

# **Railway Imperialism. A Small Town Perspective on Global History, Jamalpur, 1860s–1900s\***

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## **RESÜMEE**

Jamalpur ist eine der ältesten Eisenbahnstädte in Indien. Dieser Artikel befasst sich anhand von Gründungsgeschichten der Stadt mit den ersten vier Jahrzehnten ihres Bestehens (1860er–1900er Jahre), um so das Zusammenspiel der stadtspezifischen, regionalen und imperialen Faktoren, die das Entstehen der Stadt geprägt haben, zu verstehen. Er konzentriert sich insbesondere auf die Spannungen zwischen einer imperialen Politik der Abschottung und der moralischen Überlegenheit einer ‚weißen Arbeiterklasse‘ einerseits und der Angewiesenheit auf andere Bevölkerungsgruppen in der Stadt, der Region und dem Empire andererseits.

Es wird argumentiert, dass es notwendig ist, über einen Lokal-Global-Gegensatz hinwegzukommen, um sowohl Einzelheiten als auch Zusammenhänge verstehen zu können. Der Artikel fordert dazu auf, Prozesse und Mechanismen zu lokalisieren und zu analysieren, die nicht nur Verbindungen und scheinbare Einheitlichkeit, sondern auch Abgrenzungen und Brüche erklären. Das Zusammenführen von scheinbaren Gegensätzen ermöglicht es, die Stadtgeschichte unter Berücksichtigung der Vielschichtigkeit von räumlichen Bezügen neu zu schreiben.

Being hailed in the railway administrative writings as the largest and the most important railway town of India, Jamalpur presents a challenging case to simultaneously explore the larger connectedness as well as local specifics of a town whose history stands at the intersecting levels of urban, transport, technological, and not least, imperial histories. In this

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this paper I explore some of these themes for the first four decades of the town's existence. In particular, I look into the early history of Jamalpur at three levels. First, I focus on the newly developing labour force of migrant Europeans around the Jamalpur railway workshop. Rudyard Kipling's description of Jamalpur as the 'Crewe of India' was perhaps not only a literary symbolism; the fact that most of these skilled workers came from northern England can be usefully reconstructed to explore the connections across the empire. Second, I explore the concerns and debates around providing a proper physical and moral environment for them, thereby producing imperial ideals and colonial contradictions in the urban / moral setting. The tensions of empire became apparent in the paradoxes between an attempted moral superiority and insularity of the 'white working class' and the reliance on and connectivity with Indians in town. Third, speaking of a railway workshop town, the 'transfer of technology' was as important as the movement of people. The potential of 'global' connectedness is explored here in the backdrop of close imperial ties that existed between India and Britain. How far the imperial and the global aided each other or in fact competed against each other is the core question.

## Two foundational stories

Jamalpur has two foundational stories. Let us begin by probing these stories in order to unravel its history. Before the first railway had steamed into Jamalpur on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1862, D. W. Campbell, the locomotive superintendent of the East Indian Railway Company (EIRC), had decided to shift the locomotive workshop from Howrah to Jamalpur.<sup>1</sup> It was said that in doing so he was guided by the urgency to induce a better work ethic amongst British workforce that comprized of engineers, mechanics, engine drivers, station masters and guards. Reportedly, during their working hours these men disappeared to pubs and billiard rooms of hotels and lodges spread across Howrah and Calcutta. This information was orally passed on from Campbell to his successor, from whom it reached G. Huddleston. Huddleston, who started his career as a junior clerk at Jamalpur in 1880, reproduced Campbell's information in his book published in 1906.<sup>2</sup>

In my earlier essay I used this personally communicated story from one generation of engineers to another, which was subsequently retold in published accounts, merely as an anecdote,<sup>3</sup> but surely one can draw more out of such stories. Perusal of private papers of some of the members of British railway workforce in India adds corroboratory weight

1 In 1854, both locomotive and carriage & wagon shops were established at Howrah. S. A. H. Abidi, *Hundred Years of Jamalpur Workshops*, s. l., e.a., p. 1.

2 George Huddleston, *History of the East Indian Railway*, Calcutta 1906, p. 241. In 1907, he rose to the position of general traffic manager of the EIR. "New Traffic Manager for the East Indian Railway", in: *The Railway Magazine*, XXI, July-December 1907, pp. 81-82 [henceforth RM].

3 Nitin Sinha, "Entering the Black Hole: Between 'mini-England' and 'smell-like rotten potato', the railway workshop town of Jamalpur, 1860s-1940s," in: *South Asian History and Culture*, 3 (2012) 3, pp. 317-347.

to this anecdote and also opens up other possibilities of rethinking histories of connections.

Amongst these, those of George Cole are extremely revealing.<sup>4</sup> Cole had come to India in 1861 as an engine driver with at least two other mechanics. He was based at Howrah, where one of the others, Jim Bench, was also based in the same job.<sup>5</sup> Soon, they fell out. Bench was found drunk on duty and had assaulted his foreman, James Higby. The reason of the fall out is unclear but interesting is the fact that Cole's name did the rounds of the drunken assaulter in the Stratford railway community of England where they both came from. We should not infer from this that Cole's life in India was based upon piety, discipline and sobriety – the projected hallmarks of imperial lifestyle which the government and the Company advocated for its 'white working class'.<sup>6</sup> In this particular case, Cole either became the victim of mistaken identity or of a conspiracy but the patchy private archives of these working class men and women settled across empire provide a refracted glimpse into lives whose histories were often framed along the trails of facts and gossip; lives which appear in flashes but seem to be intertwined. I call it patchy because both Cole and Bench stopped appearing in the bi-annual list of employees from January 1863. Bench because he was sacked; Cole's reason is unknown.<sup>7</sup>

The news and stories that circulated in the imperial gossip bazaar through letters, personal visits and word of mouth were both of private and professional nature. They circulated through distinct but overlapping networks of friends, relatives and not-so-reliable well wishers. The word 'private' as is assumed with sources such as memoirs and letters does not indicate in this case a process of construction and cultivation of individualized 'self'. These working class 'ego-documents', in contrast, are 'open' texts, which were not only read communally by family and friends but also written so.<sup>8</sup>

Lucy, the wife of Cole, did not like Mrs. Bench but they both questioned their own husbands about the other's and it was through this strategy that Lucy came to know about the heavy drinking habit of her husband. Cole in return projected himself as a faithful husband, reminding her not to believe the tales that carried back home. She accepted, in fact promised not to believe in all she hears, but she hardly meant it. She reminded

4 Mss Eur F133/42, British Library. Reconstructing historical biography of 'ordinary' people is as difficult as that of a small town. Besides his patchy series of private letters, I have used employment registers of the railway company to trace him and his friends, which adds interesting but contradictory details. All references starting with this signature are from British Library.

