

A Study of Geographical Significance and Evolution of the City of Cuttack

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Abstract: *To study any particular city or town, to be familiar with physical dimensions played a phenomenal role to demonstrate the particular area and land settings. Here, the present study signifies the physical aspect and evolution of the study of Cuttack city. Which was the premier and capital city of Odisha from ancient to the colonial period and lastly that the state of Odisha, before the capital was shifted to Bhubaneswar during the early fifties of the twentieth century. However, until now the city embraces its position as the cultural and commercial capital of Odisha.*

Keywords: *Geographical Significance, Evolution, Physical aspects, Physical dimensions*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Cuttack was the capital city of Odisha, is situated between 20° 27' to 20° 29' N Latitude and 85° 50' to 85° 55' E Longitude, occupies a commanding position in the coastal belt of Odisha. The city apex of the Mahanadi Delta, bounded by the Mahanadi on the north and by its distributary, the Kathajori on the South, has originated from River Mahanadi at the Western part of Cuttack City near Bidanasi and provide the city with a natural waterfront which is very rare for any town in India. Both the rivers remain dry in the summer except for the main channel of Mahanadi upstream of the Anicut. During the rainy season, the rivers are often flooded.

The location of Cuttack on the National Highway No.5 (N.H.5) connecting Chennai and Kolkata gives it the necessary access to the metropolitan cities of the country. Both the lifelines of southern and eastern India, the National Highway No.5 and Kolkata-Chennai Railway line of the South-Eastern Railways passes through this city. So far as the regional transportation system is concerned, Cuttack is connected with Sambalpur, Rourkela, and other important towns of the north Orissa through the National Highway No.42, and also is connected with the railway. The Taladanda Canal and Cuttack-Paradip road connect this place with Paradip Port. Other important places in the vicinity of this city are Puri which is 100 km., towards the southeast. Barang a small industrial township about 15 km to its south, and Choudwar is only 18 km. to the north. Choudwar is fast developing as a major industrial center and a Satellite town of Cuttack City. With the recent opening of Mahanadi and Birupa bridges on National Highway No.5 and the barrages over the two rivers, the importance of Cuttack-Choudwar road had increased considerably. The establishment of an industrial estate and other industrial units at Jagatpur has further increased the importance of the Northern areas of Cuttack. The ring road on the left bank of the river Kathajori revitalizes the northwestern portion of Bidanasi. This gives a new lease of life to the city of Cuttack by providing excellent approach roads on either side of the city and also to the delta apex. Bhubaneswar the capital city is only 25 km. from Cuttack towards the northwest.

Evolution of the city of Cuttack

Cuttack city can be discovered from a geological standpoint connecting Mahanadi deltaic evolution with the human activity, which had collected, scientifically analyzed, and synthesized to arrive at a mutually acceptable age of the city. It is believed that the delta has come to its present shape, through an evolutionary process over the last 1000 years by the Mahanadi river from a vast catchment area lying in the eastern Madhya Pradesh and Western Orissa.

The word "Cuttack" (anglicized version) is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Kataka', etymologically means a cantonment, the fort, the capital, or the seat of the Government protected by the army.

The city was started probably as a military Cantonment because of its impregnable situation, and owing to its location between the rivers namely Mahanadi and Kathajori. Cuttack was originally known as "Abhinaba Varanasi Kataka". On the analogy of Varanasi between Varuna and Asi.

Though, there is no authentic historical evidence about the foundation of Cuttack. 'Madala Panji' of the Lord Jagannath Temple, Chronicle, throws some light on this problem; but its accounts are based more on

tradition than on historical facts. Cuttack, which is one of the oldest cities of India and the capital city of Odisha for almost nine centuries was built as a military cantonment in 989 A.D. by the king Nrupa Keshari as stated by the distinguished historian Stirling.

The importance of Kataka rapidly increased after the occupation of Orissa by Chodaganga Deva early in the 12th century A.D. In 1135 A.D. he transferred his capital from Kalinganagar to Kataka which was then considered to be the centralized place of his far-flung empire. King Anaga Bhima Deva III (1200 AD- 1238 AD) built a new city called "Varanasi Katak" on the left bank of the river Mahanadi opposite to Choudwar and transferred his headquarters from the Adhinava Yajatinagar (Choudwar- Katak) to "Ahinava Baranasi Katak". He constructed the Barabati fort and converted it into a Military Cantonment. Anaga Bhima Deva-III-founded the "Abinava Varanasi Kataka" (Bidanasi) on the south bank of the river Mahanadi some times during the period from 1211 AD to 1229 AD.

