



Evolution History of Rajarhat New Town : A Smart Green City (1995-2024)

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Abstract:

Rajarhat New Town, which was built over a vast area of Kolkata, West Bengal, covering parts of North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas, has a left lasting mark on the history of ancient, medieval and British India. However, the main purpose behind conducting this study is to examine Rajarhat New Town as a Smart Green City, to analyze Rajarhat New Town's historical significance in India, to investigate the evolution history of Rajarhat New Town (1995-2024). This research paper conducted using quantitative research methods so, historical and content analysis have been used. The researcher has divided the discussion into Ancient, Medieval and Modern times. In addition, the analysis of the subject is divided into yearly periods. In conclusion, the innovative initiative of Rajarhat New Town carries the title of "Smart Green City" in the world. The seeds of urban civilization are sown by the development of Rajarhat New Town from rural life.

Keywords: Evolution, Rajarhat, New Town, Smart Green City.

Introduction:

Rajarhat New Town, which was built over a vast area of Kolkata, West Bengal, covering parts of North 24 Parganas and South 24 Parganas, has a left lasting mark on the history of medieval and British India. The term "Rajarhat" combines "raja", meaning "king" and "haat" meaning "market place" in Bengali, (Bhoumik, 2019). In the course of evolution, Rajarhat New Town is a developed area today. At first the hon'ble chief minister Jyoti Basu, the state government has named the township Jyoti Basu Nagar. This decision was approved during a cabinet meeting led by chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattachariya. In April-May 1999, the left front government began acquiring approximately 7,500 acres of land under the colonial Land Acquisition Act of 1894 for the establishment of the Rajarhat township. Where modern society has developed. In the past, this area was fertile cultivable land. The main livelihood of the people was agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing. Changes to the rules of business in 1997 delegated the responsibility for housing development to facilitate the creation of the Rajarhat township. In the process of evolution Rajarhat New Town is a planned and developed city in West Bengal.

Rajarhat, a municipality in Greater Kolkata, was developed as a satellite township. The New Town area has also been designated a solar city by the previous UPA government, and efforts are underway to transform it into a "Smart Green City", a vision advocated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, supported by West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banarjee. A "Smart Green City" merges sustainable technology with urban

development. The Smart Cities Mission (SCM) was initiated in India on June 25, 2015; although many cities initially joined, some withdrew after subsequent selection round but later opted out. The state administration rejected the central government's "Smart City Project" in favor of its own "Green city project". This project encompasses four gram panchayats— Chandpur, Jangrahatiyara –II, Pathaghata, and Rajarhat- Bishnupur –II comprising a total of 32 villages. Having passed through the ancient, medieval, and British eras, Rajarhat New Town is one of the developed cities today. In the continuity of evolution, New Town has left its mark on the pages of history as India's first "Smart Green City."

Review of Literature:

Majumdar et.al (2024) conducted to assess "Pros and Cons of establishing a sustainable township – a case study at New Town, Kolkata, India", This case study summarizes methods, effectiveness, achievements, and challenges faced by the city daily, utilizing surveys and secondary data from various authorities and online sources to analyze the relationship between urbanization, land use change, and the development of a smart green city.

Karmakar (2022) explored "A Local Chronicle of the Smrat City Enterprise: Case study of New Town Kolkata, West Bengal, India", This paper examines West Bengal's newly announced green city mission, compaising its similarities and differences with existing projects. The researcher employed qualitative data analysis methods, revealing that these initiatives have failed to generate employment opportunities for both the urban population and surrounding villages.

Molla (2018) conducted a study to assess "Change of Land use Pattern and the present status of Land use planning: A case study of Rajarhat New Town, North 24 Parganas, West Bengal", The research paper provides an overview of land use changes in Rajarhat New Town and assesses the current status of land use planning in the area.

Biswas and Singh (2017) reviewed "Rajarhat New Town an urban perspective: A case study of urbanization, West Bengal. India", The researcher utilized both primary and secondary sources for this study, acknowledging Rajarhat's significance in urban development.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To examine Rajarhat New Town as a Smart Green City.
2. To analyze Rajarhat New Town's historical significance in India.
3. To investigate the evolution history of Rajarhat New Town (1995-2024).

