindars for Rs. 1300 becoming themselves the Zamindars. The Mughal Emperor was to be paid a revenue of Rs. 1200 a year.

Holland formed a company in 1602 for its foreign trade. Peter Minuit, the Dutch director, purchased the whole of the island of Manhattan in 1625, from the Red Indians for 60 Dutch guilders or \$24 worth of beads and ribbons. It was named New Amsterdam and had a population of 300 people. English navigator, Cabot reached there in 1664 and claimed to have discovered and brought it under the suzerainty of their King. Charles II wasted no time to present the island to his brother James, the Duke of York. The English Admiral Richard Nichols advanced with a navy of 500, sailing from Connecticut and reached the estuary of the Hudson. The Dutch director Peter Stuyvesant surrendered. The English occupied the city and named it New York. Although the Dutch force once again captured the city, the English had New York restored to them in the peace treaty of 1674.

This nucleus of a town on the southern periphery of the island of Manhattan and flanked by the Hudson and the East rivers developed into the biggest city of the country within 1790. Previously Boston had this distinction. The construction of the protected port, the excavation of a canal to join the backwater with the Hudson, the discovery of coal and iron mines in the hinterland of the Gondwana valley and Pennsylvania, the introduction of steamers and railways by the middle of the 19th century, the establishment of wheat-grinding and other mills around the city—all these activities associated with New York remind us of the Calcutta Port, the proliferation of trade and commerce around the Ganges and the prosperity of this city.

The emblem of the city of New York is a circle in the form of a garland of buds with an eagle on top, a shield in the centre inscribed with a windmill, a Red Indian on the right with a bow and arrow and a European on the left with a lasso. In the four quadrants formed by the four blades of the wind-mill, there are two squirrels and two wine barrels. At the foot of the shield is written 1664 (the year Cabbot claimed New Amsterdam as a British possession) and under it on the outer circle the Latin phrase 'Sigillum Civitatis Novi Eboraci', meaning sign of the City of New York.

The magic of accounting, as we mentioned earlier in the form of various 'fixes', should be called more a symptom than a cause. On delving deep, it will be evident that the expenditure

## SOME CITY FALLS ABRQAD

for welfare and other variable projects have rapidly increased, in comparison to the expenses for the routine civic services, and this fact is true in respect of New York as well as other big cities. Since New York had been spending lavishly from before, it cannot keep pace with the extravagance, especially when the economy of the city has recently plunged downwards. The characteristics of the big vintage cities, which are becoming evident now-a-days, is the downward trend of employment opportunity and population. A big city-complex has to spend a greater amount per head in comparison to a small town, especially when the citizens of the former are older. Even if the population decreases, principal civic services cannot be pruned, for example, the conservancy services or the length of the thoroughfares for repair works. On the other hand, the cost of living index or per head income cannot be decreased, thanks to the powers of the trade unions and popularly agreed scales of wages. Due to these factors, a newly formed or budding town-area can maintain civic amenities on a comparatively lesser budget and accomplish need-oriented developments so that trade and commerce are encouraged to migrate to them.

From the very inception, the city administration of New York had a unique tradition for public service. In olden days, geographical development and economical progress was in tune with the revenue earned by the city and so the city administration was not handicapped in developing the arrangements for civic amenities. Today, the receipts have become stagnant, but there is no way to cut down expenditure. So, old cities are particularly handicapped in civic services, especially for such matters which relate to public welfare, and will continue to be in the same strait unless new avenues of revenue are discerned or old revenues are re-oriented. For such an approach, the drafting of a new frame-work for economic responsibilities on a long-term basis is far more necessary than internal reformation. This job does not befall the domain of the city administration. It even transcends the sphere of a State Government and falls within the jurisdiction of the Federal.

## WHEN THE CORPORATION DREAMS

"I may be a stranger to you. Still, I am making a request by letter and hope to be favoured with a speedy reply. We in the Calcutta Corporation submit ourselves to the people's will through advertisements as and when necessary. Apart from talking shop, we sometimes indulge in dreaming: a series of advertisements based on portions of poems on Calcutta. We started with Tagore's 'Ekdin rate ami svapna dekhinu' and followed it up with three more, Nirencranath Chakravarti's 'Kolkatar Jesu', Jibanananda Das's 'Suchetana' and Sunil Gangopadhyay's 'Ami O Kolkata'. Our next choice is your 'Naam rekhechhi Komal Gandhar mane mane', provided we get your permission.

