CHAPTER II

KANPUR: THE LOCALE OF THE STUDY

Colonial urbanisation was based on two premises. Its first premise was that British influence on Indian urbanisation was a positive contribution. Kanpur was a typically colonial city and we will see, in this chapter, how the British influence on it was not a boon but a bane. Secondly, the colonial administrators represented the pre-colonial and colonial urban dichotomy in stereotypical ways, viz. Asian/ Western and pre-industrial/ industrial forms of urbanisation. This view has come in for considerable revision by scholars who suggest that colonial urbanisation was neither uniform in all periods nor were its effects always beneficial. These scholars have instead suggested a three-tiered model of colonial urban transformation. In the first proto-colonial phase, the East India Company established trading factories in coastal towns and acquired naval as well as commercial supremacy wherefrom the process of territorial conquest into the hinterland began. Then started the second phase of colonial urban transformation wherein the indigenous centres of government gave way to places of colonial administration right from Presidency towns down to small civil stations and military cantonments. Hill stations were also formed during this phase to help Europeans meet the challenging summer of India. In the final industrial phase of colonial urbanisation indigenous textile centres were de-industrialized (due to the substitution of Indian textiles by foreign cloth) and Presidency towns also became
industrial centres. The railway network was established now and this gave a fillip to commerce and led to the formation of railway towns at important junctions.¹

Kanpur kept growing in size and it remained a place of expanding opportunities during the period of colonial rule. Kanpur was saved from harmful side-effects like de-urbanisation and de-industrialisation. Therefore, Kanpur fits the third phase of colonial urban transformation quite well, as we shall see later.

Colonial officials claimed to have brought this city into existence but they called it Cawnpore and not Kanpur. However, in the folk tradition, the origin of this place is also related to Hindu Singh, a small Raja of Sachendi – a small semi-urban place near Kanpur. According to the folklore, this Raja used to come to bathe on the banks of Ganga here and probably, in 1750, he decided to build a town at this place. It is reported that he built a Gateway and ramparts at this place and the traces of these existed in Old Kanpur till the beginning of the 20th century.²

Colonial rulers invested this town with significance in two ways, viz. by building a Cantonment here and, secondly, by helping some industries to be set up here. Firstly, under the Treaty of 1773 (with the rulers of Awadh), the British got the right of keeping some forces in Awadh for which a military station was

founded at Bilgram (in the adjacent Hardoi district). This station was shifted to Kanpur in 1778 even though it was (not inside but) on the fringes of Awadh. The East India Company had, in the meanwhile, established a trading factory on the Ganga at Kanpur and the shifting of the military station from Bilgram to it was thought necessary for the protection of European traders and business interests. This made Kanpur first and foremost a Cantonment. Up to 1848, ninety percent of the approximately 7,000 acres of Kanpur formed the Cantonment; only 690 acres were under civilian control. According to the first “Statistical Report on the District of Cawnpoor”, in 1847, the town had a population of 58,821 persons and eighty five percent of this population lived in the Cantonment. The number of residents in Kanpur Cantonment actually halved by 1901 and this figure of around 25,000 persons was maintained till 1931. After Meerut, Kanpur was the second largest Cantonment in the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) during the period of our study.

The simultaneous establishment of a Cantonment and an English factory at Kanpur in 1770s meant that Kosambhi’s proto-colonial and pre-industrial colonial phases got collapsed into one here. The rapid expansion of Kanpur began from around 1860 during what Kosambhi called the industrial colonial phase. In this phase, the first thing to come to Kanpur were railways. East Indian Railway connected Allahabad to Kanpur in 1859 and the latter with Etawah in

4 Chitra Joshi, Lost Worlds Indian Labour and its Forgotten Histories (Delhi, Permanent Black, 2003), p. 27.
6 Census of United Provinces (U.P.), 1931, Part II, Table IV, pp. 16-8.
1861. Rail was started to connect Kanpur with the south through Jhansi by the Great Indian Peninsular Railway and the B.B. & C. I. Railway bagged the lease to connect Kanpur with Achnera (en route Agra) in 1886. Finally, the Oudh and Rohilkhand Railway connected Kanpur with Lucknow. Consequently, by 1911 Kanpur became the largest railway junction in U.P. where five “first rank” rail lines converged. This rail network not only connected Kanpur with Punjab in the west and Bengal in the east but it also made this city the gateway of trade with Oudh, Doab, Bundelkhand and the submontane tracts of U.P.

Kanpur had the largest number of big mechanized industrial units in India after Bombay, Calcutta, Ahmedabad and Coimbatore. Industrialists of European origin controlled most of the mills in Kanpur but the capital to set up their industries was not raised in Europe. In most cases, European industrialists of Kanpur were former employees of the colonial government. One was a Station Master in Railways, another a Civil Surgeon, yet another an Engineer and one even an army officer. While most of the leather- tanning, shoe - making, harness, saddlery and accoutrements units were either directly owned by the colonial government or lived off orders from the military, other European-controlled industrial units were privately managed and their products were made for the open market.

