



Towns and cities that first appeared along river valleys, such as Mohan jodaro, were larger in scale than other human settlements. Ancient cities could develop only when an increase in food supplies made it possible to support a wide range of non-food producers. Cities were often the centres of political power, administrative network, trade and industry, religious institutions, and intellectual activity, and supported various social groups such as artisans, merchants and priests.

De-urbanisation

Were cities always like the one we see today ? Though urbanisation has a long history, the modern cities worldwide have developed only over the last 200 years. Three historical processes have shaped modern cities in decisive ways :

- (1) the rise of industrial capitalism
- (2) the establishment of colonial rule over large parts of the world, and
- (3) the development of democratic ideals.

In most parts of the western world modern cities emerged with industrialisation. In Britain, industrial cities like Leeds and Manchester grew rapidly in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as more and more people sought jobs, housing and other facilities in these places. However, unlike Western Europe, Indian cities did not expand as rapidly in the nineteenth century. Old trading centres and ports could not survive when the flow of trade moved to new centres. Similarly, earlier centres of regional power collapsed when local rulers were defeated by the British and new centres of administration emerged. This process is often described as **de-urbanisation**.

The pilgrimage towns like Madurai, Kanchipuram, Bhubaneshwar had grown as accounts of pilgrimage and trade. There were important religious institutions at these centres. These declined on account of erosion of their authority. The principal Mughal period cities of



Delhi, Agra, Lucknow, Poona, Seringapatnam, Nagpur, Tanjore and many others declined with the decline of royal authority, migration of administrators and artisans in the nineteenth century. Machlipatnam developed as an important port town in the seventeenth century. Its importance declined by the late eighteenth century as trade shifted to the new British ports of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The towns and cities which had flourished for their handicrafts, such as Agra, Surat, Cambay and Indore declined.

In the late eighteenth century, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras rose in importance as Presidency cities. They became the centres of British power in the different regions of India. For administrative purposes, colonial India was divided into three 'Presidencies' (Bombay, Madras and Bengal), which developed from the East India Company's 'factories' (trading posts) at Surat, Madras and Calcutta. However, renewed economic activities at some centres like Delhi and Hyderabad, the Colonial patronage helped to create new parts of these cities.


The new urban centres, regional capitals like those of Lucknow, Hyderabad and Tanjore became important during the British rule due to their economic importance. The political power was in the hands of the British yet traders and other professional classes of people like lawyers, doctors and others became **new symbols of town life**.

Emergence of New Towns

The decline of old towns and rise of new ones is often termed as de-urbanisation and urbanisation respectively. The improvements in transport and communication particularly introduction of railways helped in the growth of many old towns. Examples of these types of urban centres are Chandigarh, Shimla and Delhi apart from the Presidency areas. Delhi became the capital of British Empire from 1931. Shimla was the summer capital during hot months. Besides, Shimla, other hill stations were developed during the British period, to enable them to work in cool climates— Mussourie, Dolhousie, Darjeeling and Ooty. The tea and coffee plantations led to the emergence of plantation towns with distinct urban features in Assam and Kerala. Many cantonment towns also developed, such as Meerut, Kanpur and Lansdowne which housed different units of the British army. Ancient towns like Allahabad, Varanasi and Patna developed further during colonial rule on account of their centrality. In these cities the British built a series of important monuments like the High Court, the Mayo College. Notable among the Princely state cities were Jaipur, Baroda, Gwalior, Hyderabad, Mysore, Jammu and Srinagar. Jaipur and Baroda (Vadodara) were best known cities for their many architectural marvels.

The Portuguese Flavour and French Traits

With the coming of the European powers, different parts of India became colonies of various imperialist powers. Because of the dominance of the Portuguese Cochin, Goa, Daman and Diu had a Portuguese flavour.



The cities of Chandernagore and Pondicherry exhibit French traits as they were founded by the French.

After the British won the Battle of Plassey, **Calcutta** became the headquarters of the East India Company. By the Regulating Act of 1773, Governor of Kolkata was made the Governor-General of India and Governors of Madras and Bombay were made subservient to him. Calcutta remained the capital of British India till 1911.