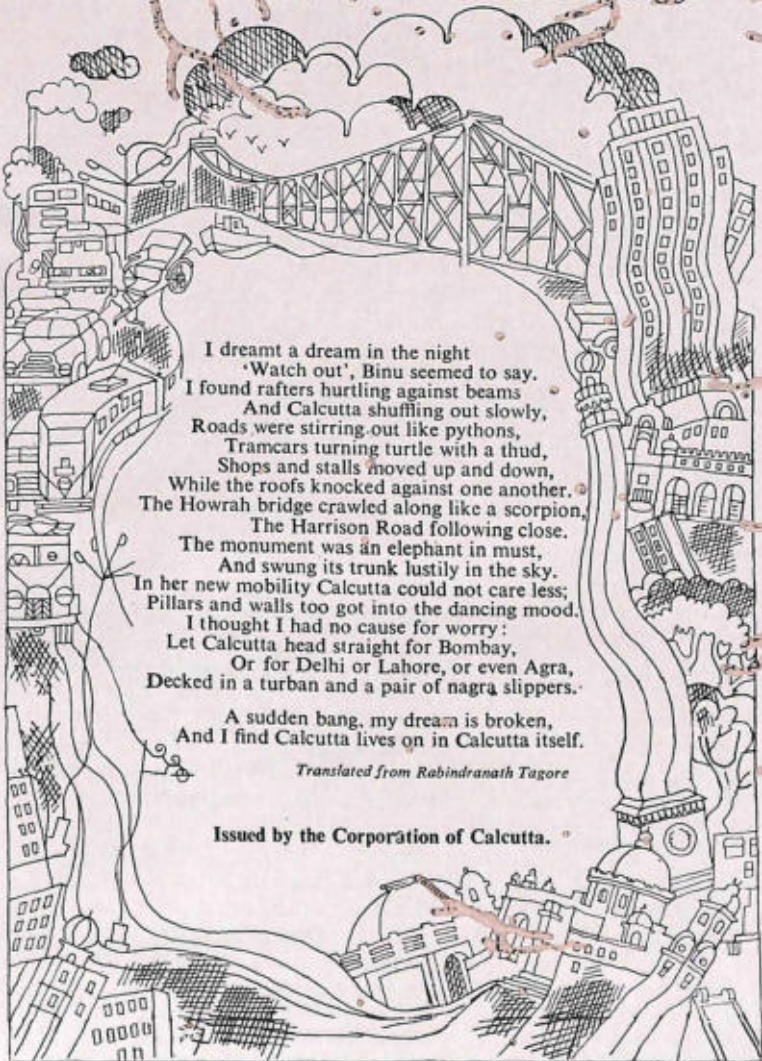
"Needless to mention all such excerpts have been published in original Bengali as well as in English — as rendered by us. They were illustrated by photo or sketch. The Corporation has had the privilege of getting prompt permission from the poet or the authorised person for such reproduction. I am submitting the excerpts of your poem and the English rendering which we want to use in our advertisement. ... In this special number we want to present the picture-poetry of Calcutta through your poem."

To this letter of mine, Bishnu De replied from Rikhia in Bihar in exactly three days: 'I am delighted to get your letter of 2.2.1977. You are a man of zeal — which I knew to be uncommon in the Corporation, at least ordinarily. I am really glad. What else to write? My broken right arm bothers me still and pains if I write much. Once again I convey that my wife and I are very happy to receive your enthusiastic letter'.

The illustrated Tagore piece under the title 'I dreamt a dream' had come out in the special supplement on Calcutta by the Statesman dated 31 January 1976. The idea struck me as soon as the advertisement manager of the news-paper wrote to us asking for support in their venture as a reaffirmation of faith in the city which had meant so much to so many for so long. The letter talked of the city which is about 300 years old — a city beleaguered with a multitude of problems and yet splendid in its quality of endurance. In this emotional vein the letter proceeded: 'Calcutta has been variously described as a nightmare city and an urban disaster of ultimate poverty and squalor, ... Calcutta is a vitally essential city. Long recognized as a fulcra-

\* The Civic Affairs, Kanpur, Republic Day Number 1978.

