



### What happened to Cities under Colonial Rule?

- 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.
- 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.
- At the same time, a host of smaller cities declined. Many towns manufacturing specialised goods declined due to a drop in the demand for what they produced. 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 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 1912
- How many “Delhi’s” before New Delhi?
- Delhi has been a capital for more than a 1000 year.
- 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.
- **Urbanisation** - The process by which more and more people begin to reside in towns and cities.
- The most splendid capital of all was built by Shah Jahan. Shahjahanabad was begun in 1639 and consisted of a fort-palace complex and the city adjoining it.
- Lal Qila or the Red Fort, made of red sandstone, contained the palace complex. To its west lay the Walled City with 14 gates. The main streets of Chandni Chowk and Faiz Bazaar were broad enough for royal processions to pass. A canal ran down the centre of Chandni Chowk.
- The Jama Masjid was among the largest and grandest mosques in India.
- Delhi during Shah Jahan’s time was also an important centre of Sufi culture. It had several dargahs, khanqahs and idgahs. Open squares, winding lanes, quiet cul-de-sacs and water channels were the pride of Delhi’s residents.
- Delhi aren’t mere streets; they are like the album of a painter.
- There were sharp divisions between rich and poor. Havelis or mansions were interspersed with the far more numerous mud houses of the poor. The colourful world of poetry and dance was usually enjoyed only by men.
- Furthermore, celebrations and processions often led to serious conflicts.]
- **The Making of New Delhi**
- In 1803, the British gained control of Delhi after defeating the Marathas. 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 modern city as we know it today developed only after 1911 when Delhi became the capital of British India.
- **Demolishing a past**
- In Madras, Bombay or Calcutta, the living spaces of Indians and the British were sharply separated. Indians lived in the “black” areas, while the British lived in well laid out “white” areas.
- In Delhi, especially in the first half of nineteenth century, the British lived along with the wealthier Indians in the walled city.
- The British learned to enjoy Urdu/Persian culture and poetry and participated in local festivals.
- The establishment of the Delhi College in 1792 led to a great intellectual flowering in the sciences as well as the humanities, largely in the Urdu language.
- During the revolt that year, as you have seen, the rebels gathered in the city, and persuaded Bahadur Shah to become the leader of the uprising.



- Delhi remained under rebel control for four months.
- When the angry lions (the British) entered the town, they killed the helpless..... and burned houses. Hordes of men and women, commoners and noblemen, poured out of communities and tombs outside the city.”
- To prevent another rebellion, the British exiled Bahadur Shah to Burma (now Myanmar), dismantles his court, razed several of the places, closed down gardens and built barracks for troops in their place.
- The British wanted Delhi to forget its Mughal past. The area around the Fort was completely cleared of gardens, pavilions and mosques (though temples were left intact). The British wanted a clear ground for security reasons.
- Mosques in particular were either destroyed, or put to other uses.
- For instance. the Zinat-al-Masjid was converted into a bakery. No worship was allowed in the Jama Masjid for five years.
- In the 1870s, the western walls of Shahjahanabad were broken to establish the railway and to allow the city to expand beyond the 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. The Delhi College was turned into a school, and shut in 1877.
- **Planning a new capital:** In 1877, Viceroy Lytton organised a Durbar to acknowledge Queen Victoria as the Empress of India. Remember that Calcutta was still the capital of British India, but the grand Durbar was being held in Delhi.
- The British had realised that the Mughal emperor was still important to the people and they saw him as their leader.
- In 1911. when King George V was crowned in England, a Durbar was held in Delhi to celebrate the occasion. The decision to shift the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi was announced at this Durbar.
- 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 building.
- The central dome of the Viceroys Palace was copied from the Buddhist stupa at Sanchi. and the red sandstone and carved screens or jalīs were borrowed from Mughal architecture. But the new buildings had to assert British importance: that is why the architect made sure that the Viceroy’s Palace was higher than Shah Jahan’s Jama Masjid!
- **How was this to be done?**
- New Delhi took nearly 20 years to build. The idea was to build a city that was a stark contrast to Shahjahanahad. There were to be rio crowded mohallas, no mazes of narrow bylanes.
- The architects wanted New Delhi to represent a sense of law and order, in contrast to the chaos of Old Delhi. The British saw overcrowded spaces as unhygienic and unhealthy, the source of disease.
- This meant that New Delhi had to have better water supply sewage disposal and drainage facilities than the Old City.
- **Life in the time of partition**
- Days after Indian Independence and Partition, fierce rioting began. Thousands of people in Delhi were killed and their homes looted and burned.
- As streams of Muslims left Delhi for Pakistan, their place was taken by equally large numbers of Sikh and Hindu refugees from Pakistan. Refugees roamed the streets of Shahjahanabad, searching for empty homes to occupy.
- At times they forced Muslims to leave or sell their properties. Over two-thirds of the Delhi Muslims migrated, almost 44,000 homes were abandoned.
- At the same time, Delhi became a city of refugees. Nearly 500,000 people were added to Delhi’s population (which had a little over 800,000 people in 1951). Most of these migrants were from Punjab.

## 8<sup>th</sup> – Colonialism and the City



- They stayed in camps, schools, military barracks and gardens, hoping to build new homes. Some got the opportunity to occupy residences that had been vacated; others were housed in refugee colonies.
- New colonies such as Lajpat Nagar and Tilak Nagar came up at this time. Shops and stalls were set up to cater to the demands of the migrants; schools and colleges were also opened.
- The new migrants coming to Delhi were rural landlords, lawyers, teachers, traders and small shopkeepers. Partition changed their lives, and their occupations. They had to take up new jobs as hawkers, vendors, carpenters and ironsmiths. Many, however, prospered in their new businesses.
- An urban culture largely based on Urdu was overshadowed by new tastes and sensibilities, in food, dress and the arts.
- **Inside the Old City:** In the past, Mughal Delhi's famed canals had brought not only fresh drinking water to homes, but also water for other domestic uses. This excellent system of water supply and drainage was neglected in the nineteenth century. The system of wells (or baolis) and channels to remove household waste were damaged. This was at a time when the population of the city was continuously growing.
- The broken-down canals could not serve the needs of this rapidly increasing population. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Shahjehani drains were closed and a new system of open surface drains was introduced.
- The Delhi Municipal Committee was unwilling to spend money on a good drainage system.
- **Decline of havelis:** The Mughal aristocracy in the seventeenth and eighteenth century lived in grand mansions called havelis.
- On entering the haveli through a beautiful gateway, you reached an open courtyard, surrounded by public rooms meant for visitors and business, used exclusively by males. Rooms in the havelis had multiple uses, and very little by way of furniture.
- Many of the Mughal amirs were unable to maintain these large establishments under conditions of British rule. Havelis therefore began to be subdivided and sold. Often the street front of the havelis became shops or warehouses.
- Some havelis were taken over by the upcoming mercantile class, but many fell into decay and disuse.
- **The Municipality begins to plan:** The poor conditions in the Walled City, however, 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.
- The idea was to draw residents away from the Old City to a new type of market square, around which shops would be built.
- Streets in this redevelopment strictly followed the grid pattern, and were of identical width, size and character.
- Even in 1912, water supply and drainage in these new localities was very poor.
- The Delhi Improvement Trust was set up 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.
- Instead of spaces being shared by many families or groups, now different members of the same family had their own private spaces within the home.