Research Questions:

1. How is Rajarhat New Town as a Smart Green City?
2. What are the historical significance of Rajarhat New Town in India?
3. How has Rajarhat New Town evolved (1995-2024)?

Methodology of the Study:

The researcher has divided the discussion into Ancient, Medieval and Modern times. In addition, the analysis of the subject is divided into yearly periods. This research paper conducted using quantitative research methods so, historical and content analysis have been used. Primary and Secondary sources have been used

to complete this research paper. Information has been collected from books, journals, newspapers, websites, records etc. Each documents content is examined in detail by researcher.

Result and Discussion:

1. Rajarhat New Town as a Smart Green City

A “Smart Green City” merges sustainable technology with urban development. The “Smart Cities Mission”(SCM) was initiated in India on June 25, 2015 ;although many cities initially joined, some withdrew after subsequent selection round but later opted out. The state administration rejected the central government’s “Smart City Project” in favor of its own “Green city project”. This project encompasses four gram panchayats— Chandpur, Jangrahatiyara –II, Pathaghata and Rajarhat- Bishnupur –II comprising a total of 32 villages. In 2017, the West Bengal government introduced the “Green City Mission”. This sustainable city is divided into two parts - a. smart city b. green city.

It focuses on reducing non-renewable resources and using renewable resources. Decorated with lots of green trees on the roadside, this Smart Green City emphasizes eco-friendly green mode transport like cycling, which is environmentally friendly. Public cycle Sharing (PBC), Cycle to Work, Dedicated Cycling Track has been created. 100 app-based public cycle sharing scheme and 100 e-bikes were launched. New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA) is also working on plans to introduce app-based “Toto” services in the township. Eco-park is an example of green city mission. It is an ecological garden built on 480 acre land, which is the first in Eastern parts of India. The first hanging restaurant in India, known as “Bishwa Bangla Gate”/”Kolkata Gate”, is located in New Town which part of a “Smart Green City”. It is a new icon of a raising Bengal.

Apart from this, modern educational institute, IT industry, different culture centers, Modern Super Specialty hospitals, planned road construction, planned drainage system, Different types of Head office, shopping Mall, Museum of Modern art, star category hotel, Research centre, Business centre, transport system, Apartment are also part of the smart green city project. With all this, Rajarhat New Town in Kolkata is known as India’s first “Smart Green City”.



Figure1: Green City|App-based cycles

Retrieved from: <https://images.app.goo.gl/HP8rVout2NZKCv87>



Figure 2: The first Solar Dome of India

Retrieved from: <https://www.getbengal.com/details/the-first-solar-dome-of-india-comes-up-at-kolkatas-eco-park>



Figure 3: Eco-park

Retrieved from: <https://images.app.goo.gl/uhkPw1L5u8cgjUYH7>



Figure 4: Rabindra- Tritha

Retrieved from: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabindra_Tirtha#/media/File%3ARabindraTirtha_2013.jpg

2. Rajarhat New Town's historical significance in India:

Rajarhat New Town has a lot of historical significance in ancient, medieval and modern times.

Significance of Ancient times: Many years ago, some parts of the 'Sundarbans' were part of Rajarhat New Town. People used to worship gods and goddesses to protect themselves from the ferocious animals of the forest. Similarly, traces of a 450years old temple are found in Rajarhat New Town which was built on the banks of the ancient "Vidyadhari river", the "Hazra Kali temple" and "Shashan kali" temple. This river is now found in the 'Sundarbans'. It is said that Rani Rashmoni used to come to worship in this temple. Every year people from all over Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh used to come to worship. There is also evidence of an ancient "animal sacrifice" tradition. It is known that 150 goats were sacrificed every year during the "chaiyatra mela" for the purpose of "Shashan Kali". A long time ago, the whole area had cremation / burial grounds or was a shasan. Many human skulls are found which indicate ancient "Tantricism". It can be estimated that these are 450-500 years old which are still worshipped today.



