

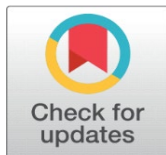
EKAMRA KSHETRA AND THE TEMPLE TOWN TRADITION OF ODISHA: A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of temple towns in Odisha, particularly focusing on Ekamra Kshetra, highlights the intricate relationship between urbanization and cultural heritage. Temples serve as sacred spaces, with their architectural styles reflecting the region's historical and spiritual significance. The study traces the development of Bhubaneswar, known as the 'City of Temples,' from its ancient roots to its modern urban landscape, emphasizing the impact of urban growth on its historic character. The research identifies the challenges posed by rapid urbanization, including the erosion of traditional identities and the need for sustainable urban planning. By examining the architectural and cultural transformations within Ekamra Kshetra, the study underscores the importance of preserving Odisha's rich temple heritage amidst contemporary development pressures.

Keywords: Ekamra Kshetra, Temple, Odisha, Historical and Cultural

1. INTRODUCTION

Temple towns are generally developed in a manner that aligns with spiritual aspirations and functional planning based on rituals. In India, historically, many cities have evolved from the religious core and continue to serve as urban areas with religious activities as prime activity. Currently, there is no suitable definition of "temple town" in existing literature. For this research study, a temple town is defined as an urban area that has evolved around one or more temples or temple-related beliefs and continues to attract significant tourist traffic. It is important to

note that some cities have their core temples but do not currently have a prominent deity for worship or religious pilgrimage. Additionally, there are cities that have lost their significance as sacred centers and are developing primarily as administrative capitals rather than as destinations for spiritual pilgrimage [Rajakumari et al. \(2019\)](#). This is still evident in city like Bhubaneswar. Conversely, the Lingaraja Temple, Rajarani Temple in Ekamra Khestra, and Jagannath Temple in Puri continue to thrive as sacred tourist destinations.

Urbanization is occurring rapidly in the historic cores of Odisha's old cities, largely due to the absence of strict planning regulations and urban design guidelines. Recent modern developments in these areas are significantly impacting their original character. As a result, the unique identity of these places is gradually disappearing. This research aims to explore the effects of urbanization on these temple towns, reveal the changes in the built environment, and assess the need for improved physical and socio-cultural infrastructure in these heritage zones.

2. BACKGROUND

The state of Odisha, formerly known as Orissa, is situated on India's eastern coast and is bordered to the east by the Bay of Bengal. Ancient temples, colorful festivals, traditional arts, and a wide variety of fauna may all be found there. It is renowned for its rich cultural legacy, history, and scenic beauty. Odisha's traditional villages have been profoundly impacted by rapid urbanization, which has brought with it both opportunities and challenges. Modern infrastructure is invading historic sites due to urban expansion, endangering their structural integrity and cultural relevance. Land use changes, transportation congestion, and population growth all put strain on historic regions in cities like Puri, Cuttack, and Bhubaneswar. Traditional ways of life are frequently lost as a result of this progress, and intangible cultural heritage is eroded. But, if well managed, urbanization can also have positive effects for conservation efforts, such as better infrastructure and more economic opportunities. To ensure that modernity does not come at the expense of cultural heritage, a balanced strategy integrating sustainable urban design and active community involvement is necessary for the effective preservation of Odisha's historic settlements. The famous historic towns of Odisha was 1)Viraja nagari – Jajpur 2) Ekamra prastha – Bhubaneswar, 3) Sri Purushottam Puri – Puri, 4) Konakama – Konark, 5) Kosala – Sambalpur, 6) Kongoda – Ganjam, 7) Utkala – Cuttack. [Mishra \(1989\)](#)

Figure 1



Figure 1 Map to Show the Historic Settlements in Odisha

Source Authors

3. STUDY AREA

The state capital of Odisha, Bhubaneswar, has been an important center of religion and culture for more than two millennia. Known as the "City of Temples," Bhubaneswar was formerly a part of the Kalinga monarchy. Many temples dot the city's landscape, the most prominent of which is the 11th-century Lingaraja Temple, a masterwork of Kalinga architecture. The historical significance of the city as a hub for Hindu worship and innovative architecture is reflected in these temples. [Garnayak \(2007\)](#)

Figure 2



Figure 2 Odisha and Bhubaneswar

The legendary Kalinga War occurred in the region during Ashoka's rule in the third century BCE. Following this event, Ashoka adopted Buddhism, which had a

profound impact on the religious and cultural fabric of the area. Known as the "Temple City of India," Bhubaneswar is a significant religious center that is well-known for its historic temples and rich cultural legacy. The city is home to more than 700 temples, the most well-known of which is the Lingaraj Temple, which honors Lord Shiva and features Kalinga architecture. Other important religious locations are the Rajarani Temple, the Mukteshwar Temple, and the Ananta Vasudeva Temple. The temples of Bhubaneswar draw both tourists and believers because they provide a spiritual and architectural window into the past. The city is a major hub for religious events and pilgrimages because of its unique combination of spirituality, history, and culture. As a religious hub, Bhubaneswar kept growing, drawing tourists and academics from various parts of India.

When the city was selected in 1948 to serve as the capital of the newly created state of Odisha, it experienced a dramatic metamorphosis in the middle of the 20th century. The new capital was to be designed by German architect Otto Königsberger, who created a contemporary urban layout with wide streets, green areas, and administrative buildings. With this construction, Bhubaneswar officially changed from being a medieval temple town to an urban planning hub.