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7 H.R. Nevill, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-9 and 261.
A Big Place for a Living

We find that the population of Kanpur increased by more than four times between 1911 and 1951. This made Kanpur not just the biggest city of Uttar Pradesh during the period of our study but this phenomenal increase in population also made it the fastest growing city in the province.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Population in Lakhs</th>
<th>Percentage Increase 1911-51</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benaras</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agra</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanpur</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allahabad</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The massive demand for labour made Kanpur a city of opportunity right at the turn of the twentieth century. Workers of every description came flocking to it. This massive influx of migrants propelled the phenomenal increase of population at Kanpur. And it also made Kanpur the city with the largest number of migrants in the whole of UP throughout the first half of the twentieth century. (See Table II)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place</th>
<th>1951</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Cities</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanpur</td>
<td>52.7</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agra</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benaras</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allahabad</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The great demand for labour at Kanpur led to a massive influx of migrants but not from long distances. Most of the workers in Kanpur were from contiguous districts like Unnao, Fatehpur, Hardoi, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Etawah, Farukhabad etc. In 1905, as much as 62 percent of the workers belonged either to Kanpur district or surrounding areas and this percentage increased to almost 72 percent in 1931.\(^\text{13}\)

During the period of our study (i.e., 1919-1947), like in other big cities of the United Provinces (U.P., now Uttar Pradesh), Kanpur had a sex ratio adverse to women. But, with rapid industrialization in some select periods, like during World War I or after the Great Depression, this adverse ratio became worse. Comparative statistics of the KABAL (Kanpur, Agra, Benaras, Allahabad and Lucknow) cities, in this regard, for five census(es), are as under.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>1921</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1951</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kanpur</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>668</td>
<td>694</td>
<td>644</td>
<td>699</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucknow</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agra</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benaras</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>869</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allahabad</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>753</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kanpur was the biggest industrial centre of the north but women lived here more as unrecognised appendages of their men folk and they were not acknowledged as productive workers. In 1931, only 3 out of the 2,381 supervisors (or managers) employed in Kanpur were women. Among the 24,121.

\(^{13}\) Chitra Joshi (1981), op. cit., p. 56.
mill workers their member was not much better as it was merely 1.9 percent or 469 women mill workers in all.\textsuperscript{15} Three-fifths of the female workers belonged to the lower castes (viz. mainly Kori, Chamar, Bhangi, Pasi, Dom, Khatik and Lohar castes) whereas only 30 percent of the male operatives belonged to these castes.\textsuperscript{16} Hence, in this sense atleast, women from lower castes seemed to enjoy a greater freedom of livelihood.

Ironically, as the economy did better women did worse. The reason for this was said to lie in the unexpectedly bad fall-out of a pro-women measure. By 1939, the percentage of women in the workforce increased to 3 percent (or 4,803 out of 1.59 lakh workers) but, by 1947, the number of women workers declined to 1.1 percent (or just 2,689 out of 2.40 lakh workers). Among the reasons advanced for this decline, one was rather ironical. During World War II, employers were forced to abide by maternity benefit regulations. So, due to this enforcement, it was observed that employers felt deterred to employ women.\textsuperscript{17} Consequently, women were made to suffer by a measure which was intended to benefit them.

In a bid to prove its benevolence, the Colonial government started a compulsory primary education programme for girls on September 11, 1935 at Kanpur. No other KABAL city had this privilege till 1939. The cost of this

\textsuperscript{15} Census of United Provinces (UP), 1931, Part I, p. 419.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 423.
programme was to be borne entirely by the government. But like all Colonial efforts for uplift of women (or others) this measure was partial, restricted as it was to merely four Wards of Kanpur, viz. Mulganj, Patkapur, Sadar Bazar and Anwarganj. Most of these wards, except Anwarganj (which had 83% Hindus), were mixed localities where both Hindus and Muslims lived.

Muslims formed just 29.82 per cent of Kanpur’s population in 1931. When Kanpur’s population doubled between 1931 and 1941, the proportion of Muslims declined by 6 per cent. Muslim population in Kanpur decreased from 29.82 percent in 1931 to 23.39 percent in 1941. Muslims were concentrated in some Mohallas of certain wards and this reflected the segregation in the settlement pattern at Kanpur. Every ward consisted of several Mohallas or neighborhoods. According to the Census of 1931, there were twelve Mohallas in Kanpur where Muslims constituted more than 50% of the population and out of these 7 were in Anwarganj Ward alone, viz. Bhusa Toli with 94% (being Chak no. 94), Anwarganj with 81% (being Chak no. 93), Colonelganj with 65% (being Chak no. 101), Talaq Mahal with 64% (being Chak no. 95), Hiraman Purwa with 59.7% (being Chak no. 92), Dalelpurwa with 58% (being Chak no. 91) and Baconganj with 51% (being Chak no. 98%). Out of the remaining five Mohallas with more than 50% Muslim population two were in Mulganj Ward, viz. Butcherkhana Khurd with 85.6% (being Chak no(s). 44 and 45) and Misri Bazar with 66.5% (being

