



# URBAN MORPHOLOGIES

In a sense the title of this section frames the essays within it. All of them deal with the form of the city and its experience. The essays deal with India, and form part of a growing corpus of new writings that are finally acknowledging the urban in the subcontinent. Cities are of course imaginary environments, places where the material and the immaterial overlap. In *Some Cities*, Victor Burgin suggests that "the city in our actual experience is *at the same time* an actually existing physical environment, *and* a city in a novel, a film, a photograph, a city seen on television, a city in a comic strip, a city in a pie chart, and so on".

All the essays in this section acknowledge this *imagined* environment, steering clear of old-style urban sociology. From the opening essay by Gyan Prakash which discusses the recent urban turn in India, we move to Radhika Subramaniam's discussion of the physiognomy of the crowd in Bombay in 1992. Next we have Ashis Nandy's memoir of childhood in Calcutta during Partition, when the shadows of death and dislocation hovered uneasily in the city. We then read two accounts of contemporary Delhi: Aditya Nigam examines rumour, reason and proletarian subjectivity during the sightings of an alleged Monkeyman in the poorer parts of the city in 2001, and Awadhendra Sharan looks at discourses of health, disease and displacement in governmental practices.

All the essays are clearly marked by a post-nationalist sensibility, and steer clear of the older narratives of developmentalism. Here the Mythic, which was once evoked in the Plan, or the Nation, is constantly disrupted by violence and ruin. As post-mythic critiques, the essays steer clear of any larger frameworks of looking for *the* Indian City, focussing rather on particular cities: Calcutta, Bombay and Delhi. We hope readers of the section will appreciate this theoretical modesty.

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