Strategic location of **Bombay** on the seashore soon helped it to become a naval base. The city of Bombay began to grow when the East India Company started using Bombay as its main port in western India. In the seventeenth century, Bombay was a group of seven islands under Portuguese control. In 1661, control of the islands passed into British hands after the marriage of Britain's king Charles II to the Portuguese princess. The East India Company quickly shifted its base from Surat, its principal Western port, to Bombay. At first, Bombay was the major outlet for cotton textiles from Gujarat. Later, in the nineteenth century, the city functioned as a port through which large quantities of raw materials such as cotton and opium would pass. Gradually, it also became an important administrative centre in Western India, and then, by the end of the nineteenth century, a major industrial centre. Bombay became the capital of the Bombay Presidency in 1819, after the Maratha defeat in the Anglo-Maratha war. The city quickly expanded. With the growth of trade in cotton and opium, large communities of traders, bankers, artisans and shopkeepers came to settle in Bombay. The establishment of textile mills led to a fresh surge in migration. Bombay dominated the maritime trade of India till well into the twentieth century. It was also at the junction head of two major railways. The railways encouraged an ever higher scale of migration into the city.

When Gods Visited Calcutta

In 1880, Durgacharan Ray wrote a novel, *Debganer Martye Aagaman* (The Gods Visit Earth). He wrote how the gods were surprised, impressed and also confused.

'The gods took a train to Calcutta and went around this capital of British India. The gods were wonderstruck by the big, modern city—the train itself, the large ships on the river Ganges, factories belching smoke, bridges and monuments and a dazzling array of shops selling a wide range of commodities. The gods were so impressed by the marvels of the teeming metropolis that they decided to build a Museum and a High Court in Heaven!

The city of Calcutta in the nineteenth century was brimming with opportunities—for trade and commerce, education and jobs. But the gods were disturbed by another aspect of city life—its cheats and thieves, its grinding poverty, and the poor quality of housing for many. The chief god himself got tricked into buying a pair of cheap glasses. And when he tried to buy some other goods, he was greatly confused

by the shopkeepers who accused one another of being swindlers. The gods were also perturbed at the confusion of caste, religious and gender identities in the city.'

From eighteenth century onwards towns were no longer fortified as was done earlier.

The New Migration in Bombay

My father came down the Sahyadris
A quilt over his shoulder
He stood at your doorstep
With nothing but his labour

.....

I carried a tiffin box
To the mill since childhood
I was cast the way
A smith forges a hammer
I learned my ropes
Working on a loom
Learnt on occasion
To go on strike

.....

My father withered away toiling
So will I, and will my little ones
Perhaps they too face such sad nights
Wrapped in coils of darkness

— excerpts of a Marathi poem

Implications of Colonial Policies and Institutions

Policy of the British administration was to develop an infrastructure of transport, communications, military cantonments, civil lines, police and local government to rule India effectively. Cheap and easy means of transport were needed to let the products manufactured in Britain flow into India and Indian raw materials secured for British Industries. Efforts were made to link the major cities, ports and markets of the country by road. Work on the Grand Trunk Road from Calcutta to Delhi began in 1839 and was completed in 1850s. Public Works Department established by Lord Dalhousie started building modern roads in India. The first railway line from Bombay to Thana opened for traffic in 1853. The railway network was fully developed by 1900 and covered all parts of the country, connecting new towns and cities. Steamships were first introduced in India in



Bombay port in the eighteenth century

1826 when shipping service was started between India and England to transport goods and passengers. The steamship took only 15 to 21 days to reach from Bombay to London.

For immediate communication, the first telegraph line from Calcutta to Agra, a distance of 800 miles was opened in 1854. It was extended to Lahore and Peshawar in 1857. The British also established an efficient and modern postal system.

Urban administrative bodies (municipalities) were set up from 1881 to look after civic problems. These were primarily collection of local taxes, maintenance of roads, street lights, removal of garbage, primary education and public health.

A regular police force was established to maintain the law and order in the towns and villages. Police administration extended to all districts. Thus, the new institutions like Public Works Department, Post Office and Telegraph, municipalities and police were developed.

The Story of An Imperial Capital

It is believed— that Delhi (then known as Indraprastha) was the capital of the Pandavas during the age of the Mahabharata. Remains of several cities have been discovered in Delhi. The Tomara Rajput dynasty founded the city of Lal Kot. The Chauhan Rajput kings of Ajmer conquered Lal Kot and renamed it Qila Rai Pithora .

Delhi has been a capital for more than one thousand years, although with some gaps. Fourteen capital cities of different names were founded in an area of about 60 square miles on the west bank of the river Jamuna. At that time Jamuna flowed near the Red Fort. Today it has shifted course. Of these, more important cities were built between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries. The most splendid city was Shahjahanabad built by Shah Jahan. Its construction began in 1639. Lal Qila or Red Fort, a fort-palace in red sandstone and the walled city with 14 gates to its west were built. The main roads of the walled city were Chandni Chowk and Faiz Bazar. A canal ran down the centre of the Chandni Chowk. Jama Masjid in the walled city was the first mosque in India with minarets and full domes. It was among the largest and grandest mosques in India. It was the highest place within the city.