20 Census of U.P., 1941, pp.36-7.
Chak no. 42); one was in Patkapur Ward, viz. Patkapur with 76% (being Chak no. 20); and two were in Collectorganj Ward, viz. Butcherkhana Kalan with 58.6% (being Chak no. 81) and Anwarganj (Bans Mandi) with 55% (being Chak no. 79).\textsuperscript{21}

Muslims lagged behind the literacy averages achieved by residents of the five largest cities of U.P. (also known as the KABAL towns) and they also fell much short of the educational achievements of the Hindus of these cities, especially in terms of knowledge of English is concerned so far as Kanpur was concerned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE IV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literates and English knowing People in KAVAL Towns in 1931 (in %)</strong>\textsuperscript{22}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: - (a) Literates; (b) English knowing people.

The first conclusion from this table, of course, is that social development, of which education and literacy are vital indicators, was the foremost casualty of


\textsuperscript{22} Census of 1931, UP, Part II, Table XIII, pp. 470-4.
colonialism. But the other important conclusion which can be drawn from this table is that Muslims lagged behind others in all the KABAL towns but more particularly in Benaras, Agra and Allahabad. Being an industrial centre, Kanpur's literacy averages were low for all categories with only that of Agra being lower than it from among the KABAL towns. Therefore, not the educational lag but vicissitudes of employment were a major issue in Kanpur's politics.

Dalits (known then as Depressed Class Hindus by the Census) constituted 15.70 per cent of Kanpur Municipality's total population in 1941.23

No Place to Live
This phenomenal increase in the population of Kanpur made it a very crowded and congested city with an acute scarcity of houses particularly in areas inhabited by the city's poor. On an average, there lived 300 persons to an acre at Kanpur in 1931. But in Talaq Mahal the land person ratio was four times higher, i.e. 1,229 persons per acre, whereas in Beaconganj also the ratio was similar. Both these Mohallas were typical poor class localities and, incidentally, both had a high concentration of Muslim population.24

Colonial authorities accepted that the problem of congestion was acute in Kanpur but their explanation for it changed between the beginning of the twentieth century and the census of 1931. In the Gazeteer of Kanpur, published in 1909, H. R. Nevill noted that the congestion in Kanpur was caused by the fact

23 Census of India, 1941, Part I, Table V, pp. 88-89.
that the Cantonment enclosed the city on three sides and this left the city with just one direction to expand, viz., along the southern boundary of the Cantonement. The acuteness of congestion was revealed during the riots of 1931 when military could not patrol the city apparently because 'lanes were very narrow at some places and they also had high houses on either sides'. These declarations led people to contrast, rhetorically, the big highways of Kanpur with lanes which were so narrow that the shoulders of persons moving in them brushed against the walls. Instead of accepting a part of the blame for leaving Kanpur in such a state, during the Tenement Census in 1931, colonial authorities shifted the responsibility for congestion in Kanpur onto its residents by suggesting that the city was congested because 'houses with more than one or two storeys were rare in the city'. Building houses taller than one or two storeys required civil engineering skills and lots of money; the poor could hardly afford this. But that was no concern of the colonial authorities.

Coupled with congestion was the big shortage of housing for the poor in Kanpur. But before going over to the facts and figures of this shortage it may be worthwhile to see the pattern of housing and the manner in which it was more conducive to foment community (not necessarily religious community) consciousness among people living here.

Community consciousness was sustained and buttressed by mohallas where people mostly belonging to a particular caste or community lived. These housing clusters can be explicitly occupational such as Butcherkhana (or the neighbourhood where the butchers were most numerous), regional such as Bengali Mahal which got its name by the concentration of Bengalis there or neighbourhoods related to particular castes such as Gadariya Mahal. The names of some housing clusters did not explicitly reveal the identities of their residents. For instance, Changamal ka Hata was where many Banarasis (or people from or around Banaras) lived, Patkapore had a predominantly Muslim population and Scheduled Castes were concentrated in Juhi Notified area.