# I dreamt a dream



I dreamt a dream in the night  
'Watch out', Binu seemed to say.  
I found rafters hurtling against beams  
And Calcutta shuffling out slowly,  
Roads were stirring out like pythons,  
Tramcars turning turtle with a thud,  
Shops and stalls moved up and down,  
While the roofs knocked against one another.  
The Howrah bridge crawled along like a scorpion,  
The Harrison Road following close.  
The monument was an elephant in must,  
And swung its trunk lustily in the sky.  
In her new mobility Calcutta could not care less;  
Pillars and walls too got into the dancing mood.  
I thought I had no cause for worry:  
Let Calcutta head straight for Bombay,  
Or for Delhi or Lahore, or even Agra,  
Decked in a turban and a pair of nagra slippers.

A sudden bang, my dream is broken,  
And I find Calcutta lives on in Calcutta itself.

*Translated from Rabindranath Tagore*

Issued by the Corporation of Calcutta.

### RABINDRANATH TAGORE (1861-1941)

Rabindranath was born in Calcutta at the ancestral home at 6 Dwarakanath Tagore Lane, Jorasanko (Prince Dwarakanath was his grandfather) on 7 May 1861 (25 Baisakh 1268 Bengali era). Although the poet chose Santiniketan early in his career as the place of his living, work and the University be founded, Calcutta continued to be the centre of his world. When he fell seriously ill, Tagore was brought over from Santiniketan to Calcutta for an operation and at Jorasanko on 7 August 1941 (22 Sravan 1348) went into eternal sleep.

Our translation overleaf is from the version in Sahaj Path Part II (Baisakh 1337 i.e. April-May 1930) and as included in Sanchayita. Sahaj Path is a primer by the poet himself in prose and poetry with some pieces taken from his old writings and some composed for the purpose. Sanchayita is basically a collection of his most favourite poems and gives the date of this poem as Paush 1336 (December 1929-January 1930). It is an adaptation from 'Chalanta Kalikata'—a poem in a slower rhythm and more serious vein—written a few days ago on 21 December 1929. This version of 'Moving Calcutta' was included in a collection of poems, 'Chitra Vichitra' (July-August 1954) published much after the poet's death and as such reproduced in the centenary volume of Rabindra Rachanavali (1961) by the Government of West Bengal. The more recent version does not find a place in the centenary volume although Sanchayita gives the other version in the appendix.

On 3 May 1963 the Calcutta Corporation renamed Upper and Lower Chitpur Roads, associated with the ancestral Jorasanko house which now locates the Rabindra Bharati University, as Rabindra Sarani. Tagore was truly made in Calcutta for the world.

matic cultural centre, it is also an indispensable hub of commerce and industry ... Fundamentally, Calcutta is a city of challenge and of hope.

Visva-Bharati Publishing Department got my English translation 'I dreamt a Dream' readily cleared. In the supplement my article 'Calcutta is Calcutta' kept its company. There were worthy articles in the number bringing out several facets of the controversial but lovable city. To cite a few; 'Soul Shining amid Squalor' (Jiten Sen), 'Have a Heart' (Sarali Dasgupta), 'Starry-eyed in Arcadia' (Ramesh Ghoshal), 'Laws of Urban Development' (Sudhansu Dasgupta, Secretary of CIT), 'Culture of Survival' (K. C. Sivaramakrishnan, Secretary of CMDA) and 'No Looking Back' (Bholanath Sen, PWD Minister and CMDA Chairman). It would be appropriate to mention at least a few of the other interesting ads in the issue: 'Calcutta is For Ever — Keep Calcutta Clean' by United Bank of India, 'Calcutta built partly on Lottery Funds' by West Bengal State Lottery, 'Calcutta: Once heading towards Despair ... Today leading towards Hope' by CMDA, and 'Calcutta was, is and will be' by Martin Burn.

