



## **Unit – XII: Urbanisation, Planning & Architecture.**

Colonial towns tell the story of how power was shifted from Indian rulers to the European Elites.

In the pre-colonial time, towns represented a unique form of economic activities and cultures. They were surrounded by fortified walls and thrived on the surplus and taxes derived from agriculture. Peasants from the countryside came to town for pilgrimages and for selling their produce, goods and crafts.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the decline of Mughal empire, old towns lost their grandeur and new towns like Lucknow, Hyderabad, Seringpatnam, Pune, Nagpur, Baroda, Tanjore etc were developed.

European commercial companies set up base in different towns eg. Portuguese in Panaji, Dutch in Masulipatnam, British in Madras and French in Pondicherry.

The East India Company first set up its centre at Surat and then tried to occupy the east coast. The British and French were engaged in Battle in South India and with the defeat of French in 1761, Madras became secure and started to grow as commercial centre.

As British took over political control in India from 1757, trade of East India Company expanded and colonial port cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras emerged as economic and political power.

By 18<sup>th</sup> century, Madras, Calcutta, Bombay all had important ports and became the economic centre.

The Company built its factories and fortified these settlements for protection. Fort St. George in Madras, Fort William in Calcutta and the fort in Bombay were the famous settlements of the time.

A number of records and data were collected by the British as well as Indian officials which provided information about the colonial cities.

British Government from late nineteenth century started giving responsibilities to elect Indian representatives to administrate basic services to towns and it started a systematic annual collection of municipal taxes.

The first all India census was carried out in 1872 and after 1881 it was carried out decennial (conducted every ten years)



The expansion of railways connected the hinterland (remote areas) to the port cities and so transportation of raw materials and labour to the cities became convenient.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, cotton and jute mills were set up in Bombay and Calcutta.

There were only two proper industrial cities. Kanpur specialized in leather, woolen and textiles and Jamshedpur in steel. Industrial development lagged behind due to discriminatory policies of the British.

The British wanted the cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras to represent the grandeur and authority of the British Empire. Thus, town planning was aimed to represent their meticulous and rational planning and execution along with western aesthetic ideas.

⇒ The settlement of Indians was referred to as Black Towns whereas the settlements of the Europeans were White towns.

⇒ Hills stations were developed by the British Government initially as sanitarium (place for medical treatment) for the army. It became attractive to them and many houses, buildings and churches were designed according to European styles.

⇒ It was also believed that everything in the hill station happily contributed to make the British more joyous. It would be restorative (ability to restore health) to those suffering from overwork or exhausted by the heat of the plain.

⇒ It was in the hill stations that British constructed their most elite boarding schools where European children could receive education.

⇒ One of the most important hill stations established by the British in India was Simla. It was established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on a site which the British acquired from Nepal by conquest in 1815-16. Simla was also the summer capital of the British.

⇒ A prestigious narrow gauge railway line named Kalka-Simla Railway line was built by the British for their own benefit. It is a marvelous feat of engineering skills and has also been declared as “World Heritage” by the UNESCO.

⇒ For variety of reasons, the popularity of hill stations among the Europeans began to decline in the ten to fifteen years preceding the end of the British rule.

⇒ For the defence of their Empire, the British Government established cantonments at strategic places. They also built cantonments on the borders of the many important native states to check the disturbance in the Border States



Lord Robert Clive initiated the policy of building cantonments for British troops to keep them cantoned in one place.

⇒ At present there are 62 cantonments in India. The newly established cantonment at Bhatinda is the largest of the 62 cantonment in the country.

⇒ The cantonments are administered by an autonomous Cantonment Board.

⇒ Architecture is the style in which buildings, open areas, communities, etc. usually with some regard to aesthetic effect, are constructed especially at a particular time or place.

⇒ The architectural style of buildings at Bombay was usually European. This style of architecture reflected the imperial vision in three ways.

⇒ First, it expressed the British desire to develop a familiar landscape in an alien country. It would make them feel at home in the colony.

⇒ Secondly, the British realised that European styles of architecture would best symbolize their superiority, authority and power.

⇒ Thirdly, the British thought that buildings that looked like European, would clearly show the difference and distance between the colonial master and their Indian subjects.

⇒ The public buildings were usually built in three styles. Two of these followed direct imperial style prevalent in England. The first was called neo-classical or the new classical. Its structure was geometrical, fronted with lofty pillars which were originated from Italy.

⇒ The British felt that the grandeur of imperial Rome could now be used to express the glory of British imperialism in India. The Town Hall building in Bombay was built in this style in 1883.

⇒ Another group of commercial buildings built in the 1860s was known as the Elphinstone circle. It was later named as Horniman Circle after an English editor who courageously supported Indian nationalists. These building had covered arcades at ground level to protect the shoppers and pedestrians from the fierce sun and rain of Bombay.

⇒ The Neo-Gothic style was also used. It was characterized by high pitched roofs, pointed arches and detailed decoration. This style had roots in buildings especially churches built in northern Europe during the medieval period. The most spectacular example of the Neo-Gothic style is the Victoria Terminus (now called Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus).

⇒ A new hybrid architectural style developed in India in the beginning of the twentieth century. It was a style which combined the Indian and European styles. It was called Indo-



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Saracen. The inspiration for this style came from medieval buildings in India. The most famous example of this style is the Gateway of India, built to welcome King George V and Queen Mary in India.

The shortage of space in the city led to the development of a unique type of building called the Chawl. They were the multistoried single room apartments with long open corridors built around a courtyard.

⇒ Architecture has aesthetic effects. The building also expresses the vision of those who built them. The rulers everywhere try to express their power through buildings.

⇒ The architecture also makes us understand the variety of forms in which cultural conflicts are unloaded. The political conflicts between the imperial and national and regional or local, were played out.

⇒ From the late nineteenth century, regional and national taste were developed to counter colonial ideas. So, style has changed and has developed through under process of cultural conflict.