In most of these housing clusters, residents formed caste/ community associations. Most of these associations were not explicitly political though they did get politically active particularly during election time. Hence, we see that Dhobis nominated one from their caste as representative for Municipal Board in 1932.\textsuperscript{29} In 1935, Yadav Kshatriya Sabha put up Jawahar Lal Yadav for elections from Ward number 10 in the Municipal Elections.\textsuperscript{30} In the same elections, Sonkar Khatiks decided to support Shyamlal Thekedar.\textsuperscript{31} Not only was en bloc support assured to particular candidates in elections, opposition to a candidate by a whole community was also sometimes attempted. Hence, in 1935 itself, Chamar chaudhris (or leaders) got together and decided to expel all those caste fellows

\textsuperscript{29} \textit{PAI}, 19-11-1932, pa. 804, p. 694.
\textsuperscript{31} \textit{Ibid.}
who voted for Brajendra Swarup, the current Chairman of the Municipal Board who was also a prominent local leader of Hindu Mahasabha.\textsuperscript{32}

At the root of the housing clusters along caste/community lines lay the apathy of colonial authorities as also capitalists to provide workers with accommodation. Dipesh Chakrabarty suggests that in 1929 when the labour force in jute mills in Calcutta was 3.39 lakhs only 30 percent of them were provided houses by the mills.\textsuperscript{33} As compared to this, the performance of not just colonial authorities (because Kanpur was not just a colonial city, it also had industries specifically created to service the colonial military), but also capitalists and local bodies was pathetic in Kanpur. As late as 1948 quarters (only 5,000) were available for only 5 percent of the one-lakh workers employed in Kanpur's 175 factories.\textsuperscript{34}

This dismal picture of just 5 percent of Kanpur's labour having some kind of proper living quarters was not just bad planning. The first attempt to provide living space to workers was made by two mills, viz. Lal Imli Woolen mills at McRobertsganj and by Cooper, Allen and Company (which made military boots) along the Bithoor Road near Gutaiya.\textsuperscript{35} In the twentieth century, Kanpur's Improvement Trust notified 14 external schemes for the extension of Kanpur and 5 schemes for the internal improvement of the city. Work on these schemes was

\textsuperscript{32} Vartman, 15-11-1935, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{33} Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rethinking Working-Class History Bengal, 1890-1940, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 106 This was a considerable achievement from 1897, when a survey of 73,000 jute-mill workers revealed that only 13.5 percent of them lived in coolie lines built by the Mills.
\textsuperscript{34} Report on the Amelioration of the working and living conditions of labour (RAWLCL), U.P., 1948, pp. 24-5. Kanpur alone was reported to have 38% of U.P.'s 2.57 Lakh workers then.
\textsuperscript{35} H.R. Nevill, op. cit., pp. 274 and 79.
generally not encouraging but the component for providing housing plots or quarters to workers was agonizingly slow.\textsuperscript{36} It was not as if workers were indifferent to development schemes. It was reported by E.M. Souter, Chairman, Improvement Trust, Kanpur that workers' quarters sold like hot cakes and that workers were so eager to get houses that at Khalasi Lines two additional blocks had to be made in view of their heavy demand.\textsuperscript{37} The third attempt to provide houses to the poor was made after Gandhiji's Harijan tour in 1934. But the Municipal Board just made 40 Kothries (or hovel-like one room tenements) which were offered on rent and these were only meant for Municipal sweepers.\textsuperscript{38} A slightly more comprehensive effort was made by Kanpur Development Board which replaced the Improvement Trust in 1945. This Board spent Rs. 13.41 lakhs to build 2,400 quarters.\textsuperscript{39} But, ironically, after Partition, most of these quarters meant for workers in Kanpur were occupied by the displaced persons (popularly called refugees) from Pakistan.\textsuperscript{40}

The forces of demand and supply ordained that rents be high in Kanpur as houses were scarce. Interestingly, caste/community organisations did not take up these issues of scarce houses and high rents which were vital to the existence of workers and the poor in Kanpur. Instead, these issues were either raised individually by affected persons or were articulated by informal tenant or tax payers associations led by prominent nationalists. A person called

\textsuperscript{37} Letter to Secretary, Municipal Department. F. No. 56, Improvement Trust, 1931, Municipal Department, U.P. State Archives, p. 1.  
\textsuperscript{38} Vartman, 9-7-1935, p. 5.  
\textsuperscript{40} RAWLCL, op. cit., p. 24.
Manglacharan demanded that landlords should reduce rents by 50 percent due to the recession for the three years preceding 1938. Among associations protesting against high rents we have two examples. In 1931, just two days before the infamous riots, tenants of Patkapur met at Shri Tapeshwar temple under the leadership of Iqbal Krishan Kapoor, a nationalist. They resolved to ask landlords to reduce rents or face satyagraha. Seven years later, in 1938, Municipal Tax Payers' Association was formed with an 11 member committee whose convenor was Hamid Khan, a local Congress leader. One of the demands of this Association was that landlords should decrease rents.

**Illness and Insanitation**

The massive increase of 405 percent in the population of Kanpur between 1911 and 1951 was not achieved through natural growth alone. If Kanpur's rate of population growth was the fastest as compared to other cities of Uttar Pradesh as can be seen from Table 1 above, its average mortality rates were also the highest in the whole province. During certain periods, the number of deaths in Kanpur were higher than that of births even during the decade when the city's population doubled, viz. 1931-41. For instance, for the 81 weeks between January 1934 and June 1935, there were 12 more deaths than births in Kanpur. These deaths were reportedly caused by plague, cholera, small pox and influenza.