5 In the January 1862 list, the date of appointment for both of them was 20 July 1861. In the June 1862 list, however, Cole's date was changed to 20 July 1860. Bench's remained the same. From Cole's private letters, however, it is clear that they knew each other (if not were friends) from England. Lists in IOR/L/AG/46/11/138. British Library. All references starting with IOR are from this library.

6 For the general overview of white subalterns in India see, Harald Fischer-Tiné, *Low and Licentious Europeans: Race, Class and 'White Subalternity' in colonial India*, New Delhi 2009.

7 Cole's private papers, which comprise more of his wife's letters than his, are also fragmentary. His name appears in a later source of a list of 181 people of army men, railway men and surgeons who died in India between 1802 and 1893. Mss Eur F133.

8 A remarkable source to notice this is private papers of James Palmer, Mss Eur F133/113.

him that 'actions speak louder than words'.<sup>9</sup> Letters after letters, she lamented about her general financial difficulties, which eventually forced her to keep three male lodgers to take care of herself and her three children. Cole in turn tried to divert the discussion by raising questions about her character. Cole's sister took sides with Lucy, described her as the steadiest woman in the Kingdom and mildly reproached her brother for drinking, gambling and fancying women in India. The financial distress of separated wives and families stood in contrast to what skilled male workers earned in India, and how they spent it. Cole's bills of rum and brandy (preserved in his papers) tell their own stories. Keeping in view the family needs, the company employees were allowed to draw a part of their salary in England. Bench provisioned for the payment of four pounds a month, which partly explains why Lucy did not like his wife much. If we go by Company records, Lucy also got money from Cole but her private papers convincingly show that the payment was very irregular.<sup>10</sup> However, even if these mechanics arranged for partial payment, the drinking expenses did not disappear. Out of his salary of Rs 236, John Refoy, a foreman bricklayer in Howrah, arranged for a generous sum of Rs 109 to be paid in England.<sup>11</sup> Yet, from his remaining amount, he not only maintained a *bibi* (the Indian wife) but also spent, as his fragmented household expense diary suggests, Rs 20 to 30 a month on alcohol. He occasionally indulged in good quality cheese and ham; the latter cost him as much as a case of brandy.<sup>12</sup> We don't know what cost him his life at the age of 42; his burial certificate simply mentioned 'disease of the heart'.<sup>13</sup>

In our attempt to explore the historical tangents of one of the anecdotal reasons behind establishing the workshop in Jamalpur, we can safely assume that Campbell was not inventing the fact of widespread drunkenness amongst British railway employees in India. A Scottish by origin, who was trained in the locomotive workshop of the Caledonian Railways, Campbell started his Indian career in November 1858 from Allahabad, moved to Howrah in 1863, and finally settled in Jamalpur from 1865 onwards. Proximity to railway hands at different places perhaps helped him know well the problems of white migrant workers.<sup>14</sup>

In recent years, scholars have begun to write on social lives of non-official English and European people in India amongst whom drinking was quite common. It was primarily seen as a moral problem of the British empire because class threatened to expose the cracks in racial affinity.<sup>15</sup> Stories of people such as Cole, Bench and Refoy are, however,

9 In a letter dated 26 February 1862, Mss Eur F133/42.

10 In the same list in which the date of appointment was changed, a handwritten addition was made of seven pounds drawn in England. IOR/L/AG/46/11/138.

11 Mss Eur F133/119-24.

12 Mss Eur F133/121.

13 Mss Eur F133/124.

14 Just after the rebellion of 1857, he joined the service as an assistant locomotive superintendent at Allahabad. In 1887, he became the agent to the EIRC in India. "Honours to a Scotch Railway Engineer in India", in: *Aberdeen Evening Express*, Tuesday 08 November 1887, p. 2. Also, IOR/L/AG/46/11/138.

15 Harald Fischer-Tine, *Low and Licentious* (note 6); Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India: White Violence and the Rule of Law*, Cambridge 2010; Satoshi Mizutani, *The Meaning of White: Race, Class and the 'Domiciled*

not just about white subalterns getting drunk in the colonies. They tell us about imperial lives, colonial careers, separated families, new bonding (with bibis, for instance) and social and professional networks that spanned across empire.<sup>16</sup> In fact, for families like Cole, the limits exceeded the empire. While George Cole left for India, which his sister described as the ‘crowning point to his mad pranks’, his brother Thomas Cole, left for North America to find a job.

These life stories bring out the complexities of nineteenth and twentieth century histories, which we fashionably but inadequately classify as ‘local’ or ‘global’. To me, they point at imperial movements that involved familial dislocations, (they point) at private, communal and oral circulation of news, information, tales and rumour in the age of communication revolution that emphasized speed and accuracy, and they point at the fostering of a stable sociability of a metropolitan workforce which was located in the colony. Let me park these observations and introduce the other foundational story.

Situated at a distance of six miles from Jamalpur was the pre-colonial town of Monghyr. The town had lost its importance as the frontier-fortress capital and principal military station which it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but remained famous for a variety of skilled workers such as tailors, gardeners, carpenters and shoe-makers. The principal place of fame nonetheless was reserved for blacksmiths, who produced guns, pistols, table-knives and other products at a remarkably low price.<sup>17</sup> This earned Monghyr the epithet of ‘Birmingham and Manchester of India’.<sup>18</sup> One of the reasons behind selecting Jamalpur as the site of the railway workshop, whose pre-colonial past still remains unclear, was its proximity to Monghyr. Jamalpur did not have a stable water supply, it was not even close to the coalfields or iron mines of Bihar and Bengal, but according to this story, it had what was needed the most: cheap and skilled labour. Similar to the first story, this one is also a bureaucratic-administrative reasoning repeatedly produced in the writings of railway officials from both colonial and postcolonial periods.<sup>19</sup>

This in itself is no reason to mistrust these accounts but therein lies a tension between these two foundational stories of Jamalpur: if the first suggests that the locomotive superintendent, Campbell’s interest in moving the British workforce away from the distractions of big cities of Howrah and Calcutta were served by making Jamalpur a self-sufficient ‘railway colony’, the second shows how the town, right from its inception, was

Community’ in British India 1858–1930, Oxford 2011; also see, Nitin Sinha, ‘Opinion’ and ‘Violence’: Whiteness, Empire and State-Formation in Colonial India, *South Asia Chronicle* 4 (2014), pp. 322–52.

