

8th Standard- Social Science

History-Colonialism and the City

In the late 18th century, Presidency cities were developed by the British—Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.

De-urbanisation took place as a result of British economic policies. The old manufacturing towns of India such as Dacca, Murshidabad, Surat, etc. lost their glory.

Delhi became the hub of political parties.

The period from 1830 to 1857 is referred to as the period of the Delhi Renaissance.

The British wanted Delhi to forget its Mughal past and got the area around the forts cleared off, gardens and mosques for security reasons.

New Delhi was constructed as a 10-square mile city on Raisina Hill.

Two architects Edward Lutyens and Herbert Baker designed New Delhi and its buildings.

The British considered overcrowded places as unhealthy and unhygienic and thus wanted a new city that had better water supply, sewage disposal and drainage facilities than the old city.

In most parts of the western world modern cities grew with industrialisation. In Britain industrial towns like Leeds and Manchester grew rapidly in the 19th and 20th centuries.

In India Calcutta, Bombay and Madras emerged in importance as Presidency cities in the late 18th century.

These Presidency cities became the centre of British power in the different regions of India.

At the same time cities like Machlipatnam, Surat and Seringapatam declined.

The historic imperial city of Delhi became a dusty provincial town in the 19th century before it was rebuilt as the capital of British India.

Delhi has been a capital for more than a 1,000 years, although with some gaps. As many as 14 capital cities were founded in a small area of about 60 square miles on the left-bank of the river Jamuna of these, the most important are the capital cities built between the 12th and 17th centuries.

Shah Jahan built the most splendid capital of all. Shahjahanabad was begun in 1639 and consisted of a fort-palace complex and the city adjoining it. The Red Fort contained the palace complex.

Delhi during Shah Jahan's time was also a centre of Sufi culture. It had several dargahs, khanqahs and idgahs.

Even this was no ideal city and its delights were enjoyed only by some. There were sharp differences between the rich-and the poor.

In the first half of the 19th century the British lived along with the wealthier Indians in the Walled City. They learned to enjoy Urdu/Persian culture and poetry and participated in local festivals.

But things did not remain the same after 1857. During the Revolt Delhi remained under rebel control for four months. When the British regained it they embarked on a campaign of revenge and plunder. They began to demolish everything that was associated with the Mughals. In fact, the British were very much annoyed with the Mughal emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar to see his active participation in the revolt.

They either demolished mosques or put to other uses. For example, the Zinat-al-Masjid was converted into a bakery. No worship was allowed in the Jama Masjid for five years. One-third of the city was demolished and its canals were filled up.

In the 1870s, the western walls of Shahjahanabad were broken to establish the railway and to allow the city to expand beyond walls.

The British now began living in the sprawling Civil Lines area that came up in the north, away from the Indians in the Walled city.

Delhi college was turned into a school, and shut down in 1877.

Delhi emerged into the modern city only after 1911 when it became the capital of the British India.

New Delhi was constructed as a 10-square-mile city on Raisina Hill, south of the existing city.

Two architects, Edward Lutyens and Herbert Baker, were called on to design New Delhi and its buildings. It was kept in mind that the new buildings must assert British importance.

New Delhi took nearly 20 years to build. The idea was to build a city that was a stark contrast to Shahjahanabad. There were to be no crowded mohallas, no mazes of narrow by-lanes. In New Delhi, there were to be broad, straight streets lined with sprawling mansions set in the middle of large compounds. The architects wanted New Delhi to represent a sense of law and order in contrast to the chaos of old Delhi.

In 1947, India got independence but at the same time it was partitioned into India and Pakistan. This led to a large migration from Punjab that changed the social background of Delhi. An urban culture largely based on Urdu was overshadowed by new tastes and sensibilities, in food, dress and the arts.

Inside the old city, the excellent system of water supply and drainage was neglected in the 19th century. The system of wells or baolis also broke down and channels to remove household waste were damaged.

The population of Delhi was continuously growing at this time. The broken-down canals could not serve the needs of this ever-growing population.

At the end of the 19th century a new system of open surface drains was introduced. But this system too was soon overburdened. The Delhi Municipal Committee was not willing to spend money on a good drainage system.

At the same time, millions of rupees were being spent on drainage systems in the New Delhi area.

The havelis or grand mansions in which the Mughal aristocracy lived in the 17th and 18th centuries also declined gradually. In fact the Mughal amirs were unable to maintain these large establishments under conditions of British rule. Havelis therefore began to be subdivided and sold.

The colonial bungalow was quite different from the haveli. It was a large single-storeyed structure with a pitched roof and usually set in one or two acres of open ground.

The Census of 1931 revealed that the Walled City area was crowded with as many as 90 persons per acre while New Delhi had only about 3 persons per acre.

The poor conditions in the Walled City did not stop it from expanding. In 1888 an extension scheme called the Lahore Gate Improvement Scheme was planned by Robert Clarke for the Walled City residents. Streets strictly followed the grid system and were of identical width, size and character. Land

was divided into regular areas for the construction of neighbourhoods. But even this scheme could not decongest the old city.

The Delhi Improvement Trust was set up in 1936, and it built areas like Daryaganj South for wealthy Indians. Houses were grouped around parks. Within the houses, space was divided according to new rules of privacy.

Presidency: colonial India was divided into three Presidencies—Bombay, Madras and Calcutta for administrative purposes.

Urbanisation: It is a process by which more and more people began to reside in towns and cities.

Dargah: It refers to a tomb of a sufi saint.

Khanqah: It refers to a sufi lodge often used as a rest house for travellers and a place where people came to discuss spiritual matters, got the blessings of saints and hear sufi music.

Idgah: It refers to an open prayer place of Muslims primarily meant for id prayers.

Cul-de-sac: Street with a dead end.

Gul Farosan: A festival of flowers

Renaissance: Literary rebirth of art and learning. It is a term often used to describe a time when there is great creative activity.

Baolis: The system of wells

Haveli: A grand mansion

Amir: A nobleman during the Mughal period

1639 – Shahjahanabad was begun.

1792 – Delhi College was established.

1830-57 – A period of Delhi renaissance.

1877 – Viceroy Lytton organised a Durbar to acknowledge Queen Victoria as the Empress of India.

1888 – An extension scheme called the Lahore Gate Improvement Scheme was planned by Robert Clarke for the Walled City residents.

1911 – The capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi.

1936 – The Delhi Improvement Trust was set up.