My contribution 'Calcutta is Calcutta' started with a reference to Shakespeare (Hamlet's 'To be or not to be'). Tagore's 'Kalikata achhe Kalikata-tei' translated into 'Calcutta lives on in itself' therefore matched the mood. The effect was highlighted and we, Calcuttans, further pampered by the words: 'In her new mobility Calcutta could not care less; ... let Calcutta head straight for Bombay ... Delhi ... Lahore or Agra'.

The poem was adapted by Tagore himself from the first version of 'Chalanta Kalikata' which is in a more serious vein, to wit the opening lines—'The city of Calcutta has put on a tiara of bricks on the head'. It was included in Sahaj Path Part II, a primer produced by the poet and illustrated by Nandalal Bose to initiate little children into samyukta varna or diphthongs.

A poet's metier of dream had ever been Tagore's. Most probably in 1882, while residing at 10 Sudder Street in Chowringhee, he wrote 'Nirjharer Swapnabhanga'—Waterfall wakes from Dream—which is hailed as the fountain-head of his literary genius. In 1931 on completion of 70 years, he was given a reception at the Town Hall by the Calcutta Corporation with Dr. B. C. Roy as the Mayor (later Chief Minister of West Bengal). In his reply Tagore spoke of his dream for the city and the civic body:

'Let this Corporation make the city of my birth great in the amenities of life, health, sanitation, dignity and self-respect. Let painting, sculpture, music and arts grow under its auspices and make the dwellings of the citizens abodes of joy'.

This ad received such an attention in the city that we had to repeat it in Bengali and Hindi (maine ek swapna dekha) versions. Notable repetition was in Cine Advance special number on Tagore Birthday (7 May 1976). In its pages strewn with adventures or location shooting, gipsy in filmland and hunt for Bruce Lee, the advertisement found some company in MTP's ad of 'Calcutta and Rabindranath', a longish article 'Rabindranath and Cinema' and my own 'Rabi Thakur and Sibu Samaddan'.

Our next ad in the series, 'Jesus of Calcutta' came in the special number of 'Decade of Indian Film Industry 1965-75', brought out by the Cine Advance on 26 March 1976. Its company was kept by an ad from CMDA; 'A letter from Calcutta—a lost City?' over the signature of Bholanath Sen. The letter went on to say: '... recreating new hope for Calcutta, ... CMDA was born—the first big experiment in urban renewal in the third largest city of the world. Today, after five years and long spells of ups and downs, and many new roads, drains, slums and sewage problems away, CMDA can look back and say: things are at least happening in Calcutta ...'

Apart from the usual cinema write-ups, the special number had two useful articles 'Fateful ten years (65-75) of Indian Films' and 'Bengal and the decade of the Indian Cinema'—both reviews by staff correspondents. What made us choose this issue for the first insertion of the advertisement was the plastic qualities of the poem close to the cinema techniques of freeze and montage. Take the line: 'stopped suddenly in its tempestuous rush', 'like still life on the artist's canvas', or 'sun-light . . . descending like an overlong shaft'. That apart, the human quality of the poem, we thought, would add a touch of nobility to the goings on in the movie-world.

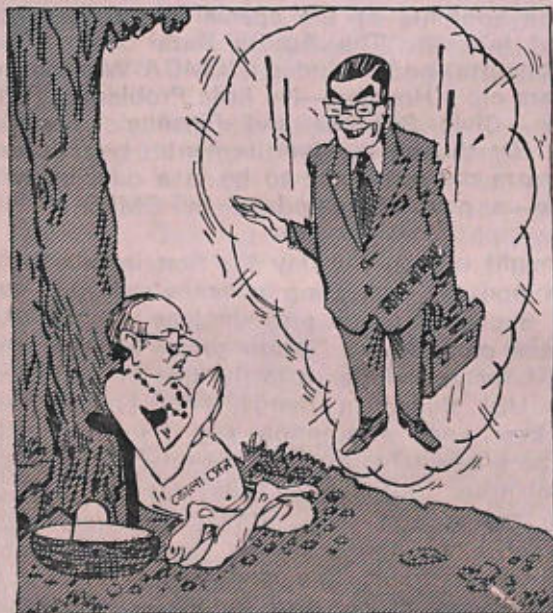
About six months earlier Nirendranath Chakravarti was talking to me for contribution to Ananda Mela, his magazine for children, I could not make use of the offer, but the idea of paying him back in his own coin occurred to me then. The poet-editor readily responded and the Bengali ad appeared in his Puja Annual of 1975, next to the contents page. The still used in it is the work of the commercial department of Ananda Bazar and the photographer who had to do it by superimposition over the shot of traffic which 'the red lights did forbid' came to tell me of the occupational hazard. When he was photographing, the on-lookers with no idea of the Jesus in the naked boy, came to chase him as a Nosy Parker and he was forced to perform a quick disappearing act. Shortly after, in the middle of November when the International Film Festival was held in Calcutta, the advertisement

