

"...The bazaar, the street, and the fair (*mela*), it seems to me, have for long formed a 'spatial complex' in India. Streets, for good or bad, all too often become 'bazaars' in India, and melas combine the different purposes of pilgrimage, recreation and economic exchanges. I take the bazaar as a space that serves the needs of transportation as well as those of entertainment and the buying and selling of goods and services. I am aware that there have been different kinds of bazaars in India, going by their different names of *hats*, *mandis*, *ganjes*, etc., and varying in their functional specializations. The bazaar I speak of is obviously an abstraction of certain structural characteristics that, to my mind, define the experience of the bazaar as a place. Everyday linguistic practices involve and permit such an abstraction - in Bengali language, for instance, the word *bajar* (bazaar) is often used in a metaphorical way to represent an 'outside' to *ghar-shangshar* (the way of the householder, i.e., domesticity); thus prostitutes are called *bajarer meye* (women of the bazaar) as opposed to *gharer meye*, housewives. The bazaar, in this analysis, is that unenclosed, exposed and interstitial 'outside' which acts as the meeting point of several communities.

Structurally speaking; in my terms then, the bazaar or the 'outside' is a place where one comes across and deals with strangers. And if 'strangers', as we have argued, are always suspect and potentially dangerous, it is only logical that the themes of familiarity/unfamiliarity and trust/mistrust should play themselves out in many different aspects of the bazaar. All 'economic' transactions here - bargaining, lending and borrowing, buying and selling - are marked by these themes.

...the bazaar or the street expresses through its own theatre, the juxtaposition of pleasure and danger that constitutes the 'outside' or the open unemployed space. The street is where one has interesting and sometimes marvelous encounters. They do not always eventuate, but the place is pregnant with the possibility. And such pleasures are by nature transgressive because they are pleasures of the inherently risky 'outside'..."

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Open Space/Public Place: Garbage, Modernity and India", *South Asia*, Vol. XIV, no.1 (1991).

"...The ubiquitous municipal notices in most large Indian cities are vestiges of the colonial administration. Their governing conventions were internalised by the Indian middle class, for whom control of everyday uses of space was an indispensable part of the establishment of their social sovereignty. Colonial rule introduced the conception of disciplining everyday conduct to give shape and form to the body politic. Rules were introduced to produce order and govern everyday behaviour. Sovereignty over society meant that social groups sharing the sovereigns' world had to be made to relate to the world according to the rules of elite imagination, not their own. As part of this social arrangement, it was necessary to obtain the obedience of the poor to a bourgeois conception of what it meant for a space to be a modern city. The ideology of colonial modernity posited a duality between the city and country in which the city was seen as orderly, hygienic, scientific, technologically superior, and 'civilised'. As opposed to the loose disorder of the village, conduct in the city was more standardized. To institute such regimentation of conduct, the colonial administration had to employ certain standardizing techniques.

The municipal sign, a most important weapon in this war against spontaneous 'indiscipline' was a colonial invention. It arrogated to itself, and its invisible enunciators, the function of a constant, relentless surveillance of everyday behaviour, a pretence of unending invigilation over popular conduct. The police were a rather inadequate implement to enforce such a huge civilising project, with such minute attention to detail. What became crucial, through constant intervention, was the reinforcement of the conceptual distinction between the legal and the illegal, between the reassuring fixity of the shops on the streets and the chaos of vendors on the pavement. This task of policing was important precisely because it symbolised the presence of a distinctly Weberian rationalist intelligence acting through the agencies of the state, which constantly kept the rules, governed conduct, and imposed restrictions, without which the minimal precarious order of modern life threatened to dissolve into chaos. The standardising function requires an appropriately standard external form. Street signs were given a standard visual styling. Painted in measured white letters on blue enamelled metal, they gradually became the emblem of the voice of the state. From signs promoting hygiene, to traffic regulations, to directions in huge disorderly railway stations, all were painted in the same standard colour and letter, a livery of municipal sovereignty. Until the 1960s most of these signs were in English, which marked the state's irresistible power and distance by delivering orders in language ordinary subjects could not entirely understand. Nonetheless, it was their obligation to obey the laws, and by a mixture of conjecture, experience, gossip, and improvisation, they managed usually to abide by these incomprehensible regulations..."

Sudipta Kaviraj, "Filth and the Public Sphere", *Public Culture*, 10(1):(Fall, 1997)