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41 Vartman, 22-7-1938, p. 2.
42 Ibid., 22-3-1931, p. 1.
43 Ibid., 22-7-1938, p. 6.
45 Vartman, 9-7-1935, p. 5.
As is evident from the table above, the average mortality rates of cities were uniformly higher than those in rural areas but in Kanpur they were the highest. Even more depressing was the fact that the already big average mortality rates of Kanpur spurted higher when considered for specific areas where the poor lived.

It is obvious from Table VI that Kanpur's poor were more prone to diseases and illnesses. But, when they took an epidemic form, these diseases did not spare the lives of rich people either. Plague reportedly claimed the life of a prominent ayurvedic physician, Pandit Sehdev Prasad Vaid, and the wife of Lala Ram Kumar, a leading yarn merchant who in the 1930s was also a Municipal Board's member. During the same period, tuberculosis was said to

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have been responsible for the death of the younger son of a prosperous trader, Seth Ram Gopal. In the same period, tuberculosis was said to have been responsible for the death of the younger son of a prosperous trader, Seth Ram Gopal.

Insanitation and pollution coupled with the near absence of medical facilities were responsible for the recurrent outbreaks of diseases and the consequent high mortality in Kanpur. We notice that with regard to solving the problems of insanitation and pollution even rank communalists displayed initiatives and sought assistance from the colonial authorities throughout the 1920s and the 1930s. But the colonial bureaucracy used techniques of passing the buck (or blame) to the elected Municipalities. And the Municipal Board of Kanpur (like elsewhere) was perpetually short of funds, personnel and ideas. Hence, as we shall see, Kanpur remained 'a filthy, over-crowded, smoke-belching city' throughout the period of our study. The near absence of medical facilities coupled with insanitation and pollution made Kanpur's population quite prone to illness and diseases.

Colonial officials gave Mr. Halsey, Collector of Kanpur between 1865-72, credit for improving sanitary conditions of the city. Prior to the organization of a regular Conservancy department in 1866 by him, it is reported, residents of Kanpur threw garbage indiscriminately on lands adjoining the city, sweepers

48 Pratap, 19-4-1920, p. 4.
49 Ibid.
maintained latrines for private profit, butchers killed animals at home, etc. After
the interest taken in sanitation by Mr. Halsey, colonial officials boasted of three
main sewers lined by brick; systematic disposal of night-soil and sweepings at
Narayanpur trenching grounds by bullock-carts up to 1903 (and by the five and a
half mile tramway thereafter); construction of two slaughter houses, one each at
Coolie Bazar and Cooperganj; and construction of some public latrines. But,
after this initial enthusiasm, there was an absolute neglect of sanitation by
colonial authorities and the Municipal Board alike. Some areas, particularly those
inhabited by the city's poor, were the worst victims of this neglect.

During the period of our study sanitary problems in some areas became
from bad to worse. It was reported in 1926 that living in Sisamau was a problem
due to filthiness. Another complaint, after six years, identified the problem of
insanitation to be a shortage of latrines, garbage dumps, etc.

Similarly in Ranjit Purwa drainage was reported to have been awful (and
streetlights missing) though this area was a part of the Municipality. Seven
years later, in 1931, the absence of drains in Ranjit Purwa led one Matadin
Shukla to complain that there was no exit for dirty water from this locality.

In the absence of adequate drainage, latrines and garbage dumps, stench
and bad odour became constant objects of complaint from most parts of the city