Cuttack continued to be the capital of different Hindu dynasties, the region of the last independent king of Orissa, Mukunda Deva who was defeated by the Afgan king Soloman, the king of Bengal, in the year 1568. On the eve of the Afgan occupation, Cuttack was found to be well guarded and heavily fortified capital. The sultan of Bengal also selected Cuttack, as his capital for Orissa. However, Afghans were not destined to rule Orissa and they were soon ousted by the Mughals in the year 1590. Cuttack continued to be the capital of Mughal- Orissa until the Marahattas occupied it. During the Mughal period, several public buildings were constructed out of which the Juma-Musjid at Balubazar and Kadamrasul in Daragha Bazar are still in existence.

By the middle of the 18th century, the Mughal power in Orissa dwindled considerably and in the year 1747, Orissa practically came under the occupation of Marahattas. During this period Cuttack greatly prospered as an emporium of trade and became the central market of exchange between the Marahattas of Nagpur territory and the English Merchants of Bengal and northern India. The area of the town had also extended considerably and the Chauliaganja area where the Marahattas had their Military camp for protecting the highways passing towards the north-south is an extension during that period.

In the year 1803, Cuttack was occupied by the British, and during this period the Taladanda Canal, the Kendrapara Canal, Machhagaon canal, the Gobari, and the Pattamundai canals were all constructed, by the East India Irrigation Company, as early as 1862. In the river Mahanadi, three separate weirs were built which were known as the Naraj, Mahanadi, and Birupa weirs.

Along with these waterways, roads were also opened up during the later part of the 19th century. Like-wise the Jagannath Trunk Road which runs from Midnapore to Ganjam via Cuttack, the Cuttack Sambalpur Road, the Cuttack Chandabali road which runs via Kendrapara, the Cuttack- Taladanda Road which lines up Cuttack with the false point. The railway line of the Bengal Nagpur

Railway (B.N.R) was constructed through the coastal region of Orissa as it connects Cuttack directly with Chennai and Kolkata and provided enormous opportunities for trade and commerce, in-land communication; thus creating facilities to develop healthy growth of the town.

To promote the people, the first Govt. English School was established in Cuttack in 1841. This was later converted into a full-fledged College i.e. Ravenshaw College after the name of Mr. P.E. Ravenshaw. The Orissa Medical School was opened in 1875 following the establishment of Cuttack General Hospital in 1874. Cuttack has all along been enjoying the unique privilege of being the administrative and the commercial nerve center of Orissa. It ranks as one of the most attractive and old cities on the Eastern coasts of India with life spread over more than a thousand years. It is a bridge linking together the past, present, and future of Orissa. Unlike many of the old cities, it is not in the decay of ruins. It is reputed all over the country for its exquisite and delicate filigree and horn works and the fine and colorful textiles.

Like Rome, Cuttack was not built in a day. History has recorded the past of this ancient city, the stories of the rise and fall of several empires and dynasties. Its age is quite large on its full. It is not merely a city with a history, it has a living present and a still more glorious future. One can reasonably hope that with its increasing importance and under the fostering care of its people and the Government. it will develop into one of the most attractive cities on the Eastern Coast of India. Settlements around Cuttack took the shape of the city, but it is very, likely that the primitive settlement grows into a city some times before 1000 years from now.

Physical Aspects:

Cuttack city is situated at the River Mahanadi to the north and its major tributary Kathjori on the south of the city respectively. These act as natural waterfront, which is very rare and unique of its kind. Both the rivers remain mostly dry in the summer except for the main channel of Mahanadi upstream of the Anicut (Barrage). The rivers often get flooded, during the rainy season.

The low-lying nature of the land of the city perhaps compelled the people in the early days to dig the earth and make a platform for the construction of houses. The result was that innumerable tanks came into being and these tanks have since been acting as rainwater accumulation centers. Analyzing the relief characteristics of Cuttack city, whose relief value is less than 30 meters, on an average 33 meters' contour found near Naraj. The height of the hillock near Naraj is about 130 meters. From the flow patterns of the rivers, a clear slope from

Northwest to Southwest is identified. The sea level is at a distance of 90 km. from the city indicates a very low slope from the apex of the delta to the base of the delta. While 8 meters' depth of river belt of Kathjur.

