

## **Post-Capital Bhubaneswar: Smart Evolution**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Bhubaneswar, the capital city of Odisha, occupies a unique position in the urban history of India. Unlike many historic cities that evolved gradually through centuries of continuous expansion, Bhubaneswar represents a rare synthesis of antiquity and modernity. Renowned as the “Temple City of India,” its historical roots extend back more than two millennia, with archaeological, epigraphic, and architectural evidence indicating continuous habitation from the period of Emperor Ashoka in the third century BCE. At the same time, it emerged in the post-independence era as one of India’s earliest planned capital cities, designed to accommodate the administrative and developmental aspirations of the newly reorganized state of Odisha. This coexistence of an ancient sacred landscape and a modern planned capital makes Bhubaneswar a compelling subject for urban historical inquiry. The decision to shift the capital of Odisha from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar in 1948 marked a significant turning point in the city’s history. Conceived by the German architect Otto H. Koenigsberger, the new capital was envisioned as a model of modern urban planning, characterized by organized residential sectors, administrative zones, public institutions, and transportation networks. The post-capital phase witnessed rapid demographic growth, infrastructural expansion, and economic diversification, transforming Bhubaneswar from a relatively small town into one of eastern India’s fastest-growing urban centres. Over the decades, the city emerged as a hub of governance, education, healthcare, information technology, and commerce, attracting migrants from across Odisha and beyond. The evolution of Bhubaneswar after becoming the state capital reflects broader processes of urbanization and modernization in post-colonial India. While the planned city initially catered primarily to administrative functions, subsequent decades saw the expansion of municipal limits, integration of peripheral villages, development of industrial and institutional corridors, and the emergence of new residential and commercial zones. This growth was accompanied by significant demographic changes, including increasing population density, spatial reorganization, and changing socio-economic structures. The city’s transformation illustrates the dynamic interaction between state-led planning, market forces, and citizen participation in shaping urban landscapes. Despite its achievements, Bhubaneswar’s rapid urban growth has also generated multiple challenges. The preservation of its rich cultural and architectural heritage has often come into tension with developmental imperatives. Historic temples, archaeological remains, traditional water bodies, and sacred landscapes have faced pressures arising from urban expansion, encroachment, and environmental degradation. Simultaneously, issues such as traffic congestion, inadequate public transportation, housing shortages, waste management, water security, and climate resilience have emerged as critical concerns for urban governance. These challenges underscore the need to examine the city’s developmental trajectory through a historical lens. The launch of the Smart City Mission in 2015 marked another watershed in Bhubaneswar’s urban evolution. Selected as India’s first-ranked Smart City, Bhubaneswar became a laboratory for innovative approaches to urban governance, digital infrastructure, citizen participation, mobility management, and sustainable development. Although the Smart City initiative belongs to the contemporary period, its foundations were deeply rooted in the city’s historical experiences as a planned capital and cultural centre. Understanding the evolution of Bhubaneswar prior to the Smart City era is therefore essential for assessing the opportunities and limitations of contemporary urban transformation. This study seeks to explore the historical evolution of Bhubaneswar from its emergence as the capital of Odisha in 1948 to the threshold of the Smart City Mission. It examines the interplay between urban planning, demographic growth, infrastructural development, governance mechanisms, and heritage conservation in shaping the city’s identity. By analyzing archival records, census data, government reports, municipal documents, legislative debates, and contemporary newspaper accounts, the study aims to reconstruct the trajectory of Bhubaneswar’s post-capital development and evaluate the factors that prepared the city for its transition into a smart urban centre. The article argues that Bhubaneswar’s

transformation cannot be understood merely as a story of modernization or technological advancement. Rather, it represents a complex process of negotiating continuity and change, where an ancient heritage city adapted to the demands of administrative centrality, economic growth, and global urban aspirations. Through a historical examination of this transition, the study contributes to the growing scholarship on urban history, heritage management, and sustainable city planning in contemporary India.