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52 Vartman, 5-3-1926, p. 2.
53 Pratap, 28-2-1932. The complainant requested Maheswari Prasad, the local Municipal
representative, to get one drain made for releasing slushy water which had accumulated
for long.
54 Pratap, 10-1-1923, p. 16.
55 Vartman, 26-2-1931, p. 2. A road was, however, built there in 1929.
and during all the decades. In 1920, the stink from the unattended drains of Feelkhana, Anwarganj, Kursawa, etc., was getting unbearable and some residents demanded a phenyl spray to reduce it.\textsuperscript{56} In 1931, there flowed a stinking drain right behind Kotwali - in the heart of the city - which reportedly caused a great inconvenience to shop-owners nearby.\textsuperscript{57} Ministers visiting Kanpur suffered the inconvenience too while mixing with the people in the way colonial officials never did. Hence, in 1946, Vijay Laxmi Pandit, the Provincial Health Minister, was pained to see that health and sanitation in by-lanes behind Collectorganj and Kamla Tower was as bad as it was twenty years ago.\textsuperscript{58} And the local self-government Minister, Atmaram Gobind Khare, immediately after Independence, was greeted by an enormous stink when he visited the residential quarters of poor sweepers near Koklas Mills. This happened not by design but by virtue of the fact that the huts of the sweepers and the stinking drains near Koklas Mills ran into each other.\textsuperscript{59} After a tour of the hatas or slums in 1952, Jawaharlal Nehru was reported to have angrily said, 'Hang the Development Board President and burn down these hatas.' In his address to FICCI later, Nehru told industrialists that the hovels he had seen in Kanpur were a disgrace ... It would be better if the workers had no place to live than these hovels. It would be better if the pace of industrialisation slowed down than workers should be made to live in these shocking and humiliating conditions.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{56} Pratap, 5-4-1920, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{57} Vartman, 20-5-1931, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{58} Pratap, 13-8-1946, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 9-9-1947, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{60} S. P. Mehra, Cawnpore Civic Problems (Kanpur, 1952) as cited in Chitra Joshi (2003), op. cit., p. 61.
Some of these unsanitary conditions were also aggravated by the absence of motivation among the Municipal administrators and conservancy staff to keep Kanpur clean. Upper India Chamber of Commerce (UICC), a body representing the European businessmen of Kanpur, alleged way back in the 19th century that the Municipal Board was obsessed with 'sentimental' matters and, consequently, it neglected sanitation. It sanctioned a cowshed and ghats on Ganga but did not think of devoting attention to improving sanitation in the city.61

The complaints of the less resourceful and unorganised commoners were more dismal. A complainant said in 1927 that the well-to-do residents of Anandbagh paid water and house tax to the Municipal Board but its conservancy staff had not removed a dead dog which had been stinking for two weeks in the northern part of it.62 Neglect and indifference are better reflected in day-to-day activities. Even a literally everyday activity like cleaning garbage dumps became an occasional affair. In some areas such as the less-affluent Nachghar, and that too near Durgadevi’s temple, a garbage dump got cleaned only after eight days or so.63

It was not as if no area was kept clean and no complaint was ever attended immediately. Obviously, the Cantonment and the Civil Lines area were kept prim and proper most of the time. The ‘salubrity’ and ‘comfort’ of

61 Complaint to Municipal Board by UICC on July 16, 1890. See Chitra Joshi (2003), op. cit., p. 43, fn. 86. In a similar vein, the Managers of Cooper Allen complained to the District Magistrate of Kanpur that high caste Hindu members of Municipal Board kept the octroi on babul bark, a tanning agent, high because they were prejudicial to and contemptuous of the manufacture of Leather. Ibid.
63 Vartman, 12-7-1931, 2.
Cantonment was considered inviolable. Even after a committee of specialists demanded in 1893 that the main sewer of Kanpur be taken out from the Cantonment this could not be done for a long time. Any cause of complaint about sanitary disorder in the Civil Lines was urgently removed. To illustrate this we have an incident on Mall Road near Christ Church College. Incidentally, in 1905, a Municipal regulation prohibited the construction of industries in the neighbourhood of the Mall Road. Hence, when, in 1918, some bad smell was reported from there, it was promptly attended. Infact this small sanitary inconvenience was attended so promptly that Municipal Review, published from Kanpur, turned green with jealousy. Its editor taunted whether the complaint of bad smell was attended to so urgently only because Europeans and colonial officials used the Mall Road?

Not just insanitation, scarcity of water was another acute problem in Kanpur. In fact, according to one version, the first communal riots of Kanpur in 1927 were triggered off after a scuffle over drinking water on a hot summer evening. Kanpur's Municipal Board started water-works in 1894, i.e. almost thirty years after its Conservancy Department. Not only did water supply start late but it also was clearly inadequate for the city. In 1894, the water works was built at the cost of Rs. Fourteen and a half lakhs for providing water to a population of one and a half lakh. This population crossed the two-lakh mark in

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64 Ultimately, after the plague of 1900 and the riots related with it in Kanpur, could industrialists ensure the building of a sewer across Cantonment even though the Cantonment authorities kept protesting against it. Chitra Joshi (2003), op. cit., p. 59.
65 Chitra Joshi (2003), op. cit., p. 51.
66 Report on Native Press (RNP), No. 40 of 5-10-1918, 618.
1921 and the existing water supply proved inadequate. On paper, the average daily supply of water in Kanpur was twenty gallons per head, but even colonial writers accepted that, this ‘figure was high’ and that it was unreal because ‘the larger mills and factories consumed immense water.’