Bhubaneswar has seen a rapid increase in modernization and urbanization in recent years. With the presence of numerous esteemed establishments like the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), it has become a significant center for both education and the economy. The IT industry in the city has expanded, drawing capital and creating job possibilities. Bhubaneswar has made progress in the development of its infrastructure, including new commercial spaces, contemporary residential complexes, and better transportation networks, in tandem with its economic expansion.

Even with these developments, Bhubaneswar has been able to maintain its cultural legacy. The city's distinct fusion of heritage and advancement is highlighted by the presence of historic temples and contemporary facilities. Bhubaneswar is regarded as one of India's smart cities today, successfully juggling modern urban development with the preservation of its rich cultural history. The city is still thriving today.

Figure 3

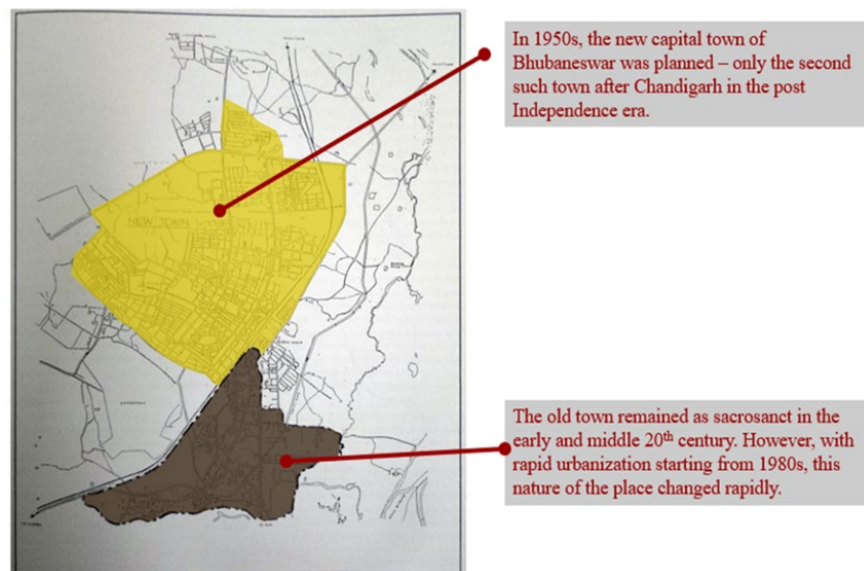


Figure 3 Map of the City of Bhubaneswar -old and new town; Source: EKAMRA KSHETRA

4. BHUBANESWAR – HISTORIC GROUP SETTLEMENTS

Famous for its ancient group settlements, Bhubaneswar has a rich and varied cultural legacy in places like Dhauli, Khandagiri, Ekamra Kshetra, and Sisupalgarh. Every one of these locations provides a distinct window into the rich past and magnificent architecture of Odisha. Khandagiri: Famous for its rock-cut caves that date back to the first century BCE, Khandagiri is also known for the nearby Udayagiri hills. King Kharavela of the Mahameghavahana dynasty ordered the construction of these caverns for Jain monks. The stunning sculptures and inscriptions in the meticulously carved caves, like the well-known Rani Gumpha (Queen's Cave), offer insights into the Jain religion and the sociopolitical context of the time. The area's rich spiritual and cultural history is attested to by the caverns.

Figure 4

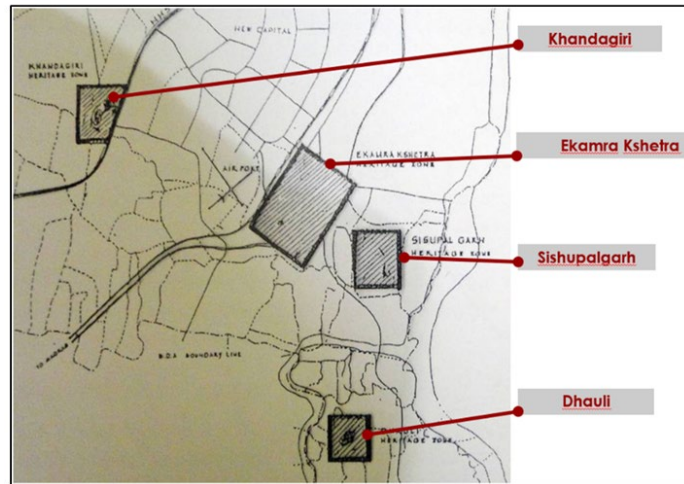


Figure 4 Map Showing the Ancient Group Settlements in Bhubaneswar

Source

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/325904510_The_Chitrakarini_Temple_of_Bhubaneswar_Odisha_India_An_Investigative_Field_Study

- 1) **Ekamra Kshetra:** Known for its concentration of historic temples, Ekamra Kshetra, the old town of Bhubaneswar, has been dubbed the "City of Temples." The exquisite 11th-century Lingaraja Temple, devoted to Lord Shiva, is located in this region. The temple complex, with its soaring spire, elaborate carvings, and expansive courtyard, is a prime example of Kalinga architecture. Other noteworthy temples in Ekamra Kshetra include the Rajarani Temple, distinguished by its red and yellow sandstone structure, and the Mukteswara Temple, renowned for its elaborate carvings and elaborate archway. Because of its historical significance, this region is a hub for religious and cultural events, honoring the city's long history. [Mishra \(1989\)](#)
- 2) **Sisupalgarh:** One of India's biggest and best-preserved ancient fortifications, Sisupalgarh is an old fortified city that dates back to the third century BCE. A sophisticated urban colony with thoughtfully designed streets, imposing entrances, and cutting-edge drainage systems is revealed by archaeological investigations. The city's rectangular layout and fortified walls were purposefully created to highlight the engineering

prowess and urban planning abilities of its residents. Sisupalgarh provides an enlightening glimpse into Odisha's pre-urban history and its importance as a significant political and cultural hub.