**Keywords:** Urban History, Capital City, Smart City, Heritage Conservation, Demography, Urban Planning, Bhubaneswar

### Historical and Strategic Foundations:

Bhubaneswar served as a major hub under Emperor Ashoka and as capital during King Kharavela's reign<sup>1</sup>, featuring Ashokan inscriptions, Kharavela's edicts and caves, temples from the Sailodbhava, Bhauma, Somavamsi, and Ganga eras, plus modern monumental buildings and institutions. The push for a separate Odisha state intertwined with debates over its capital and autonomy<sup>2</sup>. Cuttack, as Odisha Division headquarters, drove cultural and political life but proved inadequate and overcrowded for a provincial capital due to its position between the Mahanadi and Kathajodi rivers. In 1933, the Odisha Administrative Committee endorsed keeping Cuttack as capital<sup>3</sup>. Post-1936 separation as a province, alternative capital sites gained urgency amid Cuttack-Puri rivalries—some favoring Puri, others rejecting it as a religious center unfit for secular governance. Southern Odisha leaders pushed southward. In 1936, Central Public Works experts led by F.T. Jones proposed Rangailunda near Berhampur. In May 1937, Odisha Government formed the I.R. Dain Committee, which assessed four sites: Cuttack, Barang, Chaudwar, and Puri<sup>4</sup>. On September 24, 1937, after heated debates, the Legislative Assembly led by Girija Bhusan Das approved building the capital at Cuttack-Choudwar, a Cuttack suburb on the Mahanadi's northern bank<sup>5</sup>. Lack of funds and political resolve prevented implementation, as Odisha Government couldn't fund a Mahanadi bridge.

The post-war reconstruction committee championed Bhubaneswar for its historical importance, ample space, and nearness to Cuttack. On April 14, 1945, the Public Works Department endorsed it as the ideal capital site, noting Cuttack's unviable expansion and Bhubaneswar's promise<sup>6</sup>. With Cuttack and Bhubaneswar as finalists, post-WWII Congress leader Harekrushna Mahtab secured Assembly approval for Bhubaneswar. Though Mahtab initially favoured modernizing Cuttack (consulting Tata planners), he selected Bhubaneswar due to multiple factors: anticipated Mahanadi Bridge delays versus faster Cuttack-Bhubaneswar highways; WWII-era U.S. troops'

use of its aerodrome and their constructed buildings; easy land acquisition from nearby barren areas and forests; year-round pleasant climate; rocky terrain ideal for housing with abundant local stone slabs; and deep historical significance.

### From Resolution to Foundation: The Early Years of Bhubaneswar's Capital Construction

On September 30, 1946, the Odisha Legislative Assembly unanimously approved a resolution to construct the state capital. In 1948, the Odisha Government engaged Otto Koenigsberger, a German Jewish architect who had escaped Nazi Germany, as the town planner for the project. On April 13, 1949, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation stone for Bhubaneswar, the new capital<sup>7</sup>. The Odisha Legislative Assembly first met there on October 10, 1949. Early construction faced challenges like funding shortages, Cuttack employees' reluctance to relocate, and opposition from some Congress leaders to shifting from Cuttack. At Odisha's request, India approved Rs. 2 crores for the project; interim Finance Minister Liaquat Ali Khan announced Rs. 1.32 crores. Progress stalled in the 1950s after Harekrushna Mahtab joined the central cabinet, with Chief Minister Nabakrushna Chaudhury remaining in Cuttack, and delays from leaders like Radhanath Rath and Bishwanath Das. Construction accelerated during Mahtab's second term (1956–1960)<sup>8</sup>. By late 1951, nine offices—PWD, Secretariat, Health Directorate, Prisons IG, Cooperative Societies Registrar, Public Relations, Agriculture, Forestry, and Tribal/Rural Welfare had shifted to temporary Bhubaneswar buildings from Cuttack. Planned structures included the Gandhi Memorial, Legislative Assembly, Governor's House, Secretariat, State Library, Museum, and Accountant General's Office. In 1951, bridges over Kathajodi and Kuakhai eased Cuttack-Bhubaneswar transport. The Secretariat finished in 1960, but Gandhi Memorial was dropped due to funds. Disputes between planner Otto Koenigsberger and architect Julius Vaz (designer of Rabindra Mandap), plus architect shortages,

prevented some buildings. Koenigsberger left for England in 1951, later moving to Germany<sup>9</sup>.

### Demographic Shifts:

Bhubaneswar, historically known as Ekamra Vana and celebrated as one of the foremost centres of Shaivite culture in eastern India, remained a relatively small urban settlement for much of the colonial period. Despite its immense religious and cultural significance, demographic growth was slow and gradual during the first half of the twentieth century. Census records indicate that the population increased only marginally from 8,170 in 1921 to 9,253 in 1941, reflecting the city's predominantly sacred character and limited economic opportunities. The absence of major industrial, administrative, and commercial activities constrained large-scale migration and urban expansion during this period. A dramatic demographic transformation occurred after Bhubaneswar was designated as the capital of Odisha in 1948. The establishment of government offices, public institutions, residential colonies, and supporting infrastructure converted the city into the administrative nucleus of the state. Consequently, Bhubaneswar experienced an unprecedented surge in population growth. The most remarkable phase of expansion was recorded between 1961 and 1971, when the city registered a decadal growth rate of 176.07 per cent, the highest in its demographic history. This rapid increase was primarily driven by migration associated with government employment, construction activities, and the development of urban infrastructure. Over the subsequent decades, the city continued to grow steadily, reaching a population of 885,363 by the 2011 Census. The demographic expansion of Bhubaneswar was accompanied by substantial spatial growth. The municipal area, which covered only 50.25 square kilometres in 1961, expanded to approximately 185.30 square kilometres by 2011. This increase reflects the incorporation of surrounding villages, peri-urban settlements, and newly developed residential and institutional zones into the urban framework. The expansion of the city's geographical boundaries illustrates the transformation of Bhubaneswar from a compact planned capital into a rapidly developing metropolitan centre.

Gender composition has remained an important demographic characteristic of the city. Although the gap between male and female populations has gradually narrowed over time, a noticeable gender imbalance

persisted in 2011, when the city recorded 468,043 males compared to 417,320 females. This disparity largely reflects migration patterns, as employment opportunities in government services, construction, education, and the private sector historically attracted a greater number of male migrants. Nevertheless, increasing female participation in higher education, professional employment, and urban economic activities has contributed to a gradual improvement in gender representation. The social composition of Bhubaneswar has also undergone significant transformation. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have become increasingly visible components of the city's population. Between 2001 and 2011, the Scheduled Caste population increased from 53,677 to 76,770, while the Scheduled Tribe population rose from 29,594 to 44,016. These trends reflect broader processes of rural-to-urban migration, expanding educational opportunities, and improved access to employment within the urban economy. The growing presence of these communities has enriched the social and cultural diversity of Bhubaneswar while also highlighting the need for inclusive urban development policies. Religiously, Bhubaneswar continues to be overwhelmingly Hindu in character. According to the 2011 Census, the Hindu population stood at 842,912, constituting the dominant religious community within the city. At the same time, the presence of Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and other minority groups demonstrates the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of the urban population. This diversity has been further strengthened by the city's emergence as a centre of education, administration, healthcare, and information technology.

A notable feature of contemporary Bhubaneswar is the emergence of a large floating population. Unlike the migration patterns of the 1950s and 1960s, when migrants often settled permanently within the city, present-day urban growth is increasingly sustained by daily commuters, temporary workers, students, and service-sector employees. Rural migrants as well as people from neighbouring districts and states travel regularly to Bhubaneswar for employment, education, healthcare, and commercial activities. This mobility has significantly increased the functional population of the city beyond its officially recorded census population.

The city has also witnessed the emergence of a youthful demographic profile, driven by the concentration of universities, technical institutions, research centres, and

professional colleges. The presence of a large student population and young workforce has contributed to economic dynamism and urban expansion. However, it has simultaneously increased pressure on housing, transportation, public services, and employment opportunities. The proliferation of informal settlements and slums in certain parts of the city reflects these demographic pressures and marks a significant departure from the planned residential development that characterized Bhubaneswar during its formative decades as a capital city.

In this context, the long-delayed national census assumes particular importance. The postponement of the 2021 Census due to the COVID-19 pandemic has created a significant gap in demographic data. Updated census information will be crucial for understanding contemporary trends in population growth, migration, gender composition, social diversity, urban expansion, and housing demand. Such data will provide policymakers, planners, and researchers with valuable insights into the future demographic trajectory of Bhubaneswar and its evolving role as one of eastern India's leading metropolitan centres.

### **Institutional Evolution: Offices to Global Innovation Hub**

By 1977, Bhubaneswar hosted major institutions like Raj Bhavan, Secretariat, Legislative Assembly, State Museum, Rabindra Mandap, Utkal University, University of Agriculture and Technology, and key research centers including Regional Institute of Education, Sainik School, IMMT, Institute of Physics, and others<sup>10</sup>. BJB College and Rama Devi College stood out among colleges. Later additions included East Coast Railways, RBI/State Bank regional offices, Police Commissionerate, and engineering/management institutes. KIIT, SOA, and Xavier Institute of Management (since 1987) gained university status. Over 20 MBA programs thrive alongside NISER, IIT Bhubaneswar, Institute of Life Sciences, and IM&A. Elite schools Loyola, Sai International, KIIT International, Xaviers, DPS, DAV attract statewide talent. Infocity-I/II have positioned Bhubaneswar as Odisha's education and IT hub.

