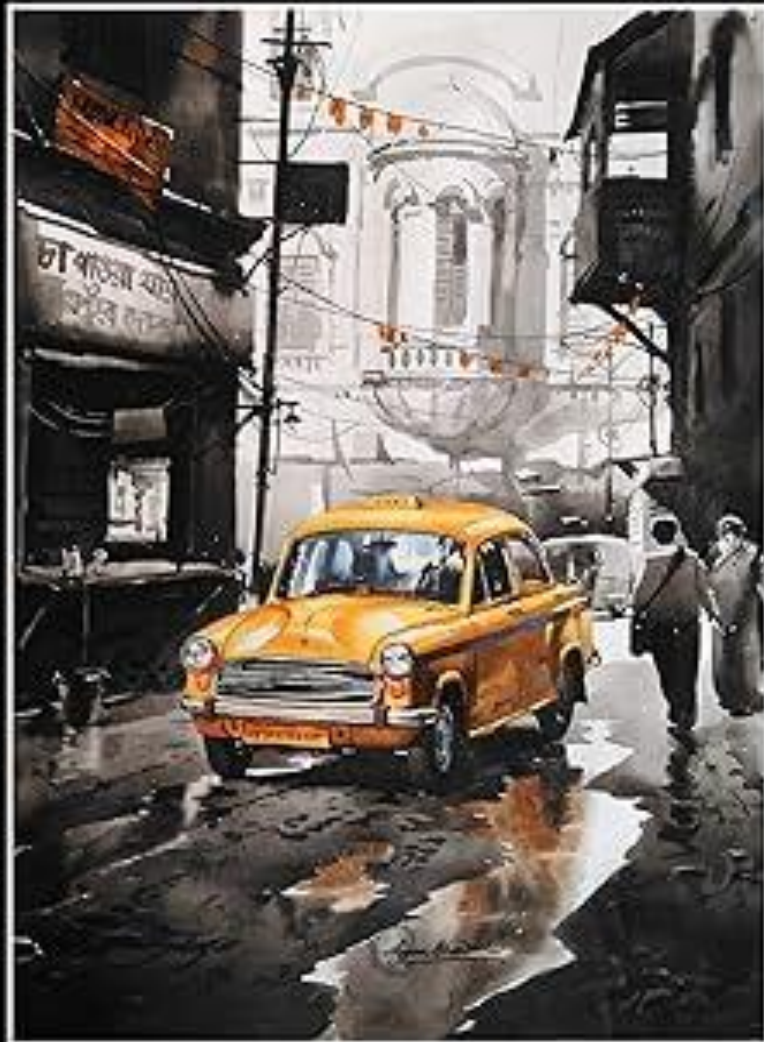


SRINIVAS

KOLKATA

AND IMAGINATION



IN SPACE, TIME

VOL. I

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Rethinking Urban Health Calcutta 1939–50

SRILATA CHATTERJEE, RITWIK BISWAS
AND AVIRUP SINHA

Introduction

The city is becoming increasingly important in historical research to understand social evolution and cultural change. Concepts like ‘urban modernity’ in trying to analyse the modernization process of urban society and economy have added a new dimension to the study of the city as a symbol of modernity, development, and progress. Historians have not failed to focus on the study of the Indian cities both in their precolonial and colonial existence to scale the extent of change that marked urban life in India. These studies emphasize varied aspects of urbanity, ranging from demographic patterns, economic and social life to urban politics and public culture. In comparison, historical research on urban health, sanitation, and medical culture have drawn little attention. Partho Datta’s work on the city of Calcutta has focused on the connection between urban planning and incidence of disease. He shows how epidemic disease and climatic concerns influenced town planning and improvement of Calcutta.¹ That there was ‘an intimate connection between colonial planning and concerns rising