

EVOLUTION OF A FRENCH COLONY TO AN INDIAN CITY: A CASE STUDY OF CHANDANNAGAR CITY OF WEST BENGAL, INDIA

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Abstract

Chandannagar city, located on the right bank of the Hooghly River in West Bengal, is a part of the Kolkata (Calcutta) Urban Agglomeration. This small city is a former French colony having a separate entity with its own characteristics. The present paper attempts to focus on the various facets of the city, viz., the growth as a French colony in 1673 till present date, urban morphology (both structural and functional) and social structure. Chandannagar has endured the impact of progressive urbanization over the last three centuries sharp rise during the last few decades. The immigration of a variety of people to this city during the long continuous process of urbanization from different economic and social backgrounds has influenced the social landscape of the city. Urbanization has led to weaker and superficial social bond among the people. The change in social fabric has been less drastic as compared to changes in the urban landscape. There have emerged two indigenous but very peculiar cottage industries of the city – well-ring manufacturing and decorative electrical lightworks employing hundreds of families for their livelihood. The lightworks is of international fame, even used in the Thames Festival and Dubai Shopping Festival. Finally, focus has been given to the problems (existing, emerging and managerial) of the city. The paper is based basically on field survey in and around Chandannagar through interviews and questionnaires of sufficient number of associated persons as well as on books, magazines and published articles.

Key Words: Urban Morphology, Urbanization, Metropolitan, Social Fabric

Introduction

Chandannagar, formerly known as Chandernagore or Chandernagar is a small city and former French colony located 30 kilometres north of [Kolkata](#), in [West Bengal](#), [India](#). It is head quarters of a subdivision in [Hooghly District](#). It is a part of the area covered by [Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority](#). Situated along the western banks of river [Hooghly](#), the city has been able to maintain a separate identity different from all other cities and abide by her own characteristics. The total area is a meagre 22.14 square kilometres having a population of 166,867 (Census of India, 2011). Chandannagar is connected to Kolkata by [railway](#), [roadways](#) and river and it takes about an hour to reach there by car. The study area is a municipal corporation under Chandannagar P.S. (mostly eastern part) and Bhadreswar P.S. (western part) in the district of Hooghly, West Bengal. The Saraswati river forms its north-western and western boundary. The Hooghly River forms its entire eastern boundary. The city shares its boundary with the urban areas of Chinsurah in the north and Mankundu in the south but Nowpara and Jarua Gram Panchayet form its western boundary. At present, there are 33 wards in the Chandannagar Municipal Corporation (Figs. 1 & 2).

Objectives

The main objectives of the study are stated below: