Chapter 14
Indigenous Modernities in Dependent Princely States: Design of Public and Civic Spaces in Baroda

1 Background

Company rule in India, which began in around the eighteenth century, dominated the majority of the Indian sub-continent and was also marked by complex arrangements of power and administration. After the mutiny of 1857 the British crown took direct control over the affairs of the country. However, the British managed to rule a vast country such as India due to a sophisticated arrangement of indirect rule; wherein certain long-standing princely states were allowed to manage their affairs, as long as they could swear their allegiance to the British crown. This also meant that the princely states were dependent on the British crown for protection, financial and other major policy matters. This extreme dependency of the princely states on the British crown for their existence at times created an environment of mistrust or defiance and at other times was marked by constant negotiation and even co-operation.

The princely state of Baroda not only defied the British crown during many a moment, but also through its own initiatives managed to create a counter-colonial narrative. But more interestingly the state of Baroda, under the leadership of its king Sayajirao Gaekwad III, undertook massive social and education reforms, as well as commissioning civic buildings and public places that completely transformed the nature of the city of Baroda between 1880 and 1910.

This form of indigenous modernity was managed and executed by hiring freelance Indian and European engineers, botanists and librarians: thereby totally bypassing the British Empire. This paper wishes to explore the nature and form of these transformations in the city as related to design of botanical gardens and museum as public places. The paper will try and articulate the unique formation and design of these spaces, and how it was a result of complex negotiation with and at times defiance of the British colonial rulers. The dependencies of the princely state on the British colonial rulers in fundamental matters of security and economy was an overarching condition that influenced the conception and formation of these public projects.
2 Indirect Rule in India

Colonial powers had begun to expand their territory in India as early as the sixteenth century. Trade and commerce being their main objective, it was not until the seventeenth century that the East India Company began forming colonies for settlement purposes. By the time the British began establishing their initial territories in India, the Mughal powers were under decline with no political stability in the country, which left the smaller regional powers to war amongst themselves for control of the Indian subcontinent. The British took advantage of the fact that there was a lack of an efficient singular political system, by substituting it with their own. The Company rule in India, fuelled by economic and political objectives, began by annexing territories to expand their empire. After their success in Bengal and South India, the British devised a system of alliance with the local rulers based on mutual benefits, where the British administration gave a political stability and legitimacy to the native rulers along with protection, and in return the local kingdom would turn into a vassal state under British administration.¹ Company rule recognised the authority and power of the native rulers and included a certain amount of flexibility in its administrative system in order to have a better hold over the vast and diverse Indian subcontinent. This concept of indirect rule came to be convenient and efficient, as it incorporated indigenous methods of urban governance while providing an overarching imperial administrative system. This relationship with the native states allowed the British to become a suzerain power, while the vassal states pledged their sovereignty to them. The period after the mutiny of 1857 saw the formalisation of the policy of indirect rule. As the political control was taken away from the East India Company and India came under the control of the British crown, the policies of indirect rule became clearer and centralised, unlike the strong decentralised nature of governance during the company period.

2.1 Political and Legal Groundwork

After the mutiny of 1875, the British devised two different strategies for control of the Indian sub-continent. In certain parts of the country, based on political or economic contingencies, they completely annexed the region and ruled the same directly. For example, large parts of Northern Indian Gangetic plains apart from prominent coastal regions were directly ruled by the British. However, more than five hundred princely states were also indirectly ruled by them.

The system of indirect rule in India allowed the colonial powers an immense political and economic advantage. A state under indirect rule was expected to provide

military support to the British and was not permitted to have its own independent army. These army contingents formed part of the British army which were used against external threats and also to curb internal unrests. The British also offered military support to their allied states to settle disputes with rival regional powers, which became one of the biggest incentives of allying with the British. Apart from military resources, the British legally bound the indigenous states through treaties, sanads and official letters. Treaties defined the terms of the alliance with the native states and were often unilaterally issued. Forming treaties with Indian rulers would allow them access to resources for the purpose of trade, and the British also acted as third-party negotiators to settle disputes between native rulers. The degree of dependency of a given state, on the British, was defined by the nature of the alliance and by the British policy on intervention. The latter, however, was not very well defined. It was based on convenience and often came from a strategic standpoint, depending on the importance of a given state. Policies of absolute non-intervention, like the ring-fence policy, did not require the British to interfere in the state’s internal matters. However, states under subsidiary alliance with the British had varying intervention policies. In order to ensure the smooth transition of power after treaties were signed, residents were stationed in the states to monitor and oversee the administrative activities and intervene wherever necessary.

