

UNIT 27 – UPSC - Shift of Imperial Capital

India's History : Modern India : The Imperial capital shifted from Calcutta to Delhi : 1912

The Calcutta



The revolt of 1857 led to the British Crown assuming complete control of the Indian territories. Queen Victoria assumed the Government of India on 1st November 1858. Calcutta became the Royal Capital of India ruled by a Governor General and Viceroy. Queen Victoria became the Empress of India on 1st January 1877 and Calcutta became the Imperial Capital. The Government house was built between 1799-1803 by Lord Wellesley as he thought that India should be governed from a palace.

As the empire's second city, Calcutta's importance continued to increase and Calcutta became a municipality in 1852. Imposing buildings were built and Calcutta became the "city of palaces". The city got a telegraph line in 1851, railway service in 1854. The University of Calcutta was established in 1857. Public sewerage system in 1859, filtered water supply in 1860, horse drawn tram carriages in 1873, the Hogg Market in 1874, telephone exchange in 1882, electricity supply in 1899, followed by electric trams in 1902. Calcutta grew as an important Asian trading center with the East India Company having a monopoly in jute, tea, saltpetre, indigo and opium.

The Delhi



Delhi, the eternal capital city of India, has had a mixed fortune in governance since the decline of the Mughals. The aftermath of the events of 1857 reduced it to a provincial town of the Punjab, and amenities came to it because of the concerns for the British troops and officials stationed in and around Shahjahanabad, the Walled City. The first municipality of Delhi was created in 1863, ironically in order to "raise funds for the police and for conservancy and such other funds as the members may think fit to expend on works of improvements, education and other local objects..."



Yet, the city charmed Queen Victoria; she held a durbar here upon assuming the title of the Empress of India in 1877, though Calcutta was the capital of British India. Before the durbar was held in 1911 to commemorate the shifting of the capital of India to Delhi, Curzon too held a vice regal durbar in 1903. Obviously, the construction of the new Imperial capital in Delhi created a mixed structure for city governance in which the Central government had strong control.