16 A highly useful text in this field is of David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Career in the Long Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge 2006.

17 Numerous administrative reports, travelogues and unpublished accounts talk in length of Monghyr’s craftsmanship. To get an idea, see, ‘Mofussil Stations: Monghyr’, in: *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register for British and Foreign India, China, and Australasia*, XIV (New Series), 1834, pp. 119–30. According to an early nineteenth-century estimate, 5,000 blacksmiths resided in Monghyr. George Hamilton, *East India Gazetteer*, p. 238.

18 Joseph Hooker labelled Monghyr as the ‘Birmingham of Bengal’. L. S. S. O’Malley, *District Gazetteer of Monghyr*, revised edn. Patna 1926, p. 236. Samuel Carrington, a railway engineer who arrived in India in the middle of the rebellion of 1857, nevertheless did not find Monghyr’s comparison with Manchester justified. *Mss Eur B212*.

19 Huddleston, *History of the East Indian Railway* (note 2), p. 240; Abidi, *Hundred Years of Jamalpur Workshops* (note 1).

based upon its regional linkages for the supply of men and material. If the first points toward the ‘insularity’ of a ‘railway town or a colony’ which had no significant pre-colonial past, the second reminds us that our historical quest to understand Jamalpur’s history would remain frustratingly incomplete if we ignore the manifold spatial and temporal linkages it intrinsically was and gradually became a part of. If the first seductively draws us towards retelling the stories of white subalterns who also were sahibs, the latter unfailingly reminds us that the history of bungalows, streets and gymkhana in Jamalpur will ever remain incomplete without the history of *bastis*, villages and shrines spread all around Jamalpur. It is only in this constant bind of (apparent) oppositions that networks of empire, movement of personnel, politics of colonialism, choices made around technology, and cultures of belief make sense as probable gateways to write the history of Jamalpur – and inversely, to take up the history of Jamalpur as a vantage point from where to unfold our understanding of mechanisms of ‘globalization’ processes. Tensions and oppositions are important devices to grasp and explain the coming into being of connectedness, but the posited juxtaposition between insularity and connectivity should not be confused with absolute historical reality; they merely serve as heuristic analytical frameworks to explore the complex trajectories of a town that had a significant number of skilled immigrant population (not only of those coming from Britain but also from within India); and a town, which was based upon an imported technology of railway locomotive repair and maintenance. In other words, this paper uses the twin factors of people and technology to tell the multi-sited history of Jamalpur.

### The ‘insular’ Jamalpur: people and institutions

Let us consider insularity first. The largest railway settlement of India developed around the nucleus of the workshop, which started growing from 1862. The insularity of the town was not only implicit in Campbell’s concern but was explicitly underscored by Rudyard Kipling, the most celebrated chronicler of the British empire. He described the town as ‘unadulteratedly Railway’.<sup>20</sup> He claimed that a non-railway person would feel like an interloper or a stranger. Writing almost seventeen years later, George Cecil echoed Kipling’s remarks by generically describing railway towns in India as unique; in his own words, ‘in no other country such a thing exist’.<sup>21</sup>

Kipling’s observations on Jamalpur were, of course, based upon the ‘white’ part of the town. When he talked of the ‘railway settlement’, he meant the Railway Colony which was adjacent to the workshop and was inhabited by superior grade officers who were mostly British. The racial character of colonial urbanism is something that has been widely explored in the existing literature. Debates on sanitation, hygiene, defence, recre-

20 Rudyard Kipling, ‘A Railway Settlement’, in: *The City of Dreadful Nights and Other Essays*, London 1891, pp. 91-100, here p. 91.

21 George Cecil, ‘Railway Settlements in India’, in: *RM*, xvi, Jan-June 1905, pp. 111-13.

ation and morality show that in spite of transgressions, Jamalpur shared with other towns the feature of racially-inflected division of physical and social space.<sup>22</sup>

A slew of measures were adopted to improve the living conditions of the white population in the town. A section of the report presented in both Houses of the British Parliament by Juland Danvers, the government director of the Indian railway companies, is noteworthy:

*At Jumalpoore, the great workshop of the line, a large European population has been planted, which is constantly on the increase. This settlement...has been laid out with neatness and regularity, the drainage is complete, and the houses, both for men and officers have been erected on the most advanced principles of sanitary science. There are two Christian churches, a mechanics' institute, a library, recreation grounds, a racket court, and a band, supplied with instruments from a fine and forfeit fund, and in fact every appliance which could conduce to the rational enjoyment of the men off duty. It is the object of the Company to extend these advantages as far as possible to other stations in proportion to the European population.*<sup>23</sup>

Of the population of about 18,000 at the end of the nineteenth century, the number of Europeans and Anglo-Indians was not more than one thousand by any moderate estimate.<sup>24</sup> This meant that the expansion of town inevitably included the creation of native quarters and tenements despite the unambiguous proclamation by the government that forbade 'a native bazaar springing up close to and around the station'.<sup>25</sup> The government in fact sanctioned the white railwaymen hygienic seclusion, claiming that the municipal commissioner, if necessary, could demolish native huts in the township area. The government also denied the railway company from applying for land for the native part of the town because this fell under the concern of the municipal board.<sup>26</sup> The irony was that the municipal board itself was largely pre-occupied with matters that concerned only non-native inhabitants. Creating a small island of white colony within a small town of Jamalpur was perhaps on the mind of Kipling when he chided native meat hawkers trespassing into the railway colony on a daily basis. He instead asked for butchery.<sup>27</sup>

We will return to such transgressions but to continue with Jamalpur: the growth of the town was based upon the expansion of the workshop. The rolling mill shop in 1879, two shops for point crossing and signal and interlocking in 1894 and one again a little

22 Racial segregation became a typical characteristic of colonial but also pre-colonial towns where European quarters gradually emerged. See, for instance, O'Malley, in: DGM, p. 236 for Monghyr; for Lucknow, Veena Oldenburg, *The Making of Colonial Lucknow, 1856–1877*, Princeton 1984, pp. 52–60; for Calcutta, Pradip Sinha, *Calcutta in Urban History*, Calcutta 1978; for Delhi, Narayani Gupta, *Delhi Between Two Empires 1803–1931: Society, Government and Urban Growth*, New Delhi 1981.