2.2 Scientific and Post-Enlightenment Ideologies

The East India Company’s initial venture into the Indian subcontinent was motivated by commercial gains, and only later was it compounded with moral and political objectives. The aftermath of the Industrial Revolution and the post-Enlightenment era, saw a rapid increase in the scientific, technological and intellectual breakthroughs in the European states that came to be tried, tested and perfected in the British colonies. These methodologies helped establish a degree of control over Britain’s colonies and to impose a sense of order in a foreign landscape.

In the eighteenth century, when a first rudimentary form of indirect rule was being established, the British government realised the importance of knowing and understanding the territory they were ruling, in order to govern it better. With the political framework in place, it was important to collect, record and classify data on their territories and people. Under the colonial perspective, the process of state building required standardising data and procedures, which gave rise to the need for centralised institutions. The process of acquiring data on their vast and diverse Indian colony began by the necessity to understand its geographical terrain, and to record this data via maps, which ultimately became an instrument to control, define and solidify

boundaries unilaterally. This act of unilateral mapping was the fundamental building block on which was mounted a highly dominant relationship of the British Empire with the princely states, leading to extreme forms of dependencies.

Maps and surveys became a dominant tool for conveying the complexity of the vast terrain which became an archive of knowledge that was used for political expansion as well as military operations. Cartography, as a practice, was still being refined and developed in the West, and different methods were being implemented to survey the land. India became an experimental ground to try and test out these methods.

The larger question of control and hence dependencies can also be understood from the perspective of usage of science and technology by the British Empire in India. Institutionalisation of these practices by the establishment of the Survey of India, the Census of India, etc. became the vehicle by which the Indian territory was recorded and controlled. This gave the colonisers a massive advantage over the native princely states and helped them have total control over their political and economic spheres.

3 Indirect Rule and Princely States

Following the 1857 mutiny, the British devised the system of indirect rule, wherein the native Indian rulers governed their semi-independent territories under the direction and discretion of the British government. Such a system was established in order to efficiently run such a large country and to prevent subsequent breakouts of national rebellions. Whereas this period was referred to as one of direct control, many precolonial states in India that had a subsidiary alliance with the East Indian Company were now indirectly ruled by the British Crown.

During the indirect rule, the Indian rulers were allowed to have autonomy on matters of day-to-day administration and most internal affairs while they enjoyed the protection from the British Empire. They however had to give up their right on external matters including defence, taxation and communication. These traditional rulers had to pay allegiance to the British Empire, and work towards supporting their rule; in return they could keep their title and limited autonomy. The major princely states during this period were Baroda, Mysore, Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad and Gwalior, all of which were directly connected to the central government.

Strong control in areas of defence, foreign policy and economy left little room for manoeuvring for the princely states. However, many states carved out opportunities through defiance or negotiations in areas of civic and public infrastructure to create new forms of institutions. The British were not much encouraging of these initiatives as it did not much serve their purpose, however many states deftly implemented

many new reforms and established new spaces. Many of these policies and initiatives were independent of the British policies and often driven by the interest of the rulers. Quite often the prince elect would take a personal interest in introducing policies and certain practices that he felt were needed for the welfare of the subjects of his state. Such initiatives included matters of health care, education, civic improvement or social reforms that helped create larger public good. This enhanced the prestige of ruling class and often made them very popular amongst the citizens of the state. It is not surprising that this period was marked by many interesting urban planning and design practices that seem to have evolved independent of the British colonial intent and due to the partial autonomy enjoyed by the princely states.

### 4 Princely Cities: Spaces of Dependencies

There were a total of 570 princely states in India before 1800, and by the time indirect rule was formalised, the British crown was indirectly ruling some 175 of them. The capital cities of these princely states received much attention, as here would be the seat of power with the palace and court life in and around it. Many of the capitals of these states flourished during these periods both in terms of demographic growth and also by the way of quality of urban infrastructure, its public space and architecture. Amongst the capital cities, some stood out for their remarkable urban development initiatives and make for interesting studies. The prominent cities of these states were Mysore, Baroda, Jamnagar, Gwalior, and Hyderabad, to name a few.