- 3) **Dhuli:** Situated on the banks of the Daya River, Dhuli is a location with significant religious and historical significance. It is most known for being connected to the Kalinga War (261 BCE), which turned Emperor Ashoka from a conqueror to a Buddhist supporter. The Shanti Stupa (Peace Pagoda), built in the 1970s by the Japan Buddha Sangha and the Kalinga Nippon Buddha Sangha, is a distinguishing feature of the Dhuli hills. Reflecting Ashoka's adoption of Buddhism, the rock edicts of Ashoka, written on a rock next to the stupa, promote the values of dharma (righteousness) and non-violence. Dhuli is still a popular destination for pilgrims and a representation of harmony and tranquility.

5. EKAMRA KHESTRA-THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The history of Bhubaneswar begins with the conquest of Kalinga by Ashoka in 261 B.C. Before the 3rd century B.C., the history of Bhubaneswar is not well-documented. However, archaeological findings from the Neolithic, chalcolithic, and early historical periods indicate that humans inhabited this area as early as 2000 B.C. Discoveries of ring stones, microliths, and black-and-red pottery support this assertion. The excavation of Sishupalgarh conducted in 1948 provided significant insights into its chronological framework, indicating a timeline that extends from 300 B.C. to 350 A.D. However, a recent re-evaluation of specific pottery types discovered during these excavations, along with a comparative analysis of similar pottery found in South India, suggests the possibility of revising the earlier date for Sishupalgarh beyond the previously established 300 B.C. The particular type of pottery under consideration is known as black and red ware.

Little is known regarding the ruler of ancient Kalinga during the period of the Asokan conquest. However, it is established that Sishupalgarh served as the ancient capital of the Kalinga dynasty at that time. Following the liberation from Magadhan domination, the Chedi dynasty emerged as the next significant ruling power in ancient Orissa. Kharavela, recognized as the most prominent monarch of the Chedi dynasty, presided over a brief yet impactful reign lasting 13 years, as documented in his Hatigumpha inscription located at the Udayagiri caves near Bhubaneswar. Sishupalgarh, along with the nearby historic site of Old Bhubaneswar, likely constituted the primary capital region during the reign of the Chedi dynasty. It is challenging to find evidence regarding rulers following the 1st century B.C. until the emergence of the Sailodbhavas. However, through archaeological findings, it is possible to reconstruct the history of Bhubaneswar during this period. Based on the discovery of sculptures, pottery, coins, and other artifacts, it can be reasonably inferred that post the 1st century B.C., Bhubaneswar was influenced by external powers such as the Kushanas, the Murundas, and the Guptas, in addition to the local vigraha rulers of Toshali.

The golden era of cultural history in this region spans from the late 6th century A.D. to A.D. 1568. During this period, Bhubaneswar was administered by several prominent dynasties, including the Sailodbhavas (A.D. 575 – A.D. 700), the Bhaumakaras (A.D. 736 – A.D. 940), the Suryavamsis (A.D. 1435 – A.D. 1540), and the Chalukyas (A.D. 1559 – A.D. 1568). Subsequently, Orissa lost its independence as administrative control of the coastal district transitioned to the Mughals, the Sultans of Bengal, the Marathas, and ultimately the British, which continued until 1947. In conclusion, it can be observed that although *Ekamra Khestra* Bhubaneswar

diminished in its significance as the capital city after the 1st Century B.C., it subsequently achieved recognition as a prominent Saiva center, evolving into a city renowned for its numerous temples. This transformation established it as a significant pilgrimage destination, a status it continues to uphold in the present day. Concurrently, the establishment of New Bhubaneswar has resulted in its designation as the new capital of the modern state of Odisha.

Figure 5



Figure 5 Lingaraja Temple lithograph by James Fergusson and Thomas Dibdin, in 1847| Columbia University

Source <https://puratattva.in/lingaraja-temple-climax-of-the-kalinga-architecture/>

Ekamra Kshetra encompasses the historical area of the old city of Bhubaneswar, which serves as the focal point for temple architecture. This region is recognized as a significant Hindu pilgrimage site. As per the Anantavasudeva Inscription of Paramarddi, *Ekamra* was a sacred area "...adorned with hundreds of mango-groves, wherein exists a single Devakula [temple] surrounded by numerous temples." The 13th-century *Ekamra Purana* describes a sacred area known as *Ekamra Kshetra*, which spans a circumference of 10 miles, bordered by prominent landmarks such as Khandagiri Hills, Kundalesvara Temple, Balhadevi Temple, and Bahirangesvara Temple, with the Lingaraj Temple positioned at its center. This sacred *Kshetra* also encompasses an inner circle defined by the Meghesvara Temple and Sundaresvara Temple. The *Ekamra Kshetra* comprises 45 villages organized into eight sacred precincts, each featuring water bodies, temples, shrines, tirthas, and ritual procession routes linked to the Lingaraj Temple. While Lingaraj Temple served as the focal point of *Ekamra Kshetra*, the historical town of Bhubaneswar oriented towards the Bindusagar Tank situated in close proximity to the temple. A geomantic approach was implemented in the town's planning, carefully considering topography, the location and orientation of water bodies, land use zoning, and other factors. The overall structure of the town reflects an organic adaptation of the Mandala concept rather than a strict geometric design. Tanks such as Bindusagar, Devipadahara Tank, and Kapilesvara Tank are imbued with religious significance and are regarded as sacred sites.