Figure 5: The altar for animal sacrifice

Retrieved from: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/amp/my-kolkata/places/hazra-kalibari-in-kolkatas-new-town-has-a-centuries-old-history-unique-traditions-and-interesting-folklore/cid/1893972>



Figure 6: The idols in the inner sanctum of the kali bari

Retrieved from: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/amp/my-kolkata/places/hazra-kalibari-in-kolkatas-new-town-has-a-centuries-old-history-unique-traditions-and-interesting-folklore/cid/1893972>



Figure 7: The Hazra Kalibari in New Town can be dated back to about 450 years

Retrieved from: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/amp/my-kolkata/places/hazra-kalibari-in-kolkatas-new-town-has-a-centuries-old-history-unique-traditions-and-interesting-folklore/cid/1893972>

Significance of Medieval times: The term “Rajarhat” combines “raja”, meaning “king” and “haat” meaning “market place” in Bengali, (Bhoumik, 2019).Rajarhat New Town came into being with the 17th century tax collectors. According to historical chroniclers, “The name of Rajarhat came about in 1649 when Gourhari Raychaudhari decided to start a market in the area. He was the son of Lakshmikanta Gangopadhyay of the Sabarna Roychowdhury family. In 1608, Raja Man Singh had given Gangapadhyay zamindari of five parganas from Barrackpore to Gangasagar. They were the tax collectors (Majumder) and revered as king”. But after 1716, Roychowdhury’s son moved from that place to Nimta, Birati, Barisha, Behela, and Rajarhat remained neglected for many centuries.



Figure 8: Historian Haripada Bhoumick

Retrieved from: <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/rajarhat-land-of-the-kings-market/cid/1699082>

Significance of Modern times: Kolkata during the British period consisted of Sutanuti, Govindapur, and Kalikata. In 1690, it was a trading post of the British government. In 1773, it became the capital city of British India. Until the 1880s - early 1900s, new areas were added to the East - South. As a result, the population started expanding. Rajarhat New Town has played a significant role in the history of British India through various revolutionary activities such as Salt-satyagraha, Non-cooperation Movement as well as post-Independent land reform and redistribution etc. Thakdari, Mahisgot, and Mahishbathan areas of Rajarhat New Town played an important role against the British under the leadership of local landlord Laksmikanta Paramanik. Many people were shot and imprisoned during that time. Which has written history.

After many years of neglect in the means of communication in Rajarhat New Town, it gradually started to develop from the 20th century, “The only transport in and out Than Rajarhat then was on Bullock carts. Buses that left shyambazar couldn’t reach Baguati or Rajarhat as the Bagjola canal came in the way”(Bhoumik, 2019) The turning point started in 1956 when a bridge was built from baguati to Dakshinpara, near Nagerbazar. “ A bus service started between shyambazar and Baguati, touching Rajarhat. The bus route had no number but the fare was two annas “ (Bhoumick, 2019). After 1965, VIP Road was built and then the Rajarhat New Town area gradually started to develop.