The rulers of the princely states, by virtue of their privileged status were mostly connected with the high-ranking British officers and their families, western elites and public intellectuals. They and their extended families were often abreast with the western world through their frequent travels for either education, medical treatments or recreation. The encounters between these rulers and the west during this period (especially the from the 1890s to 1920s) led to some interesting initiatives in India. Often these rulers came back fresh and excited about the new ideas and practices they would have encountered in Europe or America, and would try and implement them in their home states.

#### 4.1 Indigenous Modernities as a Reaction to Dependencies

There is some literature to suggest that some of these princely states made rapid progress in ensuring public services, education, health care and even civic planning. Many British chroniclers referred to such states as being ‘progressive and ideal’, whereas the underlying belief was that they unleashed a western form of modernity (through mimicry) in their respective states and hence it was only natural that they were more progressive.
Homi Bhabha counters such simplistic generalisations and introduced the idea of ‘almost but not quite western’; meaning a kind of modernity that definitely is inspired from the West, but takes a new turn in the way it gets naturalised in the ethos of the Indian context.\(^4\) In some case, this modernity becomes the means of creating a counter-colonial narrative in the princely states.\(^5\) States such as Baroda in Western India, Mysore in Southern India and Gwalior in Central India managed to introduce series of reforms in policies and practice as related to the rights of its citizens, education, health care and also urban planning and design. The reforms that affected cities and their growth were usually related to overall organisation of the city, planning of water reservoirs outside the limit of the city, planning and design of public gardens, zoological parks, market buildings, landmarks such as clock towers, water bodies, palace compounds, schools, colleges, city level courts, libraries and museums.

The overall impact of such initiatives on the form of these cities was substantial, as it led to a very different organisation of spaces in comparison with the cities that were under direct rule of the British. The importance given to public places and institutions apart from overall land use made these cities special, and even today one can experience their distinct spatial structures. Many prided themselves on their well-formed and legible city fabric representing the best of Indian traditions (in terms of lively markets streets, religious institutions and water bodies) and western influence (university building, public gardens and market buildings).

The period between 1880 and 1920 was also marked by a very active role of professional engineers, architects, horticulturists and gardeners who were appointed to the service of the princely states. Many of them were abreast with international trends and were quick to make full use of the patronage they enjoyed in these princely cities. Away from the gaze of the direct British rulers, they developed close bonds with the kings and their ministers, and were instrumental in bringing about massive changes in the city fabric.

The princely rulers had access to foreign specialists and professionals through the Public Works Department (PWD), and it was standard procedure for princely states to be formally assigned PWD architects and engineers to develop public infrastructure. However, quite a few princely rulers ignored these standard procedures of hiring personnel from British institutions and circumvented the entire process by hiring professionals independently and not necessarily in consultation with the British. The Maharaja of Baroda hired independent specialists and architects to bring about major urban and cultural reforms. Robert Chisholm and Charles Mant were two such British professionals who were hired as consulting architects for the Baroda State. As an act of defiance, princely rulers would also hire non-British professionals outside

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the PWD for projects across their states. Gustav Hermann Krumbiegel, a landscape gardener from Germany, who was also a member of the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew near London, was hired to develop public parks and gardens in Baroda; later on he worked in Mysore and Bihar. William Borden, an American librarian, was invited by the Maharaja to establish a system of public libraries across the state. The fact that an Indian civil engineer and city planner, Sri Visvesria, was considered for the design and implementation of water works project in Baroda State, is a good pointer towards this defiance.

4.2 The Case of Baroda

Baroda (now Vadodara) was amongst the most important princely states during British rule in India. Baroda witnessed major social and cultural reforms towards the end of the nineteenth century. This period was also marked by major urban transformation in the city of Baroda. The origins of medieval Baroda can be traced to in sixteenth century, when a location close to an ancient town (Vadapadraka) was used to establish a walled city with four gates. Soon the walled city was inhabited and was taken over by the Gaekwads in 1720s. It remained with the Gaekwads till independence of India.