Ekamra Kshetra, known as the "Temple City," is remarkable for its concentration of ancient monuments, featuring around 700 temples that showcase

the evolution of Kalinga architecture, culminating in the renowned Lingaraj Temple. Architectural historian James Fergusson praised it as "one of the finest examples of a purely Hindu temple in India." The site also exemplifies meticulous urban planning, integrating water bodies and a structured road system based on the Mandala concept. *Ekamra Kshetra* highlights a blend of religious traditions, including Brahminical, Buddhist, and Jain systems, with Brahminical faiths like Saiva, Sakta, and Vaisnava demonstrating advancements in architecture and urban planning. The temples serve as vital centers for cultural traditions, rituals, and festivals, aided by the longstanding Sevayats (Servitors) and their communities surrounding the temples.

Figure 6



Figure 6 Lingaraja Temple by Martin Hurlimann in 1928| Columbia University

Source <https://puratattva.in/lingaraja-temple-climax-of-the-kalinga-architecture/>

6. EKAMRA KHESTRA-THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Bhubaneswar, a city renowned for its rich history and architectural wonders, has undergone several phases of development, each distinguished by unique group settlements that over the ages have reflected the cultural, religious, and political significance of the city. These communities' development can be linked to numerous significant historical periods:

1) Ancient Period (3rd Century BCE - 1st Century CE)

Sisupalgarh: Dating back to the third century BCE, Sisupalgarh is one of the oldest known urban settlements in Bhubaneswar. This fortified city, with its rectangular form, imposing entrances, and intricate drainage systems, is a prime example of superior urban design. During the Mahameghavahana dynasty's tenure, archaeological digs have shown a prosperous metropolis that functioned as a significant political and cultural center.

2) Early Historic Period (1st Century BCE - 3rd Century CE)

Khandagiri and Udayagiri caverns: In the first century BCE, King Kharavela ordered the construction of these rock-cut caverns for Jain monks. The elaborate carvings and inscriptions on the cave walls offer important insights into the

religious and cultural customs of the era. The intricate sculptures and architectural aspects of the Rani Gumpha, also known as Queen's Cave, are especially noteworthy.

3) Medieval Period (7th Century CE - 12th Century CE)

Ekamra Kshetra: Bhubaneswar, and especially the Ekamra Kshetra region, became an important religious centre in the Middle Ages. Many temples were built during this time, the most well-known of which is the 11th-century Lingaraja Temple. The temple complex is a prime example of the Kalinga architectural style, which is distinguished by tall spires, fine sculptures, and complex rites. Other noteworthy temples from this era are the Rajarani Temple, which is distinguished by its distinctive sandstone structure, and the Mukteswara Temple, which is well-known for its elaborate arches.

Figure 7

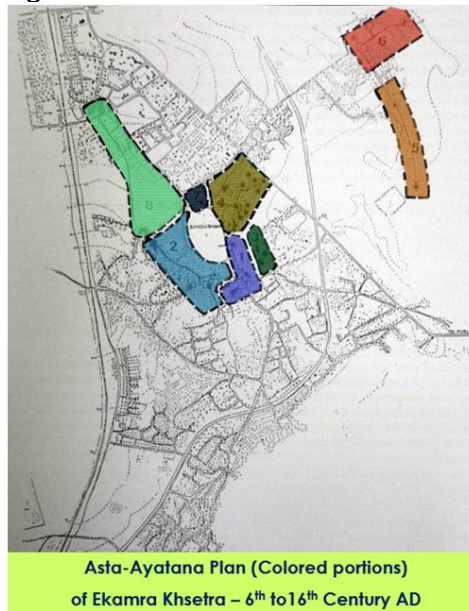


Figure 7 Asta Ayatana Plan

Name of Ayatana	Important Monuments
1 st Ayatana	Ananta Vasudeva, Lingaraj, Sahasralinga Tank
2 nd Ayatana	Papanasini Kunda, Yameswara, Venu – Kichaka
3 rd Ayatana	Ganga Yamuna Kunda, Mukhteswara
4 th Ayatana	Rajarani, Kedareswara, Gouri Kunda
5 th Ayatana	Brahma Kunda, Brahmeswara
6 th Ayatana	Megheswara, Kapalamochaneswara
7 th Ayatana	Uttreshwara, Bhimeswara
8 th Ayatana	Rama Kunda, Lakshmaneswara

7. ANALYSIS, DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

Ekamra Kshetra – Development of Astayatan

1) The Ekamra Kshetra Chronology

The history of the Ekamra Kshetra neighborhood of Bhubaneswar is extensive, spanning multiple centuries. This area, which is well-known for having a high concentration of temples, displays how Odisha's architecture and culture have

changed throughout time. This is a summary of Ekamra Kshetra in chronological order:

Figure 8

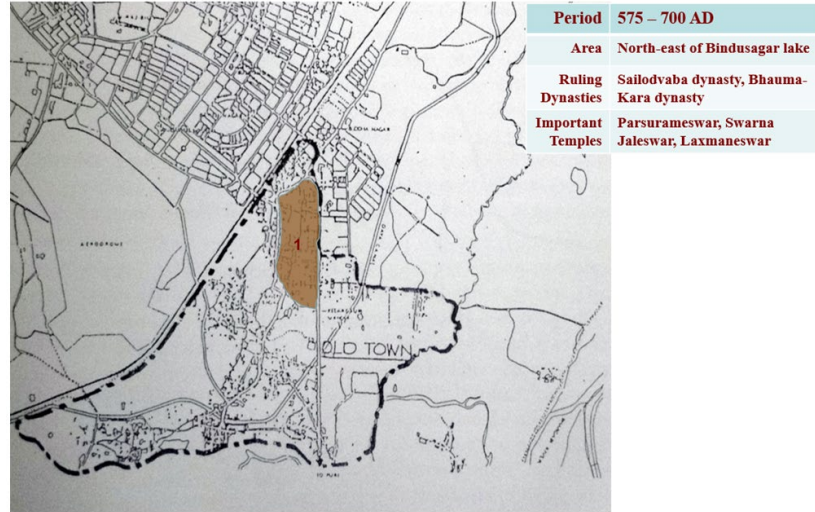


Figure 8 Ekamra Kshetra Stage 1

2) Early Historic Period (6th Century CE - 8th Century CE)

- **Important Temple Constructions:** In the seventh and eighth centuries CE, the Mukteswara Temple, which is regarded as a masterpiece of Odishan architecture, was built. The development of the mature Kalinga architectural style can be seen in this temple, which features an outstanding torana (arched entryway) and intricate sculptures.

Figure 9

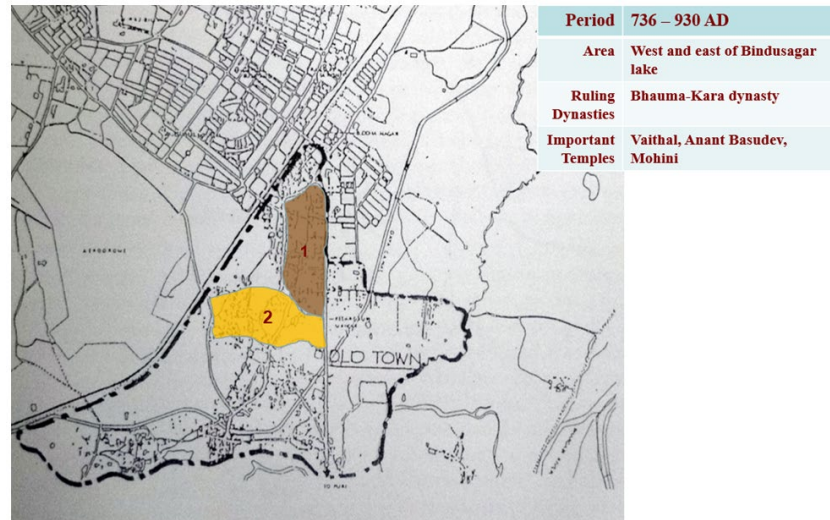


Figure 9 Ekamra Kshetra Stage 2

3) Medieval Period (8th Century CE - 12th Century CE)

- **9th–10th century CE:** Several minor temples are constructed, including the Parsurameswar Temple, which demonstrates the intricate details of temple building and sculpture as they evolve.

- 11th century CE: Work on the Lingaraja Temple begins. This is the biggest and most well-known temple in Ekamra Kshetra. This temple, which honors Lord Shiva, becomes a hub for devotion and pilgrimage and represents the pinnacle of Kalinga architecture.
- The Rajarani Temple was constructed in the twelfth century CE. It is distinct from the other temples in Bhubaneswar due to its intricate figurative carvings and unusual red and yellow sandstone.