23 Report to the Secretary of State for India in Council on Railways in India, for the year 1867–68, in: *The Quarterly Review*, July 1868, p. 70.

24 See Sinha, "Entering the Black Hole" (note 3) for a detailed account of town's population and workforce ratio along race, ethnicity and gender lines.

25 Bengal Railway Proceedings, 49, January 1863, P/163/30. British library.

26 Ibid., Prodg. 50.

27 Kipling, 'The Mighty Shops', in: *The City of Dreadful Nights* (note 20) pp. 101–02.

later, and a steel foundry in 1898, were among the many additions.<sup>28</sup> In physical terms, the workshop expanded from less than 50 acres (c. 20 ha) in 1881 to an area of about 100 acres (c. 40ha) in 1906. Another set of figures corroborates this expansion: in 1863, the total engine stock at Jamalpur was 247; it rose to 952 in 1906. In 1890, the total wages of the employees was Rs 4,15,093; in 1906, it increased to Rs 11,00,000.<sup>29</sup> The workforce increased threefold from around 3000 to 9000 between the 1860s and the turn of the century.

The expansion in physical area and increase in labour force signalled a growth in administrative and civic institutions in Jamalpur – municipality, an apprentice school and hostel, a dispensary and cemetery, cricket and raffle grounds, and, inns and restrooms – all these meant that the social life of Europeans and Anglo-Indians became quite Jamalpur-centric.

The seclusion of physical spaces went hand in hand with entrenchment of social and economic privileges. Sharp distinctions in pay structure confirm this.

#### Payment differentiation in the workshop

Category of workers	Erecting shops (fitters and mechanics)	Carpenters' shops	Blacksmiths' shops
English	Rs 70-218	–	Rs 100
Anglo-Indian	Rs 30-60	Rs 50-80	–
Native	Rs 5-20	Rs 12-18	Rs 12.06

Source: First report of special commissioner on the affairs of EIR by G.N. Taylor, submitted, 8 July 1863, Appendix A, in BRP, 3, September 1863, P/163/31.

There indeed existed a complex layer of differentiations within each of the racially/ethnically formed 'homogeneous' groups. The rather sandwiched position of Anglo-Indians which became highly politicized during the Indianization of the services debate in the early twentieth century made them the object of both criticism and protection; criticism from Indians and protection from colonial rule. However, after the rebellion of 1857 when railway construction acquired acceleration, the colonial state and railway companies thought it wise to employ Anglo-Indians in a greater number, thinking perhaps that one half of their 'racial' descent would keep them at least half loyal.

The Europeans who worked on the railways were also internally fractured. Those who came from Britain were recruited under four-year contract system by the EIRC.<sup>30</sup> Largely, they belonged to the profession of engine drivers, firemen and mechanics. The last category had workers such as fitters, boiler makers and blacksmiths. The class which they came from, usually the working class of northern England was distinct from the one

28 Huddleston, *The History of the East Indian Railway* (note 2), pp. 246-49. See Abdi, *Hundred Years* (note 1), pp. 3-7 for an institutional account of growth.

29 Huddleston, *The History of the East Indian Railway* (note 2), pp. 243-44.

30 See the contracts between individuals and the EIRC in L/AG/46/11. British Library.



from which engineers and superior grade officers came to India. Some Europeans who worked as contractors had usually come to India on their own. Another set of Europeans who easily got recruited on the railways were old soldiers and their sons residing in India. By the turn of the century, they occupied the position of guards in significant number.<sup>31</sup> They usually, together with Anglo-Indian 'lads' entered into a five year contract of apprenticeship before becoming a journeyman mechanic or joining the branch of engine operation (fireman, shunter and finally a driver) or as stated above, becoming guards. Creating a common work culture out of this motley was a critical and significant task for both colonial state and railway companies. Moral staging of proper whiteness was indeed crucial but equally important was the idea of work and safety, an aspect that has remained unexplored in the literature on whiteness and vices. The discourse that climate and consumption enfeebled the European body had its antecedents even in the eighteenth century. In respect to railways, however, debates around the conduct of British workforce in India were equally and firmly rooted in the nature of their work. After all, Campbell's immediate concern was to prevent these men from sneaking out to play and drink during their working hours.

India's first Railway Act (of 1854) laid down that 'the first and most important duty of all the Company's Officers and servants, is to provide for the Public safety'.<sup>32</sup> Further, of various regulations in the Act, provisions against intoxication seem to be the strictest. Drinking was prohibited when at work or on the railway premises or at any work attached to the railways. If intoxication led to the neglect or omission of duty, fine not exceeding Rs 50 was applicable. If it threatened public safety, the person was 'liable to imprisonment, with or without hard labour, for a term not exceeding one year, or to fine, or to both'.<sup>33</sup> There was a legal provision also to man the moral boundaries; apart from violent altercation and threats, 'swearing and immoral and indecorous language' was strictly prohibited.<sup>34</sup>

There was a definite class anxiety in the minds of state officials and company administrators. People such as Coles and Benches who had left their families behind were the direct target of such provisions. Drunkenness and insubordination was reportedly high and so were accidents.<sup>35</sup> In order to better both the working and social life of these workers, new institutions were set up. One such that acted as a pivot to organize the railway life in a railway colony was the Mechanic Institute. First set up in Lahore in 1864 and then in Jamalpur in 1866, the institute was planned to provide healthy amusement and recreation after working hours.<sup>36</sup> With amenities such as spacious swimming bath, read-

31 Huddleston, "The East Indian Railway", in: RM, Jan-June, 1906, p. 504.

32 "East Indian Railway Company, Rules and Regulations of the East Indian Railway Company, together with the Act for regulating railways in British India", Calcutta 1854, p. 10. The copy was found in Mss Eur F133/140.

33 Ibid., pp. 9, 105. There was also a fine of Rs 20 on smoking either in the premises or in or upon any railway carriage. Ibid., p. 42.

