

Part-III: Chapter 3
COLONIAL CITIES: Urbanisation, Planning, and Architecture
Revision Notes

Key concepts in nutshell

- **Sources:-**

- I. Records of the East India company.

- II. Census reports

- III. Municipal reports.

- The urban population increased from about 10 per cent to 13 per cent during the period 1900-1940.
- During the end of the eighteenth century Madras, Bombay and Calcutta had developed into important ports.
- The ruling elite built racially exclusive clubs, race courses, and theaters.
- The development of **new modes of transportation** such as horse-drawn carriages, trams, buses etc. facilitated people to live at a distant place from the places of their work.
- The rulers everywhere tried to express their power through buildings. Many Indians adopted European styles of architecture as symbols of modernity and civilization.
- The settlement of the local people were named “**Black Town**”. A fortification was built around the “**White Town**” to separate it from the “Black Town”.
- **Difficulties in collecting data:-**
 - i. People were unwilling to give correct information.
 - ii. The figure of mortality and diseases were difficult to collect.

Ports:- Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta.

Forts:- St. George in Madras and Fort William in Calcutta.

1. TOWNS AND CITIES IN PRE-COLONIAL TIMES

What gave towns their character?

- I. Towns were defined in opposition to rural areas.
- II. Towns represented specific forms of economic activities and cultures.



- III. The people lived by cultivating land, foraging in the forest, or rearing animals.
- IV. Towns, by contrast, were peopled with artisans, traders, administrators, and rulers.
- V. Towns dominated over the rural population.
- VI. Towns and cities were often fortified by walls which symbolised their separation from the countryside.
- VII. When towns were attacked, people often sought shelter in the countryside.
- VIII. Traders and peddlers took goods from the towns to sell in the villages.
- IX. There was a revenue flow of humans and goods from towns to villages.
- X. The towns built by the **Mughals** were famous for their concentration of populations, their monumental buildings and their imperial grandeur and wealth.
- XI. **Agra, Delhi, and Lahore** were important centers of **imperial administration** and control.
- XII. Artisans produced exclusive handicrafts for the households of nobles.
- XIII. Grains from the countryside was brought into the urban markets for the town-dwellers and the army.
- XIV. The treasury was also located in the imperial capital.
- XV. Within these towns were gardens, mosques, temples, tombs, colleges, bazaars and caravanserais.
- XVI. The focus of the town was oriented towards the palace and the principal mosque.

2. Towns in south India

- I. In the towns of south India such as **Madurai** and **Kanchipuram**, the principal focus was the temple.
- II. These temples were the important commercial centers.
- III. Religious festivals often coincided with fairs, linking pilgrimage with the trade.
- IV. The ruler was the highest authority and the principal patron of religious institutions.
- V. The relationship that he had with other group and classes determined their place in society and in the town.

3. Changes in the Eighteenth century

- I. The old towns went to decline and new towns developed in the eighteenth century.
- II. The growth of new regional powers was reflected in the increasing importance of **regional capitals** - Lucknow, Hyderabad, Seringapatam, Poona, Nagpur, Baroda and Tanjore.
- III. Trade, administrators, artisans, and others migrated from the old Mughal centers to



these new capitals in search of work and patronage.

- IV. In some places there was renewed economic activity, in other places war, plunder and political uncertainty led to economic decline.
- V. The European commercial companies had set up base in different places early during the Mughal era - the **Portuguese in Panaji** in 1510, the **Dutch in Masulipatam** in 1605, the **British in Madras** in 1639 and the **French in Pondicherry** in 1873.
- VI. By the end of eighteenth century, the land-based empire in Asia was replaced by the powerful sea-based European empires.
- VII. Forces of international trade, mercantilism and capitalism now came to decline the nature of society.
- VIII. The **commercial centers** such as **Surat, Masulipatam, and Dhaka** which had grown in the seventeenth century had declined when trade shifted to other places.
- IX. **Madras, Bombay and Calcutta** rapidly emerged as **new economic capitals** and centers of colonial administration and political power.
- X. New buildings, occupations, institutions developed.

4. FINDING OUT ABOUT COLONIAL CITIES

Colonial record and urban history

- 1. Colonial rule was based on the production of enormous amount of data
- 2. The British kept a detailed record of their trading activities in order to regulate their commercial affairs.
- 3. They carried out the regular survey, gathered statistical data, and published various official report.
- 4. The town map gives information regarding the location of hill, river and vegetation - all important for planning structure for defence purpose.
- 5. These maps also show the location of ghats, density, and quality of house and alignment of roads, and are used to gauge commercial possibilities and plan strategies of taxation.
- 6. The municipal corporation with some popular representative was meant to administer essential services such as water supply, sewerage, road buildings and public health.

5. Problem faced while collecting the Census

- I. The first all-India census was attempted in 1872. From 1881 decennial (conducted every ten years) censuses became a regular feature.



- II. The people often refused to cooperate or gave evasive answers to the census officials.
- III. The people were suspicious of census operation and believed that inquiries were being conducted to impose new taxes.
- IV. Upper caste people were also unwilling to give any information regarding the women of their household.
- V. Women were supposed to remain secluded within the interior of the household and not subjected to public gaze or public inquiry.
- VI. Census officials also found that the people were claiming identities that they associated with higher status.
- VII. The figures of mortality and disease were difficult to collect for all deaths were not registered and illness was not always reported, nor treated by licensed doctors.
- VIII. Historians have to use sources like census with great caution, keeping in mind their possible biases, recalculating figures and understanding what the figures do not tell.