## WHEN THE CORPORATION DREAMS

was given by popular demand to Jugantar and a few other Bengali newspapers. Then we switched over to English and used it further for film specials, as already discussed.

'Suchetana', was given the heading 'In the depth of my awakening', after a lot of hesitation, for the original, like the poet's 'Banalata Sen', could have been a lilting invitation to romance. But we thought it was ultimately the hard reality and not the never-never land. The advertisement was issued simultaneously in Bengali and English in the Ananda Bazar Patrika and the Amrita Bazar Patrika respectively on 6 November 1976 on the occasion of the visit of the World Bank Chief Robert Strange McNamara.

The pair of hands reaching for the sun no doubt burst upon the reader who sat up and took stock of it, but there were some doubts and skepticism that it could be misconstrued as abject supplication to the aid mission led by the Bank Chief, particularly in the context of a cartoon showing Bhola Sen, the CMDA Chief as a mendicant sadhu meditating on the arrival of McNamara. We



Ananda Bazar Patrika  
dated 6 November 1976

explained that the pair of hands could not be for begging, being one of a man and the other of a woman, vide the juxtaposition of the thumb and the little finger. We added that it was actually taken from a master-sculpting of Auguste Rodin, when there

## LET'S HAVE A DEKKO

was some advice that the information could be given in a footnote. We could not oblige, but do so now:

The Cathedral, 1908, stone 25½"×13½"×12½". Rodin always had a passion for modelling hands, so expressive in his view, so capable of displaying in themselves so many human emotions. Still in this period ... preoccupied with symbolism ... religious architecture of the Middle Ages, the idea came to him one day in 1908, of representing the high pointed naves by two tapering hands jointed in a gesture of prayer. Perhaps to accentuate the relationship uniting the symbol to the reality, he executed the work in stone.

We had a fear that the advertisement could be viewed as hackneyed, thanks to the oft-repeated use by UBI of the line, 'Kolkata ekdin kallolini tilottama habe'. But the large excerpts ending with 'man who will not be overcome, and of the eternal daybreak in the endless night', supported by the visualisation brought out the poem in its grandeur. We had to release a Hindi version too.

A brief account of the contents of the special numbers of the newspapers will be of interest. The Amrita Bazar feature was called 'Spotlight on Calcutta' and included; 'CMDA-Worries and Hopes', 'Port—300 years old', 'Housing—No little Problem', 'Pollution' and 'Corporation—Civic Services and Finance'. The last was an article by me. Of the other advertisements, two deserve special mention: 'Calcutta did not come to be in a day' by MTP and 'Milleniums hence—a new Mahenjodaro' by CMPO.

The Ananda Bazar brought out on the day the first instalment of its survey of Calcutta and the remaining ones in the next two weeks. The collection is shortly to be published as a book. My contribution was a piece on Calcutta 'Tabuo tomar kachhe amar hriday'—yet my heart is for you alone. It is the line of Suchetana immediately after the UBI slogan in Bengali. (In English they use 'Calcutta is for Ever', not attempting any translation like 'Calcutta one day will be a bewitching opulent beauty'.) My article ended on a sentimental note. Jibananda Das was our JND on the college routine for the English class. I was however in the B M College of Barisal just over a month and hardly came to know him. After the partition, the poet-professor had to leave behind the rice-terraced fields, dew laden air and white breasted water hens of East Bengal and come to the metropolis as a refugee. Unbelievable though it might seem, the starry-eyed poet was knocked down by a tramcar on the Rasbihari Avenue one evening and that was his end. I referred to this tragedy and said: 'We apologise to the poet. We tell him that

we have taken a vow to widen the streets, to secure the home-coming and to beautify the city'.