34 Ibid., pp. 12-3.

35 Financial (Railway) Department, no. 25 of 1855, 19 September, IOR/E/4/832.

36 PWD, Rly-A, Prods. 51-54, February 1866. Files of PWD series are from National Archives, Delhi.

ing room, billiard rooms, and entertainment halls, the authorities hoped that ‘healthy amusement’ would ‘serve to withdraw them gradually from the habits of idleness and intemperance, frequently indulged in by this class of men’.<sup>37</sup> Members were supplied only iced-water gratuitously during the warm season and soda water and lemonade at a cost but no wine, spirits or intoxicating liquor of any kind was allowed. Also, in line with the above-mentioned Railway Act, another bye-law prohibited the use of ‘violent language, quarrel, and other improper actions’.<sup>38</sup>

These institutes aimed at disciplining the European workforce. Recreational facilities together with moral values (for instance, of observing decent language) made these institutes a *social* extension of the *industrial* workplace. Together they defined the rhythm of the town; to paraphrase Kipling, in Jamalpur the day began with two steam buzzers around 7 a.m. signalling the time to arrive at the workshop, and once the workshop had ‘soaked up their thousands of natives and hundreds of Europeans’ the roads donned a ‘holy calm’. One could hear ‘nothing louder than the croon of some bearer playing with a child in the veranda or the faint tinkle of a piano’. This tranquillity was broken at eleven in the morning again with the ‘howl of the “buzzer”’ signalling the lunch break. The ‘trampling of tiffin-seeking feet’ made Jamalpur come alive, which though lasted for only one hour, after which the town once again ‘sleeps through the afternoon till four or half-past’, at which it ‘rouses for tennis at the institute’.<sup>39</sup>

The second objective was to re-create and preserve ‘imperial lives’ in a colonial location. ‘Recreation’ became the buzzword for enacting a superior physical and moral order, facilitated by building amenities for staging and performing imperial identity. Comfort of these men was often kept in mind; While proposing two baths each 8 feet deep, it was emphatically added that since ‘we intend to accommodate men superior to the general European private soldiers, we must provide a comfortable and roomy bath to induce them to take use of it’.<sup>40</sup> The homogeneity of this European sociability was, however, very palpable and subject to class- and rank-based preferences. ‘Precedence’ created ‘heat-ed disputes, jealousies and heart burnings’. The chief storekeeper might get affronted because he was asked at dinner-party to ‘take in the assistant engineer’s wife instead of the agent’s “lady”’. Or, the wife of the general traffic manager might decline to patronize the officer’s club because she might meet there the assistant storekeeper’s sister, ‘a person who she considers her social inferior’.<sup>41</sup>

As it did for imperially mobile workmen, technological modernity refracted through colonial power created its own set of anxieties for indigenous groups. Apart from Kipling’s stories, Jamalpur also left traces in vernacular prose texts. A Bengali farcical text described the journey of the gods of Hindu pantheon to different industrial centres in

37 P/163/36, August 1865, Prods. 164-65.

38 PWD, Rly-A, Prods. 18–22, August 1865.

39 Kipling, ‘A Railway Settlement’ (note 20), p. 95.

40 PWD, Rly-A, Prods. 51–54, Feb. 1866.

41 Cecil, ‘Railway Settlements’ (note 21), p. 111.

eastern India.<sup>42</sup> Jamalpur with its workshop put them in awe. The industrial work culture and town life, interestingly here also, were woven around the howl of the steam-whistle but rather than leading to a holy calm, the buzzer terrorized the lives of the Bengali *babus* (clerks). Getting up at three in the morning, the babu would also wake up his wife and ask for tea. He would then have a quick bath and chant the mantra ‘bring rice, bring rice, its about time’. For Bramha, the creator of the universe, colonial modernity was rapidly leaving its ineradicable traces. Despite of being terrorized by industrial time discipline, *babus* ate foreign biscuits, drank lemonade, played cards, wore boots, and consumed alcohol. Appalled by this, the creator thought of destroying his own creation.

Both Kipling and the Hindu gods visited Jamalpur in the same year (and I am here going by the date of their publication, which is 1888) but both gave two diverse accounts. Between Kipling’s Jamalpur, which was specklessly neat and Brahma’s Jamalpur which was irredeemably blasphemous lay the trajectories of the historical development of the town. For instance, the first points toward the colonial history of municipalization, health, sanitation and hygiene, the second towards the social history of how natives related to modernity. The same railway colony which had King’s Road, Queen’s Road, Prince’s Road, Victoria Road and Steam Road that reminded Kipling of how loyal Jamalpur was to its industrial and imperial provenance, was in native parlance called *sahibpara*, *sahib* meaning paternalistic master, and *para* a locality. In this attempt to construct the history of Jamalpur by working through its apparent oppositional binds, the methodological thinking is to explore the temporal developments through multiple sites of the same spatial location, that is, Jamalpur.

### Beyond insularity: Regions and communities

The above approach helps to question and refine the projected insularity. The growth in town and its secluded European quarters with various amenities went hand in hand with the emergence of *bastis* (tenements). Kipling himself had alluded to a ‘dreary bustee’ in the neighbourhood of the Railway Colony which was allegedly prone to cholera epidemics.<sup>43</sup> I have not come across any direct reference to any epidemic emerging out of this basti, but surely we do have references of huts of a native colony set up just one mile away from the railway station (possibly the same place Kipling had alluded to), gutted in fire in 1884.<sup>44</sup>

Be it the liquor shops on the Jamalpur-Monghyr road where workers gathered to drink on their way back home,<sup>45</sup> be it the crime which was hatched in an inn of Jamalpur,

42 Durgacharan Ray, *Debganer Mortye Aagman*, Calcutta 1886.

43 Kipling, ‘A Railway Settlement’ (note 20), p. 94.

44 For five consecutive days fire broke out leading to one death and loss of property worth more than Rs 20,000. Keshopur, where more than hundred of huts were burnt, was described as a ‘desert’. ‘Serious Fires at Jamalpur’, in: *Times of India*, 7 April 1884.

45 Excise Administration Report.

executed in the running train and discovered some 120 miles away at Dinapore,<sup>46</sup> be it accidents and illness that required the Monghyr establishment of police force, hospitals and medicines, and be it a section of babus who commuted to Jamalpur from Monghyr, in each of these cases the history of Jamalpur was integrally tied to its region. The threads of those ties could be social, cultural, administrative and historical. After 1897, the link further diversified when three coolie trains started bringing workers from three nearby villages.