Note : Notice the Red Fort on the left and the walls that surround the city. Through the centre line (from Red Fort to the right) that is, west to east runs the main road of Chandni Chowk.

Open squares, winding lanes, several dozen bazaars, quiet cul-de-sacs (dead end streets) and water channels were the special features of the walled city. A number of Havelis or mansions were interspersed with the far more numerous houses of the poor. The delights of the city, poetry and dance, were enjoyed only by some. However, the city had some dargahs (tombs of sufi saints) and khanqahs (a place to get the blessings of Sufi saints and hear Sufi music) which were open to one and all. There were a number of temples and mosques as well.



Image of Shahjahanabad in 1858

The Making of New Delhi

In 1803, the British gained control of Delhi after Anglo-Maratha war. Since the capital of British India was Calcutta, the Mughal emperor was allowed to continue living in the palace complex in the Red Fort. The historic imperial city of Delhi became a dusty provincial town in the nineteenth century before it was rebuilt as the capital of British India after 1911.

Demolishing a Past

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British lived along with the wealthier Indians in the walled city of Delhi unlike Bombay, Calcutta and Madras where 'black' areas and 'white' areas were sharply separated. They learned to enjoy Urdu/Persian culture and poetry and participated in local festivals. In 1792, Delhi College was established for the education of sciences and humanities, largely in the Urdu language. This was how the period from 1830 to 1857 was referred by some historians as a period of the Delhi **renaissance**, that is a time when there was great creative activity in art and learning.

During the Revolt of 1857, Delhi remained under the control of the revolutionaries for four months. When the British recaptured the city, they massacred the revolutionaries in a fit of revenge and plunder. Mirza Ghalib, the famous Urdu poet witnessed and wrote, "The British killed the helpless..... and burned houses. Hordes of men and women, commoners and noblemen poured out of Delhi from the three gates and took shelter in small communities and tombs outside the city."



British forces massacring on the streets of Delhi in 1857

To prevent another revolt, the British exiled Bahadur Shah to Burma (now Myanmar), dismantled his court, razed several of the palaces to ground and built barracks for troops in the gardens. For security reasons all type of buildings around the Fort and Jama Masjid were demolished. It is estimated that one-third of the city was demolished and its canals were filled up.

The British wanted Delhi to forget its Mughal past. The Delhi College was turned into a school and shut down in 1877.

In the 1870s the western walls of Shahjahanabad were broken. The British moved to the newly developed Civil Lines area in the north, away from the Indians in the walled city.

Planning a New Capital

After Aurangzeb there was no powerful Mughal ruler, but Mughal emperors continued to be symbolically important. In fact, when a massive revolt against British rule broke out in 1857, Bahadur Shah Zafar, the Mughal emperor at the time, was seen as the natural leader.

During the Revolt the British had realised that the Mughal emperor was still important to the people and they saw him as their leader. Symbolic importance of Delhi has associated with the importance of the Mughal emperor. The British were fully aware of this fact too. Therefore, many spectacular events were held in Delhi after the Revolt of 1857. In 1877, Viceroy Lytton organised grand Durbar in Delhi to acknowledge Queen Victoria as the Emperress of India, though Calcutta was still the capital of British India. To celebrate the coronation of King George V in England, a grand Durbar was held in Delhi on 12 December 1911. The decision to shift the capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi was announced at this Durbar. It was important to celebrate British power with pomp and show in the city that was the seat of the Mughal emperors, the earlier rulers and which had become a strong hold of the revolutionaries in 1857. In both the above functions all the Indian princes and a large number of British officers and soldiers were present.

The government complex and residences of the British officials were constructed as a 10 square mile city on Raisina Hill, south of the walled city. Two architects, Edward Lutyens and Herbert Baker were called on to design New Delhi and its buildings. The architect, Herbert Baker believed, "The New capital must be the sculptural monument of the good government British rule in India is a new civilisation in growth" The architects wanted New Delhi to represent a sense of law and order. It took nearly 20 years to build New Delhi.

The government complex in New Delhi consisted of a two-mile avenue, Kingsway (now Rajpath), that led to the Viceroy's palace (now Rashtrapati Bhavan), with the Secretariat Buildings on either side. Avenue is a road or broad path between two rows of trees, especially one leading to a big house. The overall look of these government buildings was classical Greece (fifth century before Christ), though some features are borrowed from different periods of India's imperial history. For instance, the central dome of the Viceregal palace was copied from the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi and the red sandstone and carved screens or Jalis from Mughal architecture. In New Delhi, there were broad, straight streets lined with sprawling mansions set in the middle of large compounds. It was green with trees and parks ensuring fresh air. The old city had overcrowded mohallas in narrow bylanes, the source of disease. The new city had better water supply, sewage disposal and drainage facilities than the old city.