Baroda State in the western-most part of India was established in 1721 by Maratha general Pilaji Gaekwad. The state of Baroda came into complete existence after the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803–1805). Whereas the East India Company had managed to control much of Gujarat, the Gaekwads of Baroda made a separate peace treaty with the British, by entering into a subsidiary alliance which acknowledged British suzerainty and control of the state’s external affair in return for retaining internal autonomy. Divided into smaller kingdoms, the Marathas inherited their administrative system from the Mughals, which was an elaborate bureaucratic system. The princely state of Baroda was only formed after 1866, when the British Residency unified these smaller kingdoms under a single princely state in the aftermath of the Second Anglo-Maratha war. The British intervention for the control of political power over Western India resulted in the formation of one of the largest princely states, spanning over an area of approximately 8182 square kilometres, sharing its boundaries with the Rajput in the North, the Malwa in the East and the Maratha in the South. It went on to be ranked as the second highest in the British system of princely classification. Baroda State was under the governance of the Gaekwads when they signed the treaty with the British officials, but their political relations were subsequently marred by turbulence.
4.2.1 The Rebel State

Baroda State encountered major tension with the British government from time to time in matters of autonomy of administration and finances. These run-ins with the British only made Baroda State more powerful and autonomous, as it was able to take advantage of the confusion and constant infighting within the British administrations. One such series of events is historically remembered as the ‘Baroda Crisis’. It was a mark of the beginning of events that strained the relations between the British regime in Baroda, and the local ruling authorities. The crisis was a manifestation of the clash between two differing political systems, and went on to become a national crisis, causing a rift between the government of Bombay and Calcutta. The crisis further aggravated their political ties with the rulers of Baroda State, where the local rulers openly defied British ideology and authority, and some became key individuals responsible for introducing numerous modern reforms.

Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, ruler of Baroda from 1875 to 1939, was one such individual, who notably came to be known for revamping the social and educational face of Baroda. He became notoriously popular among the British when he refused to follow protocol at the Durbar (coronation ceremonies designed to declare the reigning British monarch the ‘Emperor’ or the ‘Empress’), failed to bow and turned his back on the Emperor and the Empress. This show of defiance brought him under British scrutiny, and they sought to stop his anti-colonial activities. However, his ideology made him one of the most enlightened rulers of India who introduced a number of reforms in the city that made Baroda one of the progressive cities of nineteenth-century India. He travelled extensively around the world, and would always be on the lookout for new ways to improve his state. He understood that the results of western modernity could not be simply mimicked in India, rather it was imperative to initiate internal improvements that were distinctive to their own particular context. Maharaja Sayajirao’s defiance of the colonial supremacy was a turning point in the history of the state, where he recognised the need for things to change from a political as well as a social standpoint, which helped shape the distinctive image of the city.

4.2.2 Transformation and Reforms

The state of Baroda under Gaekwad Maharaja Sayajirao III experienced major changes around the turn of the twentieth century, affecting all sections of the society. The influence of western thoughts, ideas of modernity, education and liberal values were the core of these reforms. Sayajirao in the year 1902 enacted the law for widow remarriage,
a landmark achievement for that time, and went on to introduce major state-level reforms in the Indian Penal Code such as the Infant Marriage Prevention Act, Primary Education Act etc. to name a few.

Baroda thus became the first territory of either the native states or British India to provide free schooling to all its citizens. The Department of Public Instruction was established in 1875, and the state government initiated a programme of free, mandatory education for both sexes and all castes. Anglo-vernacular schools taught up to four grades and prepared children for admittance into high schools, while vernacular schools taught in Gujarati, Marathi, or Urdu at the primary level.

At the same time and equally importantly, the Gaekwad launched a library movement in Baroda, which was fully established by 1922 with the assistance of W.A. Borden. The Gaekwad created the Baroda Library Department, which included a Central Library, numerous district libraries and reading rooms, traveling libraries which would take books to those areas where permanent collections had not yet been created, and a class on libraries to teach people how to work and use such an institution.7

The Countess of Dufferin Hospital, which was established in 1886, replaced the old state hospital from the Countess of Dufferin Fund. This Fund was established by Lady Dufferin, Vicereine of India (1884–1888), with the aim of improving medical healthcare in the country, primarily for women and children. The hospital was constructed to mark the Viceroy’s visit to Baroda. Major Charles Mant, a military engineer, was appointed by the Maharaja to design the hospital. He was also responsible for designing numerous civic and governmental structures in Baroda, including the State Library and, most significantly, the royal residence – Lakshmi Vilas Palace.