As the town gained vertical depth through its new institutions, it simultaneously expanded horizontally. The Jamalpur 'railway settlement' attracted people from outside, for both work and leisure. In 1921, about 50 percent of the workforce lived on the outskirts of the town. So figuratively speaking, it was the workers who came riding the coolie trains into Jamalpur every morning but it was the Jamalpur town and the workshop that went back with them every evening to their villages. The state and the railway company did not want to dislocate the workers from their 'natural' environment. The share of industrial and agricultural employment in the livelihoods of these men needs to be established through further research. Likewise, if the reviewer of Kipling's work in the *Derby Mercury Reader*, published from Derby in England, exhorted its railway readers not to miss reading the description of Jamalpur,<sup>47</sup> then the Lancashire humour, depicted in literary writings and songs of Benjamin Brierley, the most popular Lancashire writer, was shared and enjoyed by immigrant white workers during the work breaks. These varied examples related either to the livelihood of native labouring groups or to the literary taste of European workforce do not necessarily take 'railways' out of Jamalpur but they do suggest that Jamalpur was linked to the wider economic, social and cultural institutions and practices. It is no surprise then that even in this small town institutions and practices had a fascinating similarity with what happened in railway towns of England and North America. Clubs, debating societies, lantern lectures, sports, YMCA, churches, and other social, recreational and educational activities had a shared and connected history.

And simultaneously, new practices were institutionalized through these expansive associations. The presence of Bengalis kicked off the celebration of the Durga Puja. Different sects of the nineteenth century reform movements from regions as diverse as Bengal and the Punjab came to Jamalpur and Monghyr. Arya Samaj, Brahmo Samaj, Sanatan Dharma Sabha, Hari Sabahas, all had their branches in these two neighbouring towns. Some of them spatially left a mark; one of the residential quarters which Kipling had described as the 'dreary bustee' was named after the renowned Brahmo social reformer Keshab Chandra Sen. A locality which for Kipling-esque sensibility was either to be sanitized or to be removed, had a different meaning for its inhabitants. For them, perhaps, it implied fixity of memory of their cherished leader and reformer.

Towns such as Howrah, Jamalpur and Allahabad formed their distinct characteristics in relation to their regional surroundings but together they also created a bigger railway

46 Prods. 19-20, November 1865, P/163/36.

47 The Derby Mercury, Wednesday, March 28, 1900.

community. The role of railway tracks is highly interesting in this regard. The relationship between space, capital and railways has been variously described in terms of compression of time and space. The homogenization of territory was arguably the result of the nineteenth century technological advancement. The nexus between transport, technology and capital did create new spatialities but significantly of multiple natures.

One form of this spatiality was the linear connection established along the tracks that ran for some 1,020 miles between Calcutta and Delhi. A railway community was forged along the tracks in which the members of the British workforce travelled to Jamalpur to attend Sunday services, meet friends, spend weekends, and to participate in the drill and parade of the East India Railway Voluntary Rifle Corps.<sup>48</sup> In fact, one of the five clauses of the five-year contract required apprentices to 'attend regularly some place of Worship on Sundays'.<sup>49</sup> An in-depth history of the EIR Voluntary corps, which was set up in the 1860s in the aftermath of the rebellion of 1857 will reveal transnational connections.<sup>50</sup> The corps had supplied a detachment to Lumsden Horse which was raised in India to take part in the Second Boer war in 1900. Once again, we can notice that the specific colonial context of raising a self-protective force to quell any future 'rebellion' like situation became part of the wider historical connections.

However, to come back to the railway tracks: they not only forged a/the 'railway community' but also brought diverse people together. Jamalpur was the meeting point between the lower and upper sections of the EIR line that ran between Calcutta and Allahabad. In the first quarter of 1863, 26,995 up passengers (from Howrah) arrived to Jamalpur and 26,849 down passengers arrived at Jamalpur.<sup>51</sup> The passengers here were rebooked to carry on their onward journey. This practice ensured a big floating population who lived in inns and lodges.<sup>52</sup>

The same linear tracks that helped build extended connections of mobility and sociability, also created divisions. Jamalpur displayed typical characteristics of colonial urbanism; the tracks divided the town into white and black parts. The European establishments were concentrated to the eastern, the native settlements to the western. And finally, as the tracks multiplied, so did spatialities and their inter-relationship. With the opening of the Chord Line in the 1870s, Assansole emerged as the new happening railway centre. Starting as the changing station, by the turn of the century, it possessed one of the largest locomotive sheds. Both engines and people migrated to Assansole from places such as Jamalpur and Howrah. Expenses on housing provisions and workshop expansion at existing places were cut down.<sup>53</sup> The effect was that now Jamalpur donned a new identity

48 Samuel Carrington's letters are most useful in forming an idea about the railway community. Mss Eur B212.

49 See the contract signed by Frederick Mccullagh on 15.07.1890, Mss Eur C532.

50 Jamalpur was the head quarter of the Corps. In 1908, out of the combined strength of 7,344 Europeans and 9,951 Anglo-Indians employed on the whole of the British Indian railways, 13,911 (that is, more than 80 per cent) were enrolled as volunteers. "What Foreign and Colonial Railways are Doing", in: RM, 1908, p. 295.

51 Prodg. 86, September 1864, IOR/P/191/11.

52 The victim of the murder conspiracy above alluded to was one such thoroughfare passenger.

53 Prodgs. 1-4, March 1872, IOR/P/556.

because the tracks acquired a new name and function. The erstwhile main line became the 'loop line' handling mainly the flow of local goods. Jamalpur retained its coveted place as one of the biggest railway settlements of India but after this shift it also became the town 'on the siding'. The effect of this change is more perverse than appears at the first sight: travellers' accounts became more and more sparse as direct travelling between Calcutta and north India happened via the Chord Line.

### **Jamalpur: Technology and the 'global' railway age**

Speaking of a railway town, the theme of technology is of great significance.<sup>54</sup> The railways both in terms of construction and operation were an imported technology. However, the historiography that suggested that colonies were mute recipients of metropolitan technology is a thing of past. Questions which we pose around the theme of technology shape our narratives. In a highly perceptive observation, Ian Kerr draws a difference between two types of inquiries, and I paraphrase him: to questions such as what was to be built, when it was to be built and where, the British imperial role and 'technology transfer' becomes important.<sup>55</sup> However, if we ask how the railways were built, one finds Indians and pre-existing Indian technologies playing a major role.<sup>56</sup> Kerr also proposed to distinguish between the construction and operational sides of the railway technology. In the former the intermingling of technology was of higher order; in the latter, which included works done in locomotive shops, dependence on imported technology was high.