In 1923, on becoming the Chairman of the Municipal Board of Kanpur Dr. Murarilal, a well-known nationalist, promised to replace wells with water works. Nothing substantial seems to have been done on this front and the worst to suffer were the poor of Kanpur. The rich were able to meet their needs by digging wells in their compounds or employing bhistis (or traditional water-carriers) in case the water of their own wells was polluted or brackish. Consequently, in 1938, during the period of the Congress Ministry, a scheme at the cost of Rs. Twenty-two lakhs was undertaken to increase the water supply from 11 to 15 million gallons daily. Even three years after its commencement, this scheme remained incomplete due to the non-arrival of some cables and

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69 Ibid., p. 274.
70 Dr. Murari Lal Rohtagi (1872-1961) completed his degree in medicine from Lahore and thereafter joined the U.P. Government’s Health Department. He was given the title of Rai Sahib for his services in the capacity of a doctor. He left Government service, settled in Kanpur and, under the inspiration of Gandhiji, Rohtagi became active in the labour as well as the nationalist movement here. After Kanpur Mazdur Sabha became a registered body in 1920, Rohtagi became its President and Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi its Secretary. As Chairman of the Municipal Board, Dr Rohtagi allotted a piece of land for the office of Mazdur Sabha and Lala Lajpat Rai inaugurated this office in 1924. During the Non-Cooperation movement he relinquished the title of Rai Sahib, he was imprisoned both in 1921 and 1942 for his nationalist activities. He was the Chairman of the Reception Committee of the annual session of All India Congress Committee at Kanpur in December 1925. He became a Rajya Sabha member after Independence. He was involved in spreading scientific knowledge to students by establishing a Health Museum at Kanpur after his retirement from politics in 1956. See Mukt, Beesavin Sadi ke Kanpur ke Prasidh Purush avam Mahilavein (Kanpur, Kanpur Itihaas Samiti, 2004), pp. 34-7.

71 FR – 25 of 1923 for the I half of April 1923, Home Political Department, NAI. He also promised to replace oil-lamps by electric lights in the streets. Ibid.

72 Use of bhistis can be inferred from the reference to a boycott of ‘Muslim bhistis’ by Sanatan Dharam Sabha. PAI, 4-4-1925, pa. 113, p. 149.
machinery from England. Hence, complaints abounded till almost the end of our period of study that there was a shortage of water in every home.

The extent of pollution in Kanpur was another cause for worry. Apart from being the root cause of respiratory disorders among residents, the thick smoke in Kanpur also became a traffic hazard. Khan Bahadur Hafiz Hidayat Husain, the prominent Muslim Leaguer of Kanpur, felt that, particularly in winter, car drivers and tonga-wallahs grope their way in the dark due to the thickness of the smoke and, consequently, a lot of accidents occurred at Kanpur. After Husain’s death towards the end of 1935, the problem of air pollution, or the ‘smoke nuisance’ as it came to be called, did not come up at public forums so significantly. And when, after Independence, some people demanded that factories of Kanpur be shifted outside the city, the District Magistrate, Kishan Chand, reacted sharply. He advised people in the Civil Lines to move outside the city and build their bungalows there. As if to assuage feelings ruffled by his brazenness, Kishan Chand added that factories could not be shifted because building material was in short supply.

Response of Colonial Rulers and Communalism
The response of colonial authorities to problems caused by insanitation and pollution was of two kinds. Firstly, the usual strong-arm measures were either adopted or recommended. Secondly, there was the time-tested technique of passing the buck (or shrugging off the blame) for any problem raised by

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73 The Citizen, 5-5-1941, p. 1.
74 Pratap, 21-11-1944, p. 15.
76 Pratap, 9-9-1947, p. 10.
affected residents. We shall deal with these responses now. One of the strong-arm measures suggested against insanitation was to make urinating at a public place a cognisable offence under section 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). Police was, therefore, expected to catch and book people urinating in public. Such heavy-handed action led complainants to jeeringly ask - what should be made? Public toilets or regulations against peeing?77

To check pollution, colonial authorities suggested that a Smoke Inspector be appointed but hastened to add that the Government bore no liability for such an appointment because "smoke nuisance" was the "prime responsibility" of the Municipal Board.78 And this brings us to the second response of colonial authorities, viz., to pass the buck.

People in colonial India were proudly proclaimed as their "Charge" or subjects by colonial authorities. But colonialists inevitably dithered in discharging their responsibility to these subjects and their normal response was to follow pass the buck approach whenever accosted by obligations usually met by a sovereign. Therefore, when the problem of pollution was raised by representatives of people, the colonial Government passed the responsibility for framing bye laws to reduce the smoke nuisance and appointing a Smoke Inspector to enforce them on to the Municipal Board.79 A more interesting

77 Pratap, 4-12-1927, p. 24.
78 UPLCD, Vol. 59, 29-6-1933, p. 158.
79 Ibid., Vol. 64, pp. 3-4.
example of passing the buck and dithering from known pronouncements by colonial authorities related to sanitation.