The World Bank visit created appreciation and confidence. McNamara was reported to have reminisced of his two earlier visits and talked of three Calcuttas he saw—of famine in 1943, of agitation in 1968 and of developmental efforts in 1976.

Sunil Gangopadhyay's poem, like Niren Chakravarti's, was first used in his own magazine and in Bengali. It was in the March 1976 issue of *Krittibas*. The poem had earlier been translated, but I was keen to use my version which Sunil approved. It has been used twice by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* in special numbers—on New Market (19 February 1977) and Haldia (14 April 1977). Apart from its piquant flavour, vide 'your breasts jut like cameras' or 'I shall chase you like a tiger', there are some powerful lines in 'Calcutta & I' which match with both the above aspects of Calcutta. For merchandise and marketing, remember the lines: 'Calcutta adulterates moonlight,/Has now learnt how to mix cactus and grit in kiss/Or how to forget mixing sugar/In the tear-tasting liquor of tea.' The *Patrika's* feature on New Market was small comprising two articles only, 'Sir Stuart Hogg Market' by R. P. Gupta and 'New Market is New no more' by me.

For the maritime expansion of the city, the opening lines of the poem are apt: 'Calcutta is a dead-weight round my neck/I shall lure her to Haldia'. The full name of the *Patrika* number was 'Haldia Urban Complex, a CMPO Feature page to highlight Town & Country Planning department's Multi-pronged drives'. There were a number of articles: 'A Niagara of possibilities' by Bholanath Sen, 'The new entrant in grand pentagon' by CMPO (the other four being Calcutta, Siliguri, Asansol and Durgapu), 'Promise of plenty' by the Fertilizer Corporation of Calcutta and 'Haldia quickens Calcutta' by me. The advertisement has since appeared in a Hindi version too.

Next is Bishnu De with whom we opened this narrative. The last line of his poem, which lent it the title was translated by me as 'I remember as E flat'. Komal is soft or flat and Gandhar the third note of the octave in the Hindustani School of music. Tagore in his poem 'Komal Gandhar, (1932) perhaps wanted to bring out the yearning for the unattainable through the musical note, for he said 'I have no idea why in her daily chores Bhairavi forms the spread of the tone and that is why I gave her the name Komal Gandhar'. Excerpts of the original poem were used by us for the Bengali *Satyajug* on 21 April 1977. It was a special feature on 'Beautiful Calcutta', with articles like 'Calcutta—the Dream and Reality', 'Movies of Calcutta' and 'I build this House

for Happiness'. The last one by me was on the new building regulations of 1977, tall buildings and the menace of unauthorised construction, and for the heading I lifted a line from Chandidas: 'Sukhero lagiā a ghāra bandhilu'.

The English version was used on the Tagore special brought out by the Statesman on 31 May 1977. We thought Bishnu De on Calcutta would be a fitting come-back to this newspaper which started the series with Tagore's dream on Calcutta. There were delectable pieces like 'In Tagore Country' by Annada Shankar Roy, 'The Prince' by the poet himself and 'The Last Rivers and Lost Happiness' by Nirad C. Chaudhuri. We gave a new heading to our advertisement by lifting another line from the poet—'Wash the Sores of Calcutta'. In the poem, as in 'Calcutta & I', the rivers give a flowing quality and Haldia a definite destination.

Ritwik Ghatak, the rebel director made 'Komal Gandhar' in 1961 when he was at the peak of his creativity. He thought it was his most intellectual picture, but the audience might not come to accept it fully before another 20 or 25 years. Largely on location shooting on the Padma, appearing as wide as the ocean, the picture dreams of the cultural re-union between the two Bengals. Bishnu De in his own way and as a disciple of Tagore carried this consciousness and music from Calcutta down the Bhagirathi to the horizon of our dreams. He wanted to 'wash, dry, chasten and baptise' the sores of Calcutta in the ocean's music of Komal Gandhar.