### **Healthcare surged:**

Bhubaneswar boasts leading healthcare facilities offering world-class services to locals and visitors. AIIMS Bhubaneswar excels in cardiology, gastroenterology,

neurology, and oncology. Apollo Hospital provides advanced treatment, surgery, diagnostics, and emergency care. KIMS Hospital delivers comprehensive care; SUM Hospital offers tertiary services with research and academics; AMRI/Manipal handles critical care. The city also features dental clinics, eye hospitals, Ayurvedic centers, and wellness facilities, making it a medical tourism hub<sup>11</sup>. A major eastern India center for cancer treatment, Bhubaneswar's top facilities include HCG Panda Cancer Hospital, Apollo Hospital, and KIMS Cancer Center equipped with cutting-edge technology, expert oncologists, and treatments like chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery. AIIMS Bhubaneswar's medical oncology and haematology division, established February 2022 with faculty Dr. Sourav Kumar Mishra and Dr. Ilavarasi Vanidassane, offers affordable care via dedicated OPD/day care (weekdays). It has grown rapidly in OPDs, day care chemotherapies, and IPD for adult solid/haematological cancers, including targeted/immunotherapies; a 7-bed ICU; and DM Medical Oncology training (2 students/year). Odisha is bolstering infrastructure for 50,000 annual cancer patients: a 750-bed Bagchi-Shankara Cancer Centre on city outskirts (funded by Subroto Bagchi) and a state-of-the-art hospital at NISER Bhubaneswar (Rs. 650 crore, via DAE, Tata Memorial Centre, and Tata Trusts). Oncology clinics also serve patients from states like West Bengal<sup>12</sup>.

### **Modern Urban Landscape and Emerging Civic Infrastructure:**

The transformation of Bhubaneswar from a planned administrative capital into a modern metropolitan centre is reflected not only in its demographic growth but also in the remarkable diversification of its urban infrastructure and civic amenities. While the city continues to preserve its historic identity as the "Temple City of India," it has simultaneously developed into a prominent hub of commerce, administration, education, tourism, hospitality, sports, and recreation. This coexistence of heritage and modernity has become one of the defining characteristics of contemporary Bhubaneswar.

The city's skyline today is punctuated by a number of iconic institutional and commercial structures that symbolize its economic and administrative significance. Landmark buildings such as Fortune Tower, NALCO Bhavan, Doordarshan Kendra, Pathani Samanta Planetarium, and the Regional Science Centre have contributed to the emergence of Bhubaneswar as a centre

of knowledge, governance, and technological advancement. In recent years, the development of the Intelligent City Operations and Management Centre (ICOMC) and the BMC-ICOMC Tower has further strengthened the city's smart-governance infrastructure, integrating digital services, traffic management, emergency response systems, and citizen-centric urban administration under a unified platform. The ICOMC project alone represents an investment of approximately Rs. 740 crore and is regarded as one of the most advanced smart-city management systems in eastern India<sup>13</sup>.

The hospitality sector has expanded significantly alongside urban growth. Premium hotels and convention facilities have transformed Bhubaneswar into an important destination for business tourism, conferences, sporting events, and cultural gatherings. Establishments such as Mayfair Lagoon, Swosti Premium, Vivanta, Trident, New Marriot, Crown, and the historic Kalinga Ashok have enhanced the city's capacity to host national and international visitors. The growth of organized retail infrastructure, multiplexes, shopping complexes, and entertainment centres has further contributed to the evolution of an urban lifestyle comparable to that of other emerging metropolitan cities in India.

Another notable aspect of Bhubaneswar's urban development is the emphasis placed on recreational and environmental infrastructure. True to the vision of Otto H. Koenigsberger, the city continues to maintain a network of parks, open spaces, and green corridors that contribute to its reputation as one of India's greener capitals. Forest Park, Indira Gandhi Park, Buddha Jayanti Park, Mahatma Gandhi Park, Nicco Park, and Ekamra Kanan Botanical Gardens continue to serve as important recreational spaces for residents. Recent initiatives by the Bhubaneswar Development Authority have added several new parks, landscaped gardens, open gyms, and musical fountains across the city, including facilities at Kalinga Nagar, Pokhariput, and AG Colony. These developments are part of a broader strategy to improve urban livability and environmental sustainability.