Figure 10

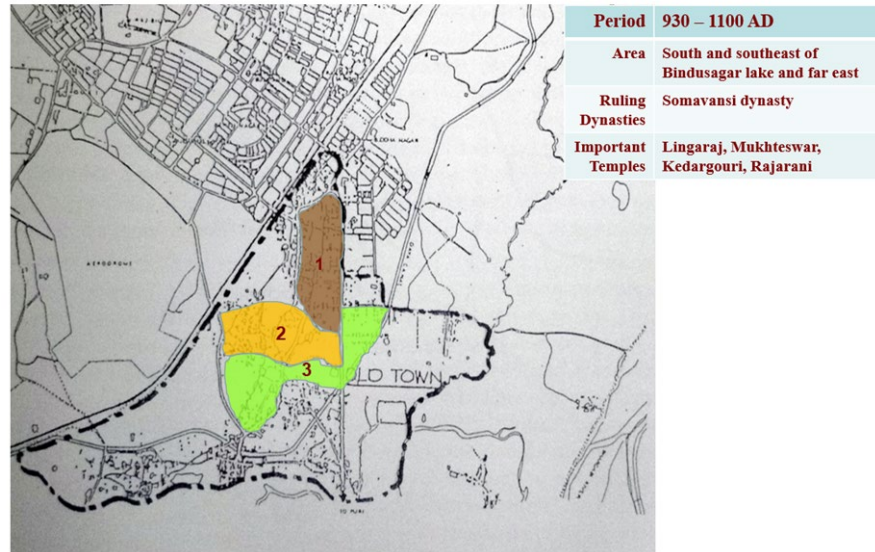


Figure 10 Ekamra Kshetra Stage 3

Figure 11

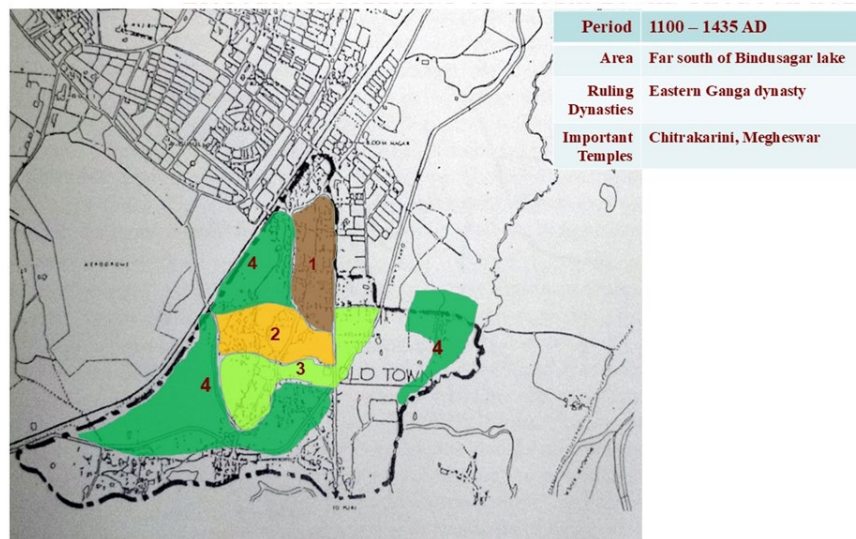


Figure 11 Ekamra Kshetra Stage 4

4) Post-Medieval Period (12th Century CE - 16th Century CE)

Remaining Religious Significance: Ekamra Kshetra is still very important religiously, even though the number of new temples being built is decreasing. The temples are still used as active places of worship, and the region is where older buildings are maintained and occasionally renovated.

- Cultural Renaissance: With rituals, festivals, and customs being actively kept and upheld, the temples of Ekamra Kshetra are essential to Odisha's cultural renaissance.

Figure 12

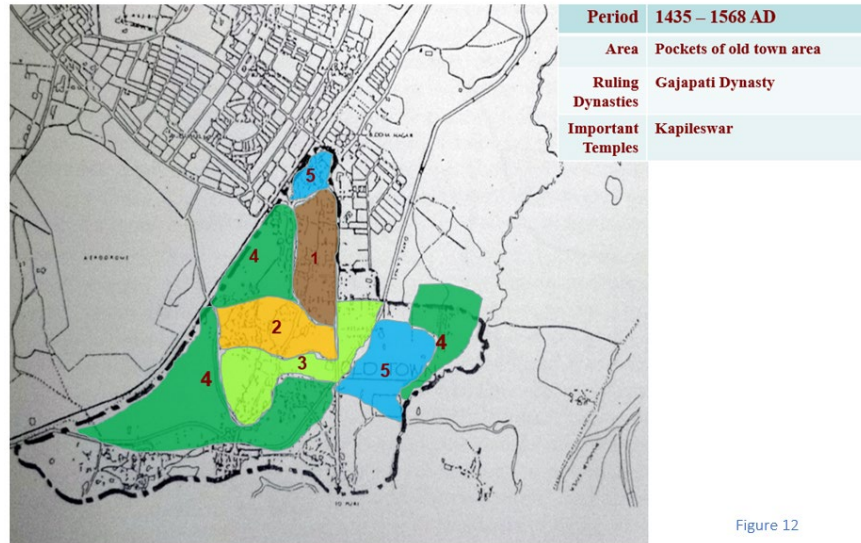


Figure 12

Figure 12 Ekamra Kshetra Stage 5

5) Colonial Period (19th Century CE - Mid-20th Century CE)

- British Administration: There is very little direct action in Bhubaneswar, including Ekamra Kshetra, during British control. Local communities still acknowledge and protect the area's religious and cultural legacy, nevertheless.
- Archaeological Interest: Historians and archaeologists are drawn to the temples, which prompts research and documentation that serves to conserve and advance knowledge of Odisha's architectural legacy.

6) Modern Period (Post-Independence 1947 - Present)

- 1948: The newly constituted state of Odisha names Bhubaneswar as its capital. Planned urban development is implemented in the area, fusing contemporary infrastructure with its ancient landmarks.
- Conservation Initiatives: With a greater emphasis on conserving Ekamra Kshetra's historical legacy, conservation initiatives are being undertaken to preserve the temples' structural integrity and cultural relevance.
- Travel and Pilgrimage: Ekamra Kshetra is becoming a popular travel and pilgrimage site. In order to maintain the viability of the historic temples and their customs in the face of contemporary development, the state government and local authorities market the region as a heritage site.
- The Smart City effort, which includes Bhubaneswar, includes goals to improve urban living while honoring and protecting its historical zones, such as Ekamra Kshetra.