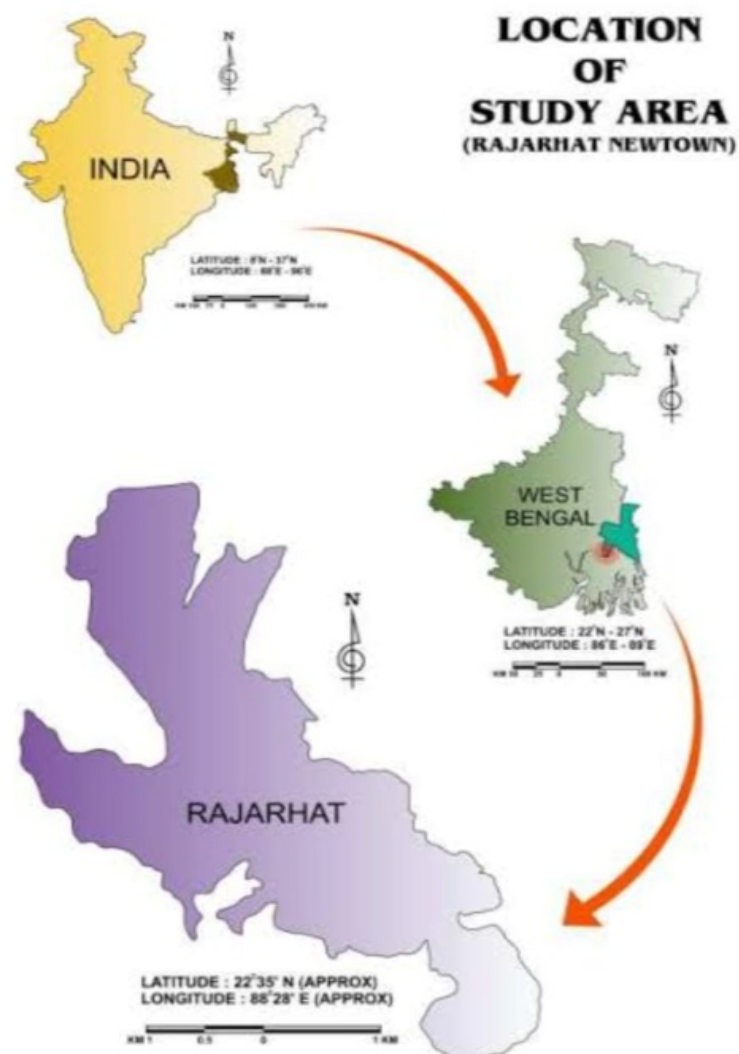


Figure 9: Location of study area (Rajarhat New Town)
Retrieved from: <https://images.app.goo.gl/CeFcvwaFKZc3DwsA7>

3. The evolution history of Rajarhat New Town (1995-2024):

1995-2006 : In the early 1990s to set up Rajarhat Township. The government acquired 21 Mouzas of New Town under the British colonial Act (1894). The New Town planning Area was declared in 1999, 45 Mouzas under the north and south parganas. The entire New Town was divided into Action areas I, II, III and the development work is going on. In 1999, the Secretary of West Bengal Government acquired 22 Mouzas with land and water bodies. Saleable plots were started by filling the land in those years.

2007-2010: In 2007, New Town Kolkata Development Authority (NKDA) was formed. Its main purpose was to make Rajarhat New Town a “Green City” for the civic community. From 2007, various infrastructural works started in Action Area I, II, III. New Town gradually started transforming into urban habitation.

2011- 2016: In these phases New Town Kolkata came under the guidance of Hon’ble Chief Minister of West Bengal Smt. Mamata Banarjee. To give a new shape to New Town, multiple revenue generating asserts were created. Like Eco -Park (Prakriti Tirtha) (2012-13), Rabindr Tritha (2014), Mother’s Wax Museum (2014). New Town project until March 2013 total 6839.31 acres of land had been procured by the respective land Acquisition collectors. All in all, New Town became a Self-Sustaining city.

2017-2024: This is the modern developing phase of New Town. Multiple innovative projects are being implemented in this phase such as Biswa Bangla Convention Centre, Sneshodiya (a retirement heaven for senior citizens), Smart Library, Solar Powered as well as cloud connected, electric buses, Multiple EV charging stations, graded cycle tracks promoting cycling, energy saving street lighting system, along with pedestrian friendly pathway. Indian Green Building Council (IGBC) project which is a Model of excellence in Urban Sustainability. It received a “Gold rating” in 2018, and a “platinum rating” award in 2020. New Town gets its unique identity with the iconic “Biswa Bangla Gate” which is India’s first hanging restaurant. Many works are still ongoing in Rajarhat New Town. Its main aims are enhancing its ease of living, through innovation, inclusion and sustainability.



Figure 10: Biswa Bangla Gate

Retrieved from: <https://www.getbengal.com/details/new-town-considered-best-smart-city-of-india-to-receive-award-from-president-getbengal-story>



Figure 11: Biswa Bangla Convation Centre
Retrieved from: <https://images.app.goo.gl/yUpUnNTYHFKe2qEZ7>

Conclusion:

The innovative initiative of Rajarhat New Town carries the title of “Smart Green City” and “Solar City” in the world. The West Bengal government has redesigned the city of New Town, which reflects new ideas. Rajarhat New Town has carried its heritage from ancient, medieval and modern times. The vast history of Rajarhat New Town cannot be discussed in depth in one article. Great signs of modernity are found in Rajarhat New Town. The seeds of urban civilization are sown by the development of Rajarhat New Town from rural life.

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