The Viceregal Palace (now Rashtrapati Bhavan)

Inside the Old City

The canals brought fresh water into the old city of Delhi (Shahjahanabad) for drinking and other domestic uses. There were wells or baolis also. Baolis were big wells, one can walk down the steps to fetch water (Fig. 15.5). Due to neglect water supply system as well as drainage system were damaged in the nineteenth century. At the end of the nineteenth century the old drains were closed and a new system of open drains



A famous baoli near the shrine of Nizamuddin Auliya in Delhi



Colonial bungalow in New Delhi

was introduced. Due to the rapidly increasing population, this system too was soon overburdened. The overflowing open drains and roadside toilets stench to the misery of the householders. At the same time, a lot of money was being spent on drainage systems in the New Delhi area but Delhi Municipal Committee did not spend any.

The Decline of Havelis

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the nobles of the Mughal court lived in havelis, which were large walled compounds with mansions, courtyards and fountains. In mid-nineteenth century there were at least a hundred such havelis. A haveli had an outer courtyard surrounded by rooms for males and an inner courtyard with rooms for women. Usually havelis included housing for various kinds of servants. Under the British rule, the Mughal nobility could not afford these havelis. Therefore, they began to be subdivided and some of them were sold to the upcoming mercantile class.

On the other hand, the **colonial bungalow** was made for one nuclear family, that is a family unit that consists only of a husband, wife and children. It was a large single-storeyed structure usually set in one or two acres of open ground. It had separate living and dining rooms and bedrooms and a wide verandah. Kitchens, stables and servants' quarters were in a separate space from the main house.

Extension of Delhi

In 1888, Robert Clarke planned an extension scheme called the Lahore Gate Improvement Scheme. Streets of identical width and size in a grid pattern were constructed around a market square. This housing colony was named Clarkegunj. It remained incomplete. Water supply and drainage remained poor in this area. The Delhi Improvement Trust, set up in 1936, built areas like Daryaganj for wealthy Indians. Here houses were grouped around parks. In these houses different members of the same family had separate living rooms, at least one feature of the bungalows was followed.

Delhi at the Time of Partition



Union Building, Pretoria

As a result of the partition of India in 1947, Muslims left Delhi for Pakistan. Over two thirds of the Delhi Muslims migrated. About 44,000 houses were abandoned. At the same time large numbers of Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan came to Delhi. Nearly five lakh refugees from Pakistan were added to Delhi's population. It had about three lakh previously. The population of Delhi was counted about eight lakh in 1951. The refugees stayed in camps, schools, military barracks and gardens. New refugee colonies such as Lajpat Nagar and Tilak Nagar came up at this time.

The large migration from Punjab changed the social milieu of Delhi. The skills and occupations of the refugees were quite different from those of the people they replaced. An urban culture largely based on

Urdu was overshadowed by new tastes and sensibilities in food, dress and the arts.

In Other Parts of the World

The architect Herbert Baker who designed the Secretariat Building in New Delhi in the 1910s, also designed the Union Building in the city of Pretoria in South Africa in the 1890s. The Secretariat and the Union Building were both built to house imperial offices. The Union Building was also located on a steep hill as is the Secretariat Building in New Delhi. Baker used some of the elements of ancient classical architecture in both the buildings. That is why we find a surprising similarity between the two buildings.



Union Building, Pretoria

Key Words

- » Dargah : tomb of a Sufi saint
- » Khanqahs : a place where people come to get the blessings of Sufi saints and hear Sufi music
- » Cul-de-sac : street with a dead end
- » Havelis : mansions
- » Renaissance : a time where there is great creative activity in art and learning
- » Avenue : a road or broad path between two rows of trees, leading to a big house
- » Durbar : royal court
- » Viceregal Palace : Viceroy's palace
- » Baoli : a big well where one can go steps down to fetch water
- » Census : a head count of population often every ten years
- » Cantonments : military camps where soldiers live in long barracks
- » Civil Lines : a separate area in a city during colonial period meant for the senior Indian civilian officers of the British government
- » De-urbanisation : decline and disintegration of towns and cities
- » Urbanisation : emergence of new towns by mass migration to urban areas in search of better prospects