Sewage drains had to be expanded/lengthened as the population of Kanpur increased and more areas came under denser human inhabitation. As a gesture of magnanimity probably in return for Kanpur's help in the First World War, in 1919, the Government assured 50 percent grant towards the expenses of a drainage scheme to Kanpur. But, when no money was forthcoming till 1928, Rai Bahadur Vikramajit Singh, the big Hindu communal leader,\(^{60}\) enquired about

\(^{60}\) Vikramajit Singh (1874-1942), educated at Muir Central College, Allahabad, he started legal practice at Kanpur in 1897. He was President of Kanpur Bar Association continuously for 14 years. An industrial magnate, he was Chairman of R.G. Cotton Mills and a Director of Punjab National Bank, British India Corporation, New Victoria Mills and U.P. Glass Works. He was one of the founders of U.P. Chambers of Commerce and he represented it in U.P. Legislative Council from 1916 to 1936.

In the second decade of the twentieth century, twice he was a member of the Reception Committee of the Indian National Congress, i.e. in 1910 at Allahabad and in 1916 at Lucknow. For his loyalty to the colonial rulers during the Non-cooperation movement, he received the title of Rai Bahadur in 1922. Later, he became actively anti-Congress and, in 1932, he formed the Constitutional League and Punjabi Association to oppose the Civil Disobedience Movement.

He was elected to the Municipal Board from Sadar Bazar Ward and to him goes credit for organizing meetings during Municipal elections to elicit support. He was Chairman of Kanpur Municipal Board from 1925 to 1932. He was a member of Kanpur's Improvement Trust in 1934 and he became its Chairman in 1937.

He founded Sanatan Dharma College which was a premier Commerce college in North India. This college also became the centre of RSS activities in Kanpur after 1937.

He was one of the Vice-Presidents of All-India Hindu Mahasabha and U.P. Provincial Hindu Mahasabha for a number of years. He was the candidate of Hindu Sabha from Kanpur District (South) and he lost though he polled 4,371 votes.

A man of religious disposition, he was one of the Secretaries of the All-India Bharat Dharam Mahamandal.

He displayed undue social conservatism. He was President of Brahamvarta Sanatan Dharam Mandal for more than twenty-five years. As the President of this Mandal he opposed the Hindu Women's Right to Divorce Bill which had been introduced in Central Assembly by one Mr. Deshmukh. The aforesaid bill sought to provide Hindu women the right to divorce as an unavoidable remedy in certain extreme circumstances. But Vikramajit Singh said that the bill was a mischievous document which should be made a bonfire of because, according to him, it was: calculated to destroy Hindu society because among Hindus marriage is a sacrament and the bill would destroy the authority of the Shastras; the Bill would interfere with the religious rights and liberties of the subjects and was contrary to the proclamation of Queen Victoria in 1858; and that Hindus took pride in the chastity and high ideals of their women and it was an insult to women to tell them to divorce their husbands and to take other husbands. (The Pioneer, 18-1-1939, p. 5. and Obituary in The Pioneer, 20-1-1942, p. 4.)
the grant for drains at Kanpur. To this enquiry, the colonial response was that since the Municipal Board had made no application for the grant from 1919 to 1926, no money was assigned for drains at Kanpur. But colonial authorities were reminded that such an application was made in 1926 and this request was repeated in 1927. Pat came the reply that no money was available then. When asked as to when could Kanpur expect to get the grant for drains, the colonial authorities remained non-committal. They replied that accounts were being examined and this was a complicated task.\(^{81}\)

One of the major consequences of this colonial neglect, indifference and back-tracking on commitments was the recurrence of disease and high mortality rates in Kanpur, as already seen earlier. But one of the minor by-products of acute insanitation was social discord among different castes/communities. The Improvement Trust had reportedly built a mohalla of 100 houses, especially for Ghosis (or Muslim milk-sellers) in Prem Nagar. To produce milk, Ghosis kept milch cattle which could not be done very hygienically due to the general unsanitary conditions. This led to a lot of protests against Ghosis who happened to be Muslims.

One complainant who happened to be a Hindu said that though just 100 houses were made for them all the Ghosis had started living in their neighbourhood. Secondly, the complainant's more substantive grievance was that 'the Ghosis collected cow-dung in front of our houses due to which the air

\(^{81}\) Ibid., Vol. 37, 22-2-1928, p. 35.
was polluted and poisonous insects and flies have bred in our locality. The fact that Ghosis had moved into the mohalla made for them was missed by this complainant, instead, he feared that all of them had moved into those 100 houses. Secondly, our complainant missed the fact that the Conservancy department and its much publicized tramway to transport night-soil, garbage, etc. outside the city was not efficient. Instead, the problems created by bad sanitary administration were put on the door of 'bad neighbours'. This is the way in which nascent communal feelings were born. Communalists found these handy for transforming the consciousness of the people through ideological propaganda and political mobilization. The following chapters are about the way in which communal organisations grew and the way they converted such small grievances into issues for communal propaganda and mobilization.

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82 Pratap, 4-8-1929, p. 27.