In 1906, soon after his return from a trip to America and England, Gaekwad launched a spate of transformative reforms in the state. By 1908 a modern banking institution (Bank of Baroda) was established to promote trade and commerce within and outside the state. The bank took over the function of the state treasury and went on to become one of the most successful banks in India. By 1890 a major reservoir for supply of drinking water to the city was constructed further upstream at Ajwa. This earthen dam was five kilometres long and 196 feet tall, and a major civil engineering project at that time. Its sixty-four gates ensured an uninterrupted water supply to the city of Baroda. Till today this reservoir is crucial for water supply and flood control in the region. The 1920s began with a proposal for a new ‘democratic’ constitution for the state, articulated in a remarkable document by Manubhai Mehta.8 The birth of Baroda University after a series of false starts was the logical outcome of a concerted effort by the ruler and his minister to create institutional structures that would endure and create long-lasting public goods. A university carved out of the existing

Baroda College (that was governed by the Bombay University) was the beginning to establish the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, and a huge step in reconfiguring the social and physical fabric of the city. Both the university and the creation of a large public garden in the form of Kamati Baug had a profound impact on subsequent urban development of Baroda City (Plates 14.1, 14.2). These were just two of the many urban initiatives taken by the Gaekwads; the others included an artificial lake in the city, designed markets, water reservoir to bring fresh water to the city, public gardens, libraries and reading rooms, auditoriums, court and hospitals. The initiatives of the Baroda State can be summarised through the following larger constructs.

4.2.3 Creation of Civic Spaces

Indian medieval cities were known for their lofty palaces, markets and community level spaces that were used by the citizens. However, Baroda State made a conscious attempt to create new kinds of spaces that transcended the boundaries of the community in a kind of modern public sphere that were for all. This idea of creating a public sphere was largely informed by an earnest quest on part of the state to create a new form of citizenship that is responsive and enlightened. The state showed its zeal in
Plate 14.2: Faculty of Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, a hybrid of European spatial planning and Indian construction techniques.
establishing these public spaces, much through their own initiatives while referring
to the best of international practices of modern city building. This local pride was
very much the outcome of the state’s dependencies on the British colonial masters.
The state was bound on matters of foreign affairs and defence to the colonial powers,
while swallowing its own self pride and esteem. City building became the perfect anti-
dote to these sentiments of helplessness and loss of control, and establishment of pub-
lic places was not as much to please the colonial masters but quite often was an
assertion on the part of princely states.

One of the first public spaces to come up in the city was the Sayaji Baug, which was
essentially a botanical garden, which housed exotic as well as indigenous flora. The idea
of a garden as a public space itself was derived from the West, but was eventually de-
signed to suit its local context. It was built on the banks of the river Vishvamitri by Ma-
haraja Sayajirao Gaekwad III in 1879 and spanned over an area of 113 acres. It was the
largest garden in Western India. The garden was modelled very much like the botanical
gardens in Europe, with its rich variety of plant species and a zoological section with
exotic animal life. Right in the heart of this garden, a museum housing the personal col-
lection of the Maharaja was added as a public structure. The museum was organised
using the prevalent international methods of documenting and cataloguing artefacts.
Soon the museum became an integral part of the civic spaces of the city (Plates 14.3, 14.4)

Plate 14.3: Museum in the garden: a window to the world.
The garden symbolised the progressive and scientific outlook of the rulers of Baroda, and it became a vehicle to introduce the modern outlook through the understanding of the natural world. It was built along the Maharaja's vision of a progressive state, but in coalition with the Royal Botanical Gardens in Kew, Surrey. It encouraged the citizens to view the different variety of plant and animal species organised in various sections, to spend time in unspoilt nature and wonder at the exotic collection of artefacts from the various journeys of the king. The garden in the princely states of India in the 1880s became the symbol of modernity and a window to the world. (Plate 14.5)

4.2.4 Break Away from the City

While examining the evolution of the city of Baroda it becomes amply clear that a conscious departure was made for urban expansion away from the old fortified city. The state made a deliberate and planned effort to move the new city away from old city for

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a fresh start, while using the modern urban design and planning technique to refer to the best of international urban space making. This was much in contrast with the other old cities of India, such as Ahmedabad where the citizens were reluctant to leave the confines and comfort of the traditional spaces of the old city and opposed introduction of modern technologies such as sewerage and water supply infrastructure.