SUMMARY

- ▶ Cities were often the centres of political power, administrative network, trade and industry, religious institution and intellectual activity and supported various groups such as artisans, merchants and priests.
- ▶ Industrialisation, colonial rule and democratic ideals have shaped modern cities.
- ▶ In the late eighteenth century, Calcutta, Bombay and Madras rose in importance as presidency cities and centres of British power in the different regions of India.
- ▶ Apart from the three Presidency areas Delhi became the capital of the British empire from 1931. Shimla was the summer capital.
- ▶ The policy of the British administration was to develop an infrastructure of transport, communication, military cantonments, civil lines, police and local government to rule India effectively.
- ▶ In the first half of the nineteenth century, the British lived along with the wealthier Indians in the walled city of Delhi, unlike Bombay, Calcutta and Madras where 'black' areas and 'white' areas were sharply separated. They learned to enjoy Urdu/Persian culture and poetry. In 1792, Delhi College was established for education largely in Urdu language.

- ▶ In the 1870s, the British moved to the newly developed Civil Lines area in the north, away from the Indians in the walled city. Now the British wanted Delhi to forget its Mughal past. The Delhi College was turned into a school and shut down in 1877.
- ▶ Symbolic importance of Delhi was associated with the importance of the Mughal emperor. The British were fully aware of this fact.
- ▶ To celebrate the coronation of King George V in England a grand Durbar was held in Delhi on
- ▶ 12 December 1911. The decision to shift the capital of British India from Calcutta to Delhi was announced at this Durbar.

Exercise Time

A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :

1. _____ was the earlier capital of British India.
 - a. Delhi
 - b. Bombay
 - c. Calcutta
 - d. Chennai
2. Delhi was made the capital of British India in _____.
 - a. 1931
 - b. 1940
 - c. 1947
 - d. 1942
3. _____ emperors continued to be symbolically important even after Aurangzeb.
 - a. Maratha
 - b. Sultan
 - c. Mughal
 - d. british
4. To celebrate the coronation of _____ in England, a Durbar was held in Delhi.
 - a. Mughul
 - b. King George V
 - c. Sultan
 - d. Queen Victoria
5. The central dome of the Viceregal palace was copied from the Buddhist stupa at _____.
 - a. Sanchi
 - b. Italy
 - c. Classical Greece
 - d. France

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. The Presidency towns were _____, _____ and _____.
2. In the age of Mahabharat, the region of Delhi was referred as _____.
3. By the Regulating Act of 1773, the governor of Calcutta was made the _____ of India.
4. Union Building in Pretoria and _____ building in New Delhi are similar in design.
5. The two architects who designed New Delhi were _____ and _____.

C. Match the Following :

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Haveli | a. a big well with steps |
| 2. Dargah | b. royal court |
| 3. Baoli | c. mansion |
| 4. Durbar | d. street with a dead end |
| 5. Cul-de-sac | e. tomb of a Sufi saint |

D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :

1. In the western world, modern cities grew with industrialisation.
2. The coronation of king George I in England was celebrated in a Durbar at Delhi.
3. Surat and Machlipatnam developed in the nineteenth century.
4. More money was spent on drainage in old Delhi than New Delhi.
5. In the twentieth century, the majority of Indians lived in cities.



E. Define the terms :

1. Renaissance
2. Cantonments
3. Civil Lines
4. De-urbanisation
5. Urbanisation

F. Answer in one word or one phrase :

1. Who lived in the 'white' areas in cities such as Madras ?
2. How many refugees were added to the population of Delhi after Partition in 1947 ?
3. Who was the last powerful Mughal emperor ?
4. Which town declined after the emergence of Bombay as a new town ?
5. Through which of the main roads of Shahjahanabad, a water canal ran down ?

G. Answer these question briefly :

1. What is meant by de-urbanisation ?
2. What helped in the growth of new towns during nineteenth century ?
3. Give three reasons for the decline of cities in India in the nineteenth century ?
4. Write a brief note how Bombay came up during British rule in India.
5. Why did the British choose to hold a grand Durbar in Delhi although it was not the capital ?

H. Answer these questions in detail :

1. What were the factors responsible for the decline of some old cities ?
2. How did urbanisation during colonial period represent a complete departure from the old pattern ?
3. Describe the new institutions that developed and benefitted the cities during nineteenth century ?
4. Describe how New Delhi was built for making it fit for the new capital of British Raj ?

PROJECT WORK

1. On an outline map of India locate and label the cities that declined and those that saw growth during British rule.
2. Make a list of ten occupations in the town or village you live. Find out how long they have existed. What does this tell you about the changes within this area ?