Colonialism and the City

The Story of an Imperial Capital

Q.1. Define de – urbanization?

Ans: it is interesting to know that as a result of British Policies the process of de – urbanization and urbanization went in hand in hand.

For administrative purpose the British divided colonial India into three presidencies which in turn lead to the rise in the importance of the presidency cities of Bombay (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai) and Calcutta (Kolkatta)

These cities became the centers of British Power in different regions of India. New factories come up and trade developed. At the same time these cities were expanding towns and cities that manufactured specialized goods declined due to the drop in the demand for what they produced. Old trading centers and ports could not survive when the flow of trade moved to new centers.

Similarly earlier capitals collapsed when the local rulers were defeated by British and new centers of administration emerged/ This process is often described as "De – urbanization".

Q.2. Why did the British choose to held a grand Darbar in Delhi although it was not a capital?

Ans: The British were fully awared of the symbolic importance of Delhi, it was for this reason that Viceroy Lord Lytton organized a Darbar in Delhi, full of pomp and show to acknowledge Queen Victoria as the empress of India. In 1911 also, when King George V was crowned in England, a Darbar was held in Delhi to celebrate the occasion. The decision to shift the capital of India from Calcutta to Delhi was announced in this Darbar. These displays show to the people of India, the ultimate power and supremacy of the British.

Q.3. How did the old city of Delhi change under British rule?

Ans. Delhi is one of the oldest cities in India. It has been the capital even earlier during ancient and medieval period of India. The British gained the control of Delhi in 1803 after defeating the Marathas. The British lived there along with the wealthy Indians. They learned to enjoy Urdu Persian culture and poetry and participated in the local festivals.

The revolt of 1857 changed all this. Things changed when the British regained control of Delhi from the rebels. They embarked on a campaign of revenge and plunder. They raged several of the Mughal palace closed down gardens and built barracks for troops in their place.

The British wanted to Delhi forget its Mughal past. Since they wanted a clear ground for security reasons. The area around the fort was completely cleared of gardens and mosques. Later the western walls of

Shah Jahan Abad were broken to establish the railway and to allow the city to expand beyond the walls. The British constructed a new city known as "New Delhi" south of the old city. Built as a complete contrast to old city. The New Delhi became the centre of power. The old city meanwhile was pushed in neglect.

Q.4. How did Partition affect life in Delhi?

Ans. The partition of India in 1947 led to a mass migration people on both sides of the new border. As a result the population of Delhi swelled, Delhi became the city of refugees. Nearly 5,00,000 people were added to Delhi's population. Most of these migrants were from Punjab. They stayed in camps schools, military barracks and gardens, hoping to build new homes. some got the opportunity to occupy (vacant) residencies that had been vacated others were housed in refugees colonies. New colonies such as Lajpat Nagar and Tilak Nagar came up at this time.

The refugees has quite different skills and occupations than those of the people they replaced. 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 and hawkers, carpenters and iron smith, 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.

Q.5. Identify three differences in the design of the two cities of New Delhi and Shahajahanabad?

Ans. Three differences were:

- Over crowded mohallas and narrow by leaves were there in Shahajahanabad but there were to be no crowded mohallas, no mazes of narrow by ones in New Delhi.
- Shahajahanabed had poor water supply, sewage disposal and drainage facilities but New Delhi had better water supply, sewage disposal and drainage facilities.
- The New Delhi represented a sense of law and order and had clean and healthy space in contrast to the chaos of old Delhi.

Q.6. Who lived in the "white" areas in cities such as Bombay?

Ans. Britishers lived in well-laid out "white" areas in cities such as Bombay.