Let us stick to the bigger picture of technology and its transfer by looking at the politics of locomotive supply and construction.<sup>57</sup> Between 1850 and 1910, 94 per cent of Indian broad gauge locomotives were built in Britain and only 2.5 per cent in India. Within this period of sixty years there was a moment in the 1860s and 1870s when Indian railway

54 Very few historians have worked on Indian railways from the viewpoint of technology and its transfer. The standard framework has been of railways being the imported technology in India that aided the process of imperial consolidation leading not to development but underdevelopment of the colony. The older nationalist writings as well as newer works in the 1980s both concur with this view. For a standard nationalist account of railways as a tool of economic exploitation, see Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India: economic Policies of Indian National Leadership, 1880–1905*, New Delhi 1966; for, railways as a tool of empire, Daniel Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century*, New York 1981; Id., *The Tentacles of Progress: Technology Transfer in the Age of Imperialism, 1850–1940*, New York 1988.

55 Ian J. Kerr, "Colonialism and Technological Choice: The Case of the Railways of India", in: *Itinerario*, 19, 2, 1995, pp. 91–111.

56 For the blend of technology in railway bridge-building, see Ian Derbyshire, "The Building of India's Railways: The Application of Western Technology in the Colonial Periphery 1850–1920", in: Roy MacLeod and Deepak Kumar (eds.), *Technology and the Raj: Western Technology and Technical transfers to India 1700–1947*, New Delhi, Thousand Oaks and London 1995.

57 This paragraph is based on two essays of Fredrick Lehmann which although dated are still the best on locomotive transfer to colonial India. "Railway Workshops, Technology Transfer, and Skilled Labour Recruitment in Colonial India", in: *Journal of Historical Research*, 20, 1, 1977, pp. 49–61 & "Great Britain and the Supply of Railway Locomotives to India: A Case Study of Economic Imperialism", in: *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 2 (1965) 4.

industry turned to other players, most importantly Germany and the United States. This was not for promoting technological exchange but for procuring built locomotives at a cheaper cost. It was the first time in 1869 that 10 locomotives from Switzerland and 20 from Germany were supplied to the EIR.<sup>58</sup> Once again, in the beginning of the twentieth century, German firms such as Hanomag, Henschel and Borsig tried to enter the import market of India. A huge debate, almost a scandal, however, engulfed the British political and industrial class when orders were given to German firms for the supply of about 50 locomotives to India. The secretary of state for India, George Hamilton, reasoned that the growing demand from the colonies – India and South Africa – had put pressure on the home production. The firm from Hanover instead offered to deliver the locomotives at a price 25 per cent less than that of British firms and also in half the time.<sup>59</sup> The British press echoed the sentiments of British firms stating that ‘what is cheapest in first cost is not always cheapest in the long run.’<sup>60</sup> ‘Being beaten’ by German firms did not go well with the British imperial interests and the protectionist policies to support British firms. Some other voices were less jingoistic. The success of German firms was explained through Germany going through recession and hence in the spirit of global entanglement of the economy, one newspaper report claimed that the moral of the story is that ‘we should rejoice when other nations are full of work, for depression in one country means depression in another.’<sup>61</sup> However, the imperial preferences cut down this utopian take on global brotherhood of economic integration. As a result, prior to independence, India imported 14,420 locomotives from Britain, built 707 itself, and purchased less than 3000 from other countries. The majority of the purchases done from outside of Britain came during the period of the Second World War.

Where does this picture of imperial patronage or global denial leave us in relation to Jamalpur? Going by the writings of engineers, it appears that the Jamalpur railway workshop had the full potential of building its own locomotives. This did not happen until 1899 when it rolled out its first home-built engine at the cost of Rs 33,000 as compared to the imported cost of Rs 47,897.<sup>62</sup> Some of the contemporary and scarce secondary writings alleged that the skill of Indian workers and the lack of proper training of workshop staff were the reasons for this long dependence on imports. Once again, if we turn to internalist voices of mechanics and engineers who shared their everyday working lives with native workers of different types, we see that skill was highly praised and in fact termed ‘irreplaceable’.<sup>63</sup> The native skill to handle imported heavy machineries such as

58 Frank C. Perkins, “British East India Uses German-Built Locomotives”, in: *Boiler Maker*, 01 June 1917.

59 “British Locomotive Builders and Export Trade”, in: *Railroad Gazette*, November 08 1901. In 1913 more orders were placed bringing the total number supplied from Germany to 78. Perkins, “British East India”. However, amazingly interesting is the fact that due to non-metric measurements prevalent both in England and India, the German productions were supervised by the famous British firm, Rendel & Robertson, later renamed Rendel, Palmer and Tritton of London.

60 “Engineering Contracts”, in: *The Bedfordshire Advertiser*, 01 November 1901.

61 “German Depression and Indian Engines”, in: *The Cornishman*, 24 July 1902.

62 Abidi, *Hundred Years*.

63 Excise Report, 1888.



steam hammers, rolling mills and cranes was praised.<sup>64</sup> In one rare mention of Jamalpur in a travel account from the late nineteenth-century, the author-traveller recalled his conversation with the manager of the shop over the topic of repair of one particular locomotive: "No English fitter in the world could do that. That job takes a native to do it."<sup>65</sup> However, in contrast to this, there also persisted the view that Indians would innately be inept in running the railways.<sup>66</sup>

The story of Jamalpur therefore serves to illustrate that although empire itself was part of the increasing and intensifying global entanglement in which people, knowledge and products circulated yet it also demonstrates that the priorities of imperial formations created asymmetrical paths in which those very people, knowledge and products moved.

## Conclusions

While working on this town, I have remained engaged with two historiographical issues. One operates at the level of South Asian history writing in which 'Urban Studies' has predominantly remained focussed on big towns and mega cities. My quest, on the other, is to write a small-town history and still meaningfully contribute to the debates on urbanity in colonial India. The second engagement is of broader scope: how to write a global history of a small town? Rather than applying any theoretical model in a 'top-down' manner, at this stage of my research, I remain convinced and committed that the history of Jamalpur needs to be told through stories – stories that tell us about people and objects, about lives, events and actions, about rumours, habits and practices. Some stories relate directly to Jamalpur; others form part of the indispensable historical context.