Figure 13

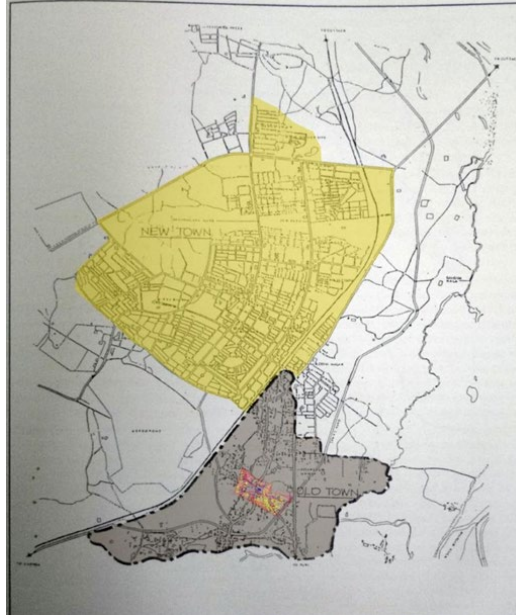


Figure 13 Ekamra Kshetra, Source: Ekamra Heritage report

8. DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW CAPITAL TOWN OF BHUBANESWAR

An important period in the history of Odisha and post-independence urban planning in India was marked by the growth of the new town of Bhubaneswar in the middle of the 20th century. The necessity to replace the older, more crowded town of Cuttack with a new capital for the state of Odisha was the driving force behind this transition.

9. INITIAL STRATEGY AND VISION

1948: Following Indian independence, Odisha needed a new capital large enough to handle contemporary administrative tasks and allow for further expansion. The historical significance, strategic position, and potential for growth of Bhubaneswar led to its selection.

Otto Königsberger's Master Plan: The new town was to be designed by German urban planner and architect Otto Königsberger. His idea of a contemporary, well-functioning metropolis with an orderly urban structure was paramount. Wide streets, lots of greenery, and separate areas for business, residential, administrative, and recreational use were all included in the concept. The goal of Königsberger's design was to create an effective, well-structured urban environment by incorporating modern planning ideas.

Figure 14

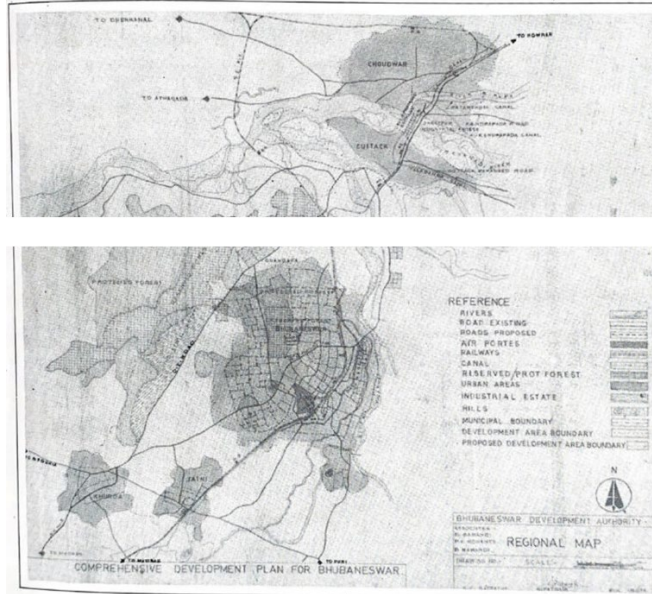


Figure 14 Map of Old Bhubaneswar

Source <https://questionofcities.org/how-bhubaneswars-master-plan-was-overtaken-by-unsustainable-development/>