Sports infrastructure has emerged as another major component of Bhubaneswar's urban identity. The city has increasingly positioned itself as the "Sports Capital of India," largely due to the international prominence of Kalinga Stadium and associated sports complexes. Over the last decade, Bhubaneswar has successfully hosted several prestigious sporting events, including the Men's Hockey World Cup (2018 and 2023), international

athletics competitions, and national sporting championships. The Kalinga Sports Complex today includes world-class hockey, athletics, football, swimming, and indoor sports facilities, attracting athletes and visitors from across India and abroad. This sporting ecosystem has significantly contributed to tourism, employment generation, and the global visibility of the city.

Recent urban-development initiatives indicate that Bhubaneswar is entering a new phase of metropolitan growth. The Bhubaneswar Town Centre District project, proposed as a modern central business district, envisages nearly 2.5 million square feet of commercial, retail, hospitality, and office space. Simultaneously, state government plans for the development of "New Bhubaneswar" and the Bhubaneswar–Cuttack–Puri urban corridor reflect a broader vision of creating an integrated metropolitan region capable of accommodating future population growth and economic expansion. These developments demonstrate that Bhubaneswar is no longer merely an administrative capital but is steadily evolving into a multifunctional metropolitan centre with regional and national significance.

### **A Tapestry of Faith: Religious Institutions in Bhubaneswar:**

Bhubaneswar blends ancient shrines like Lingaraj, Mukteshwar, Rajarani, Brahmeshwar, and Kedaragouri with modern temples and religious sites, including the prominent Rama Mandir; Radhakrushna Temple (BayababaMath, founded by Kalpataru Seba Sangha of Kendrapada); ISKCON; and Shirdi Sai Temple on Tankapani Road—alongside temples of every size dotting the city. It also hosts churches, mosques, gurudwaras, a modern Buddha Vihar, a Jain temple, Ramakrishna Math in old Bhubaneswar, Satsanga Vihar (built by Anukul Chandra's followers), and the Japanese-built Shanti Stupa peace pagoda near Dhauli's Ashokan inscription, standing for over 50 years<sup>14</sup>.

### **The Evolution of Bhubaneswar: From Plan to Reality:**

The evolution of Bhubaneswar from a carefully planned administrative capital into a vibrant metropolitan centre represents one of the most significant urban development experiments in post-independence India. Conceived in the late 1940s as the new capital of Odisha, the city was designed according to modern planning principles under the guidance of the German architect

Otto H. Koenigsberger. The original master plan envisioned a compact and efficiently organized administrative city capable of accommodating approximately 40,000 residents. Emphasis was placed on functional zoning, residential neighbourhoods, green spaces, institutional areas, and transportation networks. The plan sought to create a model capital city that would symbolize Odisha's aspirations for modernization while preserving the cultural heritage of the historic temple town. As the city expanded beyond its original design capacity, several efforts were undertaken to revise and modernize the planning framework. During the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, a number of planning reviews and development proposals, including recommendations associated with the Ford Foundation, attempted to address the challenges arising from rapid population growth and urban expansion. These revisions sought to improve land-use management, transportation planning, housing provision, and infrastructural development. However, despite the formulation of comprehensive planning strategies, implementation often lagged behind expectations due to administrative constraints, financial limitations, and inadequate political commitment. Consequently, a gap emerged between planning objectives and urban realities, a phenomenon that continues to influence the city's developmental trajectory.

Nevertheless, Bhubaneswar gradually evolved far beyond its original administrative function. Over the decades, it emerged not only as the political capital of Odisha but also as a major centre of education, culture, commerce, healthcare, and technology. The concentration of government institutions, universities, research centres, and public-sector enterprises transformed the city into a focal point of regional development. Its role as the seat of political power was complemented by its growing importance as a cultural and intellectual centre, attracting scholars, artists, journalists, professionals, and entrepreneurs from across the state and beyond.