In having presented two sets of stories, one related to imperial mobility and town centric-insularity and two to the expanding linkages of the town based on labour movement, migration, and changing spatial connections, my objective was to give an idea of the different scales at which the history of Jamalpur unfolded. The town, the region and the empire were interlinked and interrelated through the *processes* of movement of people. I emphasize the word *processes* because it is important to examine them and not just chronicle the movement.<sup>67</sup> What did it mean for village-based industrial proletariat to work in India's foremost railway workshop? Did the workshop and recruitment pattern intrinsically and ironically reproduce village, caste, and kinship ties? Similarly, did the mobility of mechanics and engineers from Britain mean the replication of their home-based work culture or was it the case that the colonial location produced structures of differences?

64 "India: From a Correspondent", in: The Daily News, Thursday, March 19, 1868, p. 5.

65 Ibid.

66 See the satirical text *The Koochpurwanaypore Swadeshi Railway*, by Jo. Hookm, Calcutta n.d. Internal evidence suggest it was published immediately after the second world war.

67 Frederick Cooper, "What is the Concept of Globalization Good for? An African Historian's Perspective", in: *African Affairs*, 100, 399, pp. 189-213.



In any discussion on scales of spatiality, it must be emphasized that the flows and counterflows that bind them together are crucial elements for understanding social formations of and within each of them. Intersected through the issues of race, class, language, rank and physical locations, the spatial homogenization along the interlinked units is neither complete nor consummate. Both extraordinary and quotidian practices create ruptures in spatial homogenization. For instance, the racial characteristic of physical dualism of colonial towns was mundanely trespassed by the presence of native servants in colonial bungalows.<sup>68</sup> The physical dualism was also routinely transgressed by daily meat hawking by natives for their white consumers. The native colony in which the houses were gutted in fire was inhabited by well paid Anglo-Indians and Bengali clerks. Race and class at times joined hands to consolidate hierarchical structures; in other moments, they opposed each other.

In this series of reflections, we also need to ask what effects the imperial dislocation produced when British men went back to their homes? If Jamalpur was fondly called the ‘Crewe of India’ referring to the leading railway town in northern England,<sup>69</sup> can the postcolonial perspective enable us to trace the effects of Jamalpur back on places such as Stratford? Exploring the contours of this reverse flow and effect will help in writing the history of connections in a non-linear way. Some court cases in England involving returned workers suggest that the marital and familial separation engendered by mobility did not get stabilized. To give just one example from the Stratford railway community itself, which bears striking similarity to Lucy’s condition, one wife named Ann, had taken in a lodger to support herself and her children.<sup>70</sup> The husband who had just returned after spending two years in India physically assaulted the lodger on the pretext of him having physical intimacy with his wife. In the court, the wife deposed against her husband leading to his imprisonment. Of course, if such cases were widespread, then Jamalpur would not be a name to be fondly invoked in British railway communities as Crewe was amongst the British Indian railway community. India did come to Lucy’s dreams but as a source of anxiety. She was told by her friend that every woman ought to be with her husband if the latter is in India.

This shows how differentiated notions of space emerge and thrive within structures of connections. Cecil’s remarks on the nature of social life in railway towns are very perceptive in this regard. Labelling it as a ‘hum drum existence’ he says, ‘after four or five years of Jamalpore or Tundla [another railway town in north India], many an assistant traffic superintendent or district engineer wishes himself back on an English line, in spite of the

68 It is remarkable to observe that in Cecil’s account of railway settlements in India, which was very similar to Kipling’s, the only native figure that appears is of a mali (gardener), who almost every sahib would employ individually or on a share with his neighbour. Cecil, “Railway Settlements” (note 21), p. 111.

69 This is how Kipling famously described it, which became the standard way of referring to Jamalpur in subsequent railway and popular writings. Amusingly, for the British railway and railway enthusiast readers, Kipling himself was described as the ‘Dickens of India’: “The Railway in India”, in: RM, July-Dec. 1904, p. 114.

70 A newspaper clipping giving details of this case is found in Cole’s manuscript, Mss Eur F133/42.

larger salary which is to be earned in India.<sup>71</sup> But this longing for 'home' from the location of 'exile' did not mean that the home had remained unchanged. The fact remained that wives did get lodgers and children occasionally ended up in juvenile courts. The 'exile' itself changed its nature. In another essay, Cecil accepted that after a few years a majority of English clerks preferred to spend their holidays at hill stations in India rather than returning to England; in his words, 'the exile begins, oddly enough, to prefer India to England.'<sup>72</sup>

This brief window on the history of Jamalpur shows that 'small' need not be treated as 'isolated'. On the other hand, my quest is not to instrumentally 'reveal' global in the local. Marking or showing connections is useful but inadequate as long as they don't explain the mechanisms of connections. Further, these mechanisms can only have relevant analytical value as long as they also explain the counter-argument of disconnections and differences. Global or imperial did not mean 'sameness'. Some of these mechanics and engineers who developed 'love' for India never stopped longing for their 'home' in England. And alternately, in spite of being an imported technology, technological and innovative changes made in India caught attention and were proposed to be brought back to the metropole.<sup>73</sup> In the highly connected world of technology, personnel and work in the nineteenth century, there remained, therefore, differentiated worlds of home and colony, east and west. They remained connected but in an asymmetrical way. After all, it was Jamalpur and Monghyr that were called the Crewe and Manchester of India, and not the other way round. In short, there remained differentiated worlds of 'Crewe' and 'Jamalpur'.

If places, people and ideas were connected even in asymmetrical ways, how should we explain singularity and specificity? Was Jamalpur atypical or typical? Once again, our answer will depend on the type of questions we pose. If our point of entry is colonial capital and imperial protection, then the history of Howrah, Jamalpur and Allahabad may look similar. But if approached from the aspects of how work and labour was organized, how cultural practices developed, how racial, ethnic and class relationships were managed, then distinctions are visible. Jamalpur did prove to become a better place than Howrah to manage European workforce; both gunshots of voluntary corps and church hymns filled the landscape surrounded by hills on three sides, making it attractive for railway families, friends and employees to visit it. It did provide better options for attending Sunday services than other neighbouring places. Specificity does not need to stand in opposition to connection or comparison. They can go hand in hand as historical phenomenon and also as our analytical framework.

71 Cecil, "Railway Settlements" (note 21), p. 113.

72 Cecil, "Railway Clerks in India", *RM*, p. 25.

73 As early as 1868, a traveller in India pointed out the benefits of convertible seats into sleeping berths and hoped that 'it may catch the eye of one of our railway directors at home'. "India: From a Correspondent", in: *The Daily News*, Thursday, March 19, 1868, p. 5.