Prithi Nandy's 'Calcutta if You must exile Me' is the latest used by us in the series. It has the distinction of being the only poem in its original version and from the youngest poet (30). He belongs exclusively to Calcutta, though widely travelled. His challenge to wound his lips, to burn his eyes and ultimately to destroy his sanity, if Calcutta must exile him, expresses his abounding faith in the city and a foreclosure of his option to live elsewhere. It is both a stand against unnecessary violence and a tribute to the city's incredible vitality.

We chose the poem first for a special number on Calcutta brought out by the Amrita Bazar Patrika on 5 July 1977. Notable contributions were 'Calcutta no longer a Swamp, nor a Garden' by CIT Secretary, 'Haldia to undergo full Exploitation' by a Port Commissioner official. The charm that arrests Visitors' by the Tourism Secretary and 'CMDA has a dream to fulfil' by the PRO of the Authority. I tried my hand with a prosaic piece 'Citizens can ensure Cleanliness', talking of our efforts in conservancy service, delineating our recent steps in strengthening solid waste manage-

ment and ultimately appealing to the people to look after this city.

A few days earlier (on 29 June 1977, shortly after the new Ministry took over here) a Bengali translation of the poem, 'Nirbasane jad Pathabei' was given as our ad in a feature on industrial regeneration in West Bengal brought about by the Satyajug. There were a limited number of articles—on drug industry, small and cottage industries and power generation. It is interesting that in both these issues an advertisement by MTP 'Eyes that Watch' kept company with ours. The MTP ad was a graphic work of an oversized eye showing men and machinery in the thick of construction. Ours was a visualisation in photography with a vertical extension of Calcutta caught in a dilated iris. Both should be a pointer to the affirmation of hope and the establishment of credibility for the city.

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### Corrections

- page 3, line 1 : *for* lagour and the unions *read* labour and the unions'
- p5, ln3 of (i) : *for* uch *read* such ; ln3 of (ii) : *for* implicating *read* implication
- p12, pr2, ln9 : *for* Sectioh *read* Section ; ln15 : *for* unuer *read* under ; pr4, ln9 :  
*for* garbag *read* garbage
- p19, pr5, ln3 : *for* boycoott *read* boycott
- p21, pr4, ln4 : *for* give *read* decide them as he thought best. He has now  
given
- p30, ln2 : *for* age *read* ago
- p50, pr2, ln8 : *for* Owne *read* Owns ; pr3, ln7 : *for* ful *read* full
- p57, ln4 : *for* partinent *read* pertinent
- p71, pr2 ln13 : *for* Tantative *read* Tentative
- p75, ln5 : *for* ration *read* ratio
- p94, pr3, ln2 : *for* arry *read* carry ; *for* monosoons *read* monsoons
- p96, margin of cartoon, ln8 : *for* bewiching *read* bewitching ; last ln *for*  
potheles *read* potholes
- p115, pr2, ln2 : *delete* country's
- p122, pr3, last sentence : *for* hos to main *read* has to man
- p123, pr2, ln4 : *for* 2/3rd *read* 1/2
- p124, pr2, last sen : *for* went *read* want
- p129, ln4 above Table : *for* alightly *read* slightly
- p141, ln1 of Postscript : *for* may *read* may be ; next ln : *delete* not
- p145, pr3, ln7 : *for* Rectangular *read* Rectangular ; pr4, ln5 : *for* distinguishing  
*read* distinguish
- p157, pr2, ln2 : *for* 1961 *read* 1951 ; ln13 *for* For *read* Fort
- p158, pr4, ln10 : *for* suppression *read* supersession
- p168, pr2, ln4 : *for* your *read* you
- p172, pr2, ln12 : *for* Civalinga *read* Sivalinga
- p199, pr1, ln3 : *for* howkers *read* hawkers ; ln 12 : *for* ciric *read* civic
- p200, pr4 ln1 : *for* Inchape *read* Inchcape

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