6. Trends of change

- I. The smaller towns had little opportunity to grow economically.
- II. Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras, on the other hand, grew rapidly and soon became sprawling cities.
- III. The **introduction of railways in 1853** meant a change in the fortunes of towns.
- IV. Economic activities gradually shifted away from traditional towns which were located along old routes and rivers.
- V. Every railway station became a collection depot for raw materials and distribution point for imported goods.
- VI. **Railway towns** like Jamalpur, Waltair, and Bareilly developed as a trading centres.

7. What were the new towns like?

Ports, forts and centers for services

- I. Madras, Calcutta, and Bombay had become important ports.
- II. The English **East India Company** built its factories because of competition among the Europeans companies, fortified the settlement for protection.
- III. In Madras, Fort St George, in Calcutta Fort William and in Bombay the Fort marked out the areas of British settlement.
- IV. There were separate quarters for Europeans and Indians, which came to be labelled in contemporary writings as the “White Town” and “Black Town “.
- V. Two **Industrial cities** also developed - **Kanpur** specializing in leather, woolen and

cotton textiles and **Jamshedpur**, specialize in steel.

VI. India never became a modern industrialised country as discriminatory colonial policies limited the levels of Industrial development.

VII. Madras, Calcutta Bombay grew into a large city but did not signify any dramatic economic growth.

8. A new urban milieu

I. Colonial cities reflected the mercantile culture of the new rule.

II. Political power and patronage shifted from Indian rulers to the merchants of the East India Company.

III. Indians who worked as interpreters, middlemen, traders, and suppliers of goods also had an important place in these new cities.

IV. Economic activities near the river or the sea led to the development of docks and ghats.

V. Around the periphery of the fort, Europeans merchants and agents built **garden houses**, racially exclusive clubs, racecourse and theatres for the ruling elites.

9. The first hill stations

I. The hill stations were a distinctive feature of colonial urban development.

II. The hill stations were initially connected with the needs of the British army.

III. Hill station became strategic places for billeting troops, guarding frontiers and launching campaigns against enemy rulers.

IV. The temperate and cool climate of the Indian hills was seen as an advantage.

V. British associated hot weather with epidemics, Cholera and malaria and attempts were made to protect the army from these diseases.

VI. Hill stations were also developed as sanitariums i.e. places where soldiers could be sent for rest and recover from illness.

10. Settlement and segregation in Madras

I. In 1639, the British constructed a trading post in **Madraspatam** and the settlement known as **Chenapattanam**.

II. The company had purchased the right of settlement from the local Telugu lords, the Nayaks of Kalahasti.

III. Rivalry with French East India Company led the British to fortify Madras.

IV. Chintadripet area meant for weavers, the Washermanpet colony of dyers, Royapuram was a settlement for Christian boatmen.

- V. The *dubashes* were Indians who could speak two languages the local language and English.
- VI. *Paraiyars* and *Vanniyars* formed the labouring poor.
- VII. The Nawab of Arcot settled in nearby Triplicane which became the nucleus of a substantial Muslim settlement.
- VIII. **Mylapore** and **Triplicane** were earlier Hindu religious centres that supported a large group of Brahmins.
- IX. **San Thome** with its cathedral was the centre Roman Catholics.

11. **White Town Fort St. George**

- I. Fort St. George became the nucleus of the White Town where most of the Europeans lived.
- II. Colour and religion determined who was allowed to live within the fort.
- III. The Company did not permit any marriages with Indians.
- IV. Other than the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese were allowed to stay because they were European and Christian.

12. **Black Town**

- I. The Black Town developed outside the Fort.
- II. It was laid out in straight lines, and housed weavers, artisans, etc.
- III. Middlemen and interpreters were the person who played a vital role in the company trade.

13. **City Architecture in Calcutta**

- i. The vast open space around the Fort (which still exists) became a landmark (the building of Fort William and the Maidan), Calcutta's first significant town planning measure.
- ii. In 1798, Lord Wellesley became the Governor General. He built a massive palace - Government House.
- iii. The existing racial divide of the "White Town" and "Black Town" was reinforced by the new divide of "healthy" and "unhealthy".
- iv. It was as if the grandeur of the cities had to reflect the authority of imperial power

14. **City Architecture in Bombay**

- i. Towards the beginning of the twentieth century a new hybrid architectural style developed which combined the Indian with the European.
- ii. This was called **Indo-Saracenic**. "Indo" was shorthand for Hindu and "Saracen" was a



term Europeans used to designate Muslim.

- iii. Jamsetji Tata built the Taj Mahal Hotel of Bombay in a Indo-Saracenic style.
- iv. Another style that was extensively used was the neo-Gothic, characterised by high-pitched roofs, pointed arches and detailed decoration.

15. What Buildings and Architectural Styles Tell Us

- i. Architecture reflects the aesthetic ideals prevalent at a time, and variations within those ideals.
- ii. These buildings also express the vision of those who build them. Rulers everywhere seek to express their power through buildings.
- iii. Architectural style not only represents and reflects the prevalent taste, they mould tastes, popularise styles and shape the contours of culture.

Time Line	
1500-1700	European trading companies establish bases in India; the Portuguese in Panaji in 1510; the dutch in Masulipatnam, 1605; the British in Madras in 1639, In Bombay in 1661, and in Calcutta in 1690; the French in Pondicherry in 1673
1757	Decisive victory of the British in the Battle of Plassey; the British becomes rulers of Bengal
1773	Supreme court set up in Calcutta by the East India Company
1803	Lord Wellesly's Minute on Calcutta town improvement
1818	British takeover of the Deccan; Bombay becomes the capital of the new province
1853	Railway from Bombay of Thane
	First Spinning and weaving mill



1857	in Bombay
1857	Universities in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta
1870s	Beginning of elected representatives in municipalities
1881	Madras harbor completed
1896	First screening of a film at Watson's Hotel, Bombay
1896	Plague starts spreading to major cities
1911	Transfer of capital from Calcutta to Delhi