Although a large portion of the city’s population inhabited the fortified city on the eastern banks of river Vishvamitri, colonial urban development began at a considerable distance from the old fortified city. The walled city can trace its origins back to early sixteenth century under the Gujarat Sultanate. Under the sultanate rule, Baroda grew to be a prominent city along the trade route.

Baroda continued to thrive as a city without any external disturbances until the advent of the Mughal rule in the Indian subcontinent in 1526. Emperor Humayun’s initial attempts to invade Gujarat were unsuccessful, until Akbar conquered Gujarat finally in 1573 and made Baroda into a Sarkar or a district under the viceroy of Gujarat, which was now a part of the Mughal empire. Mughal rule for Baroda was generally uneventful in terms of political warfare, but the city did grow outside the fortified walls, with the necropolis coming on the outskirts of the fortified city to include various tombs and daragas. With the Marathas making frequent forays into Gujarat and with the Mughal power in decline, a lot of battles were waged to gain control over Baroda. Various
factions within the Maratha empire began forming for control over portions of Gujarat until finally in 1734, the Gaekwads captured Baroda, effectively ending the Mughal rule. In 1752 The Gaekwads of Baroda formally acknowledged the sovereignty of the Peshwas of Pune. In the eighteenth century, the Gaekwads established themselves as virtually independent rulers, recognising the suzerainty of the Maratha Empire. Baroda was then named the capital city of the Gaekwad state. With this came a large population influx which allowed the city to expand beyond its walled boundaries. In 1802, the Treaty of Bassein, which was signed between the East India Company and the Maratha Peshwas of Pune, required the Marathas to accept and acknowledge British authority, officially ceding all their territories to the Company. Baroda became part of the Bombay Presidency as a capital city of the princely state of Baroda, ruled by the Gaekwads under British sovereignty.

City development under colonial rule in many parts of the country neglected the indigenous settlement patterns in order to make a physically and symbolically distinct colonial city. Physical segregation or a break away from the native city was usually motivated by the underlying principle of forming a city that was to be ethnically, socially and architecturally distinct. This disparity often helped define boundaries, but also served as a symbolic gesture to ascertain a self-important authenticity merely by contrast to the local indigenous architectural practices. Under the East India Company, British engagement in the Indian subcontinent was predominated by military, economic and commercial gains. Hence, the British initially looked at Indian cities as military or trading outposts. Military settlements or cantonments were among the first interventions to come up in prominent cities as a means of establishing a military and administrative network. In Baroda, the cantonment was established after the Treaty of Bassein was signed and a resident was appointed for the city. Since Baroda was a princely state under a subsidiary alliance with the British, it secured an autonomous existence within the British Empire. Baroda was allowed to conduct its own internal affairs without much British interference but still had to adhere to state policies set up by the colonial government. But not until after 1857 were the policies of indirect rule in Baroda formalised.

Initially, infrastructure development in Baroda under the governance of the Gaekwads was limited to setting up the cantonment and the railway line, which was exclusively used by the British. After the 1857 mutiny, with the transfer of political power from the East India Company to the British Crown, came certain policy level revisions that allowed Baroda to grow as an autonomous state. The cantonment and the residency, initially built to the north of the city, was located at a considerable distance from the walled city. This physical segregation of the colonial military settlement defined the extent of the ‘new and modern’ city’s boundaries. With the advent

of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III, city planning and urban infrastructure development became more centred on public needs, but modelled after a modernised western city. With the new Public Works Department (PWD) being established in 1855, which institutionalised settlement planning and building practices, city infrastructure grew by leaps and bounds. The PWD, as a formal institution, was also responsible for appointing officials to serve as architects or engineers for princely states. But the Maharaja hired specialists independently who implemented his vision of a progressive city. Baroda saw the introduction of a variety of urban civic infrastructure, such as public gardens, hospitals and educational institutions, which were solely for the benefit of the local population. With the railway station and the cantonment already set up, the Maharaja decided to move his idea of a modern city to the same location, with the intent of creating a modern identity of the city. The development that came around the station and the cantonment was mainly institutional in nature and paved way for the formation of an institutional precinct (Plates 14.6, 14.7).

Plate 14.6: The institutional precinct around the station comprising of the garden, university and the museum.