The city's expanding media landscape further reflects its growing prominence. Bhubaneswar today serves as the headquarters of a vibrant print and electronic media industry. More than seventy to eighty newspapers and periodicals are published daily in Odia and English, making it one of eastern India's most important centres of journalism and public discourse. Prominent publications such as *Sambad*, *The Samaja*, *Prameya*, *Dharitri*, *Pragativadi*, *Samaya*, *Dinalipi*, *The Times of India*, and *The Indian Express* maintain a strong presence in

the city, contributing significantly to the dissemination of information and the shaping of public opinion. The growth of digital media platforms and regional television networks has further strengthened Bhubaneswar's position as the communication hub of Odisha.

Economic transformation has been equally remarkable. While the early decades of the capital city were largely dependent on government employment and public administration, recent decades have witnessed substantial diversification of the urban economy. Industrial estates at Rasulgarh, Mancheswar, Chandaka, and Bhagabanpur have stimulated manufacturing and small-scale industrial activities. Simultaneously, the rapid expansion of the service sector—including banking, information technology, education, healthcare, hospitality, retail trade, and real estate—has generated new avenues of employment and investment. The development of technology parks, software export units, and business process outsourcing centres has further integrated Bhubaneswar into the national and global economy<sup>15</sup>. The emergence of Bhubaneswar as an information technology destination has been particularly noteworthy. The establishment of Infocity, Infovalley, and several software parks has attracted major national and international companies, contributing to the city's reputation as one of India's emerging knowledge economies. Combined with a large pool of educated youth graduating from institutions such as Utkal University, KIIT, SOA University, and other higher educational centres, these developments have accelerated economic modernization and urban growth.

Thus, the history of Bhubaneswar's development illustrates a gradual transition from a planned administrative settlement to a multifaceted metropolitan centre. Although challenges related to infrastructure, urban governance, housing, and environmental sustainability persist, the city has largely succeeded in transcending the limitations of its original design. Today, Bhubaneswar stands as a dynamic urban space where historical heritage, political authority, cultural vitality, and economic modernization converge, reflecting the broader story of Odisha's transformation in the post-independence era.

### **Cultural vibrancy blooms:**

Though primarily the state's administrative capital, Bhubaneswar is rapidly emerging as its cultural hub, hosting year-round dance and music festivals, seminars,