Figure 15

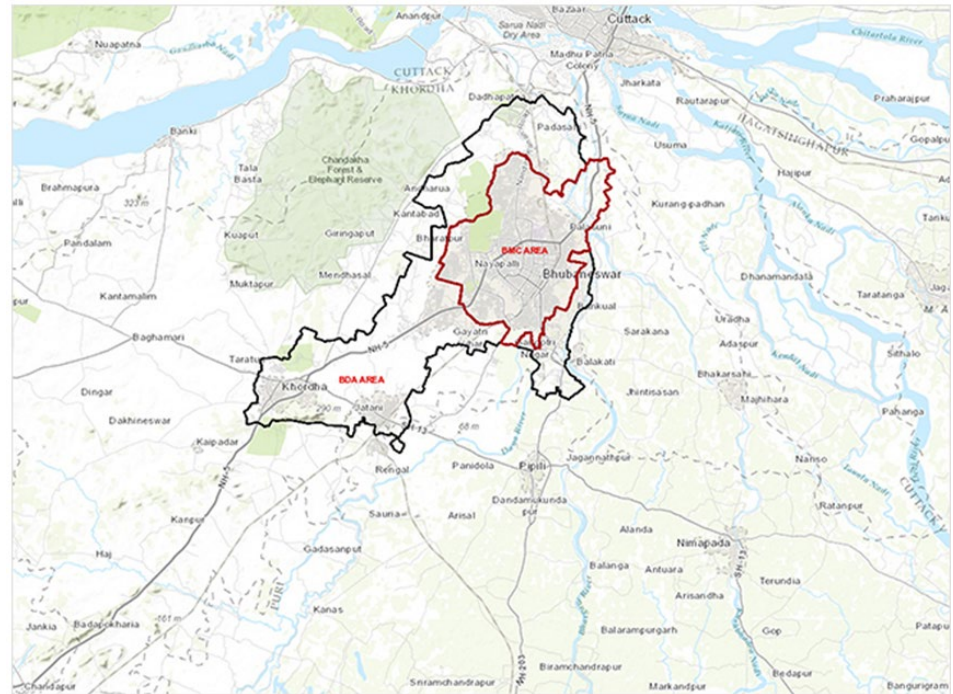


Figure 15 Present-day map of Bhubaneswar

Figure 16

Period	Area	Ruling Dynasty	Important Temples
575 – 700 AD	North-east of Bindusagar lake	Sailodvaba dynasty, Bhauma-Kara dynasty	Parsurameswar, Swarna Jaleswar, Laxmaneswar
736 – 930 AD	West and east of Bindusagar lake	Bhauma-Kara dynasty	Vaithal, Anant Basudev, Mohini
930 – 1100 AD	South and southeast of Bindusagar lake and far east	Somavansi dynasty	Lingaraj, Mukhteswar, Kedargouri, Rajarani
1100 – 1435 AD	Far south of Bindusagar lake	Eastern Ganga dynasty	Chitrakarini, Megheswar
1435 – 1568 AD	Pockets of old town area	Gajapati Dynasty	Kapileswar

Figure 16 Historic Settlement of Bhubaneswar through the Ages

10. IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

1950s: During the first stage of development, government buildings, housing for government workers, and necessary infrastructure were built. Some of the first buildings constructed were the Assembly House, the Secretariat Building, and other administrative offices. The groundwork for Bhubaneswar's development as an operational state capital was laid during this time.

1960s–1970s: The city grew as new public amenities, medical facilities, and educational institutions were built. During this period, prominent establishments such as the Capital Hospital and Utkal University were established, which helped Bhubaneswar become a center for healthcare and education. The creation of residential areas like Saheed Nagar and Bapuji Nagar gave the expanding population somewhere to live.

1980s–1990s: Bhubaneswar kept expanding while emphasizing on enhancing connectivity and infrastructure. Major road, bridge, and public transportation infrastructure projects improved the city's internal mobility and access to other regions of Odisha. The development of industrial regions like Mancheswar and Chandaka accelerated employment creation and economic expansion.

11. THE SMART CITY INITIATIVE IN THE MODERN ERA

From the 2000s to the present: Bhubaneswar saw a tremendous increase in modernization and urbanization at the turn of the century. There was a sharp increase in the erection of multiplexes, malls, and high-rise structures in the city. With the creation of Info city and other technology parks, the IT industry started to thrive, drawing investments and generating job possibilities.

In 2015, Bhubaneswar was chosen as one of the initial 20 Indian cities to be built under the Smart City Mission. The project sought to improve the efficiency, sustainability, and livability of the city. A strong public transportation system, sophisticated traffic control, e-governance services, and the construction of green spaces and public areas were among the major initiatives.

12. PRESERVATION OF CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Despite the speed at which modernization was advancing, Bhubaneswar's rich cultural legacy was preserved. Initiatives were made to combine cultural conservation with urban growth, and historic sites such as Ekamra Kshetra were preserved. Bhubaneswar's reputation as a center of culture was upheld by the city's temples, customary celebrations, and cultural events.

13. HUB FOR RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Prestigious universities like the National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER), the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), and the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar are located in this educational powerhouse. These establishments have established the city as a hub for research and higher education, drawing scholars and students from all around the nation. Going forward, Bhubaneswar wants to strike a balance between sustainability and expansion. The improvement of infrastructure, raising living standards, and encouraging inclusive growth are the main objectives of the city's development goals. To make Bhubaneswar a model for urban development in India, smart city initiatives are still evolving.

The evolution of Bhubaneswar from a medieval temple town to a contemporary metropolis is a prime example of well-thought-out urban development. The city's journey positions it as a dynamic, forward-thinking, and energetic metropolitan hub, demonstrating its ability to embrace modernization while conserving its rich cultural and historical heritage.

14. CONCLUSION

The historical context reveals that Ekamra Kshetra, along with nearby sites such as Khandagiri-Udaygiri, Sishupalgarh, and Dhauli, represents a unique historical heritage of significant archaeological value. While it continues to be an important Shaiva pilgrimage center, it has not been a major urban center since the Mauryan period. With the establishment of the new Bhubaneswar as the capital of Odisha, the old town has faced increased threats from urbanization, largely due to a lack of balanced planning for the new city. This lopsided development has been exacerbated by the low prioritization of the old town area.

The proliferation of diverse sects within Hinduism has led to intricate processes of transformation and adaptation in the cultural landscape. This exceptional sacred landscape persists to the present day, exhibiting a remarkable array of resources that reflect various typologies. The objectives of this research are to examine the evolutionary processes and the dependent variables associated with Ekamrakshetra, situating this analysis within the framework of various historical periods and in relation to the dynamics of urban development and to evaluate how urbanization affects the distinctive characteristics of Ekamra Kshetra's historic urban core. The study aimed to assess the impact of urbanization on the areas surrounding the Ekamra Kshetra precinct, which is an urban core rich in cultural and architectural heritage. Additionally, the study sought to examine how these changes impact the cultural and architectural identity of the city. The studies conducted indicate that the increase in population, commercial activities and shifts in land-use patterns are affecting the traditional character of the area. Historic buildings, which were once constructed using locally sourced materials, are

increasingly being replaced or modified with modern construction techniques. The spatial layout and street character of the Ekamra Kshetra area, once defined by low-rise, traditional buildings, are now being transformed into mixed-use or fully commercial spaces. Unfortunately, there has been little to no effort to conserve the cultural heritage of the city.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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