This precinct included a large botanical garden, educational institutes and the railway station. This area defined the northernmost boundary of the city, adjacent to the river. An important gesture towards making Baroda a contemporary city was the relocation of the royal palace. The royal residence, which was originally located within
the old city, was moved outside the city walls, further to the west. In terms of its site and setting, it was modelled very much like the Victorian palaces. The Lakshmi Vilas Palace in Baroda was set amidst a vast expanse of manicured land with designed avenues leading to it. But the palace itself was one of the earliest experiments in Anglo-Indian architecture—an architectural language that was said to be the fusion of European and Indian (mainly Mughal) architectural styles. In the late nineteenth century, the Maharaja introduced various social, administrative and political reforms within the state and spent the better part of the century developing infrastructure for it. The city expansion, which effectively began from the cantonment, started moving towards the walled city with civic infrastructure such as hospitals, central jail and an administrative precinct coming up.

The architecture of Baroda that emerged during this period seems to be a hybrid; deploying the European classical spatial planning (Maharaja Sayajirao University Arts Faculty, Museum, Dufferin Hospital) traditions along with local construction techniques such as load-bearing brick walls, squinches and domes. The site and setting of these building was very much similar to others in colonial cities in India that used the surrounding open spaces to frame the buildings, while the high ground and plinth often created a monumental impact.
4.2.5 Valuing the Tradition

The most interesting feature of the development and modernisation of Baroda city was an acknowledgment of tradition and history. Unlike many modern efforts of city development and architectural production, it was very much conscious of the old city. This was also an example of a kind of native assertion that eventually helped to mobilise a counter-colonial narrative. For example, an old water tank on the edge of the city, Sursagar, that had been in use for centuries, was revived and made relevant to modern times through a major urban design and development exercise around the water tank. This project is a good example to understand the approach of the princely state towards city development and allows us to understand how at all the times the reformers were trying to introduce modern amenities and features in the city, all the while acknowledging and balancing the historicity of the city. New functions were added around a historic tank. Far from being a community tank with strong religious significance, it began to take shape as a civic space for the whole city. Creation of such civic or public spaces was significant from the point of view of the establishment of a modern city. Sayajirao III was not the only person around that time promoting such ideas. Sociologist and urban planner Patrick Geddes was also advocating similar ideas of ‘gradual changes’ in sync with local traditions and environment. Patrick Geddes was a Scottish botanist and sociologist who had spent substantial time in the Indian subcontinent. He was commissioned by many different princely states to prepare reports on the state of urbanisation along with suggested strategies of urban development. In his report on the city of Baroda he makes the following observations – ‘Around city’s tanks, we have not only a natural civic centre, which we as town-planners would most wish develop, but one which is plainly in process of this evolution already and for years past.’¹¹

These views were distinct from the ones of the British colonial state in India. The British ideally wanted to develop new settlement away from the old Indian settlement. They did not want to deal with the messy conditions of the old cities, in fact they completely neglected and ignored the same. The old Indian city was left to decay and fossilise in the early colonial era, as the British were more interested in developing the cantonments, the civil lines, the mall and the areas around the gymkhanas and polo grounds.

5 Conclusions

The overall arrangement of the indirect rule and the administration of the princely states by the British Empire created extremely unfavourable conditions for the Indian rulers. They were totally at the mercy of the British Empire on fundamental aspects of state administration such as defence, economic exchanges and foreign policies (relationships with other Indian princely states). In domestic matters such as succession, taxes and infrastructure development, the level of interference was also high. These conditions often led to most princely states totally surrendering all their autonomy in most matters; many royal families (such as the ones in some states of Rajasthan) withdrew into their own personal indulgences with scant regard to overall development of the state. However, some powerful states like Baroda developed a sophisticated counter-colonial attitude, not through open rebellion but through subtle defiance, negotiations and investment in public projects. These states often bypassed the British agencies and directly started dealing with professionals from across the globe (and not only from Britain). They invested in the ideas of modernity that were contextual to the actual realities on the land. Modern projects of infrastructure, legal, financial, education and civic nature became the vehicle to bring about social change in the state.

The form of modernity was indigenous and extremely sensitive to the real need of the people. It cannot be seen merely as being a mimicked condition of the East trying to copy western modernity. The transformation that took place in this period had a long-lasting impact on the city, its institution and its citizens. Even till date the institution and spaces that were created during this tough phase of dependencies continue to endure and are omnipresent in the contemporary city as well.

Bibliography