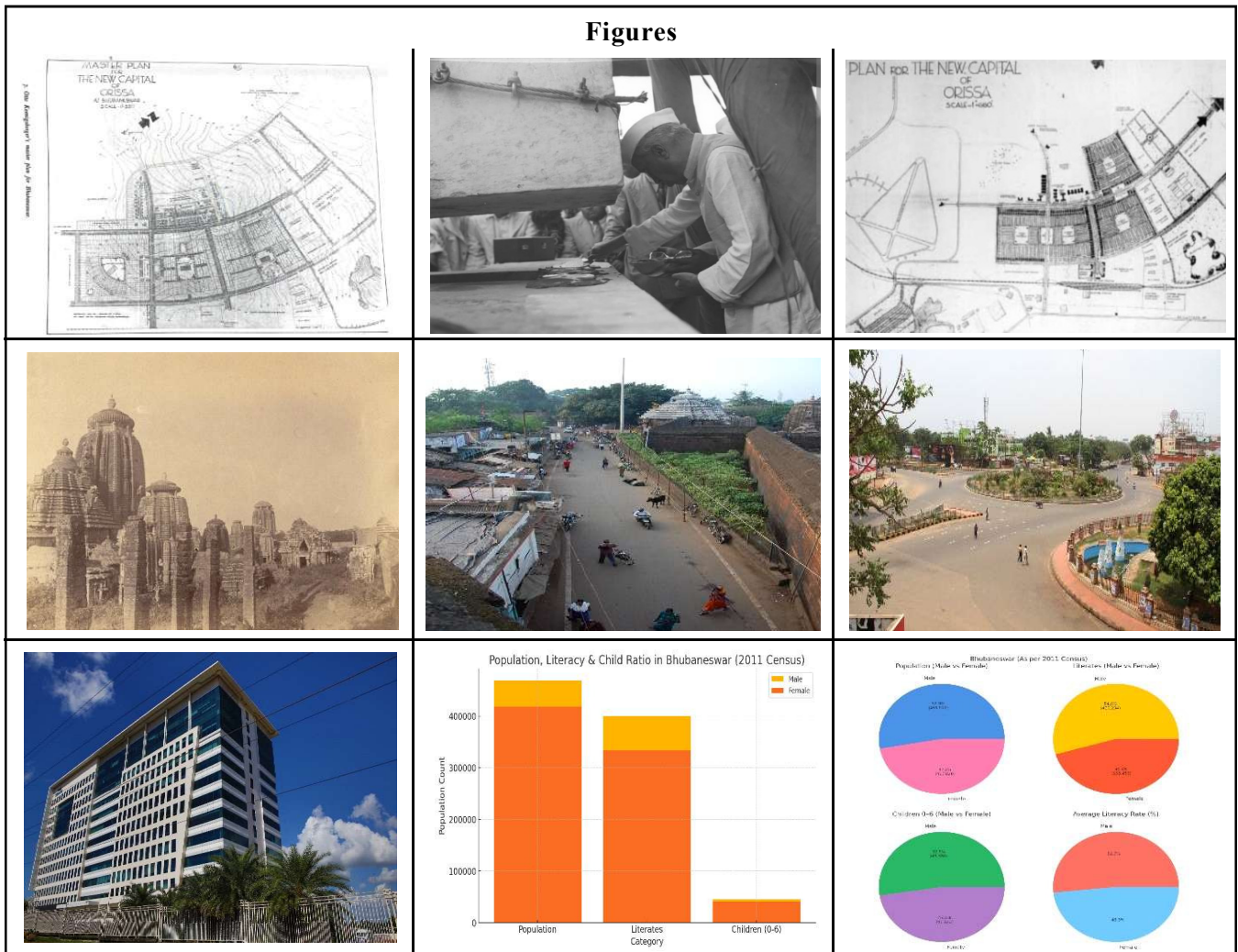
workshops, and exhibitions, starting with the Bhubaneswar Music Circle’s initiatives alongside the weekly Raahgiri event that enhances the city’s vibrant, civilized vibe. Highlights include the 7th International Odissi Festival on December 23, 2012, featuring veteran dancer Sonal Mansingh; the annual Toshali Craft Fair (launched 2012 at Janata Maidan); Adivasi Mela; and Sisir Saras. The 2018 Men’s Hockey World Cup sparked Dot Festival and other celebrations, followed by the 2023 FIH Men’s Hockey World Cup and 2025 Women’s Junior Asia Cup at Kalinga Stadium. Artisans like the late Raghunath Mahapatra and Sudarsan Sahu draw visitors with stone sculptures mimicking ancient and medieval styles. This blend of heritage and modern culture positions Bhubaneswar as Odisha’s top tourist spot. Well-connected by rail, road, and air, it attracts millions of domestic and international visitors yearly. Population growth started slowly; the Odisha government offered

99-year leases for private housing, and planner Koenigsberger favoured low-rise over high-rise development. Around 10,000 new housing units add annually, a trend set to continue, including high-rises in Jatani, Khordha, Pipili, Uttara, Dhauli and Nakhara to house spillover. Recent urbanization has swelled slums in open areas and roadsides, driven by rural migrants seeking jobs.

**A city on the rise:**

Real estate firm Cushman and Wakefield and urbanization body GIREM have ranked Bhubaneswar among India’s top 10 emerging cities, citing its strong growth potential. Odisha’s Urban Development Department plans world-class infrastructure, including a rapid transit system, 24/7 water supply, and integrated sewerage. Compared to Chandigarh planned concurrently Bhubaneswar’s differences seem minor. Former Chief

**Figures**



Minister Biju Patnaik remarked, “Bhubaneswar is a poor man’s town, reflecting the poverty of Odisha’s people.” This economic reality, combined with planners’ vision, capped its ambitions, preventing it from evolving like Chandigarh and cementing its “poor man’s town” identity<sup>16</sup>.

### **Towards a Living Museum: Challenges and Prospects**

Bhubaneswar’s grid layout, rich history, and contemporary progress set it apart. However, transient populations, slums, and divides between residents and officials impede true “smartness”. The delayed 2021 census will offer demographers vital data. Preserving the historic core as a vibrant museum is essential. Reviving such centers offsets urbanization’s damage, harmonizing heritage with modernity. Success depends on collaboration: citizens engaging administrators in open forums. Nearing its 79th year (and centenary horizon), Bhubaneswar symbolizes reinvention, from Ashoka’s era of peace to Smart City ambitions. It must balance sentiment with advancement through inclusive governance, heritage-driven economy, and equitable development, creating a sustainable city of heart, soul, and 21st-century vitality.

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