The geology of the city is alluvium in nature. Investigation work as undertaken by the Geological Survey of India indicates the geological nature in a detailed manner. The upper layer of the crust is a layer of silt deposited in the last 10,000 years (Holocene epoch). Down below the first layer, there occurs another layer consisting of multi-colored clays and silts. This sediment layer of clay and silt is supposed to be generated before 10,00,000 years. The lower part of this layer is composed of laterites and gravelly clays. This is supposed to be created before 10 million years. The third and last layer in the section is composed of strata of sandstones. The traces of these sandstones are nowadays can be located near Naraj. Geologists have traced the fossils of the Gondwana age in these sandstones. This layer of sandstones is supposed to have originated before 50 million years. Metamorphosed strata of the Eastern ghat group of rocks are also seen to occur in the deepest portion. Geologists predict the genesis of these metamorphosed rocks is of about 1000 million years. Since the first two strata of materials are in unconsolidated form, water percolation capacity is higher in them. These two strata have also weak resistance to pressure.

The Mahanadi originated from out-side Orissa in the Raipur district of Chhatisgarh entering into Orissa in the North-West. It traverses through the Sambalpur, and Dhenkanal Districts before entering into Cuttack district in the Baramba police station area. It is pouring down upon the delta from between two hills at Naraj about 12 km. west of Cuttack city, where it's stream is contracted to about 1.5 km. in width. On the southern bank near Naraj, the Mahanadi throws an important

tributary known as Kathjori which divides itself into two outlets the Kuakhai in the south and the Devi in the north. Paika a southern tributary of the Mahanadi branches off from the parent stem 16 km. below Cuttack city and rejoins it again after a course of about 20 km.

The rivers of the Cuttack city are in their late maturity stage were throwing out widening and interlocking channels with broad shallow valleys, making them unsuitable for navigation during most of the year. Only in the rainy season j.e. from June to October there come down the tremendous volume of water, which breaks through the banks causing floods. After the construction of the Hirakud Dam in the Mahanadi on the upstream near Sambalpur and the construction of barrages, there has been considerable flood control. But we must admit that despite many flood control measures taken by the Govt, the river systems are such with shallow beds and widening interlocking nature that floods continue to be a common phenomenon occurring every year. In the dry season, the rivers are almost reduced to a series of long shallow pools with vast expanses of sand in the beds. These sands have been the source of sand supply to the innumerable construction works of buildings and barrages etc. Near Cuttack, there are barrages across Mahanadi and its branch, the Birupa. The water from these rivers is diverted into three irrigations cum navigation canals, Taladanda, Kendrapara, and Machhagaon and High-level canal.

Cuttack is situated to the south of the Tropic of cancer and is located in the coastal plains of Orissa, for which it receives the moderating influence of the Bay of Bengal. As it is situated in the monsoon belt, the climate of Cuttack is mostly of monsoon type with a slight variation because of a strong maritime influence. The climate of the town is characterized by hot summers with high humidity during the southwest monsoon, dry winters, and low diurnal range of temperature throughout the year. The winter is experienced from December to March, summer in April and May and the rainy season from June to September (South-west monsoon), while the period of retreating monsoon is from October to November; April to August is the period of prevailing wind direction which is from southwest to northeast and from north to south but from September to March it blows exactly in the reverse direction. Tropical cyclone occurs in April and

May and in October and November wind direction is seasonal. Autumn is from September to November.

When it comes to temperature the month of May is usually the hottest with a daily maximum temperature of 38.6°C (101.5F) and the mean daily minimum temperature is 27.7°C (80.1 F). The diurnal range of temperature is lower than that of the interior Orissa and it is only 2°C to 3°C from June to December and 4°C to 6°C from January to May. December is the coolest month of the year with a daily maximum temperature of 37.4°C (81.3F) and means the daily minimum temperature is 14.9°C (58.8F).

Rainfall in the south-west monsoon is the principal rain-bearing wind during which more than 75% of the total precipitation is received. The average annual rainfall of the city is about 952.06mm.

There is no doubt the city has the alluvial soil from its origin. The alluvial soil predominates through its age and the nature of the deposition have brought variations in soil composition in the Mahanadi delta.

Vegetation - Cuttack city being a center of the cultural landscape is devoid of natural vegetation that could have covered the region, had there been no human interference. Some old trees are untouched during the development of the city, but there are very few to describe in the discussion. At present, the vegetation of the city is mostly in form of social forestry for beautification and environmental protection.

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