



**International Journal of Humanities & Social Science Studies (IJHSSS)**

*A Peer-Reviewed Bi-monthly Bi-lingual Research Journal*

ISSN: 2349-6959 (Online), ISSN: 2349-6711 (Print)

ISJN: A4372-3142 (Online) ISJN: A4372-3143 (Print)

Volume-V, Issue-II, January 2019, Page No. 143-147

Published by Scholar Publications, Karimganj, Assam, India, 788711

Website: <http://www.ijhsss.com>

---

**China Town of Kolkata: Possibilities of new horizon in SINO-INDIAN cultural interaction**

**Saptarshi Sengupta**

*Assistant Professor, Jain University*

**Abstract**

*Chinese people migrate to India in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. In also 21<sup>st</sup> century, India especially in Kolkata's Teritibazar & Tangra region's Chinatown area has been caring Chinese culture. New NDA govt has emphasised on cultural cooperation with China. Kolkata's Chinatown may be a chance for cultural assimilation of both the nations. It must be included in Kolkata's tourism map to increase the consciousness of the mass. Besides, Chinatown can play a vital role in cultural cooperation strategy with China. After 2014 new central govt try to improve the relation with China- in this context Chinatown of Kolkata's importance has been growing quite naturally.*

**Keywords:** *Migrate, Achipur, Teritibazar, Tangra, cultural cooperation, cultural assimilation, Commercial tourism, spread of Buddhism, social condition*

**DOI:** 10.29032/ijhsss.v5.i2.2019.143-147

---

China and India are two of the world's oldest civilisations and have co-existed in peace for millennia. Cultural and economic relations between China and India date back to ancient times. The first records of contact between China and India were written during the 2nd century BCE. The religion of Buddhism was transmitted from India to China in the 1st century CE.

China and India have also had some contact before the transmission of Buddhism. References to a people called the Chinas, now believed to be the Chinese, are found in ancient Indian literature. The Indian epic Mahabharata (c. 5th century BCE) contains references to "China", which may have been referring to the Qin state which later became the Qin Dynasty. Chanakya (c. 350-283 BCE), the prime minister of the Maurya Empire and a professor at Takshashila University, refers to Chinese silk as "cinamsuka" (Chinese silk dress) and "cinapatta" (Chinese silk bundle) in his Arthashastra.

It is well known all over the world that Buddhism from India had so much influence on China that virtually whole of China became Buddhist. In India Buddhism had risen since in Asoka's time, after Kalinga After the transmission of Buddhism from India to China from the 1st century onwards, many Indian scholars and monks travelled to China, such

as Batuo (fl. 464-495 CE)—first abbot of the Shaolin Monastery—and Bodhidharma—founder of Chan/Zen Buddhism—while many Chinese scholars and monks also travelled to India, such as Xuanzang (b. 604) and I Ching (635-713), both of whom were students at Nalanda University in Bihar. Xuanzang wrote the Great Tang Records on the Western Regions, an account of his journey to India, which later inspired Wu Cheng'en's Ming Dynasty novel Journey to the West, one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature. War, but slowly it declined in the face of Hinduism, the most ancient religion of the world which Indians had accepted and practised.

Trade relations via the Silk Road acted as economic contact between the two regions. The Silk Road not only served as a major trade route between India and China, but is also credited for facilitating the spread of Buddhism from India to East Asia.

During spread of colonialism of Europe in Asia, India and many countries were conquered by Muslims (Mughals) than Europeans particularly by the British. As China was considered too vast Europeans were satisfied by controlling Chinese coast. Thus Britain had Hong Kong and some other adjoining areas. Portuguese were satisfied with Macao with the decline of European occupying powers after First World War, independence movements got momentum. Thus during the period between 1919 end of second world war in 1945, independence movements in India and China got intensified. During the 19th century, China's growing opium trade with the British Raj triggered the First and Second Opium Wars. During World War II, India and China were played crucial roles in halting the progress of Imperial Japan.

**China-India relations**, also called **Sino-Indian relations** or **Indo-China relations**, refers to the bilateral relationship between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of India. Historically, India and China have had relations for more than 2,000 years, but the modern relationship began in 1950 when India was among the first countries to end formal ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and recognize the PRC as the legitimate government of Mainland China. China and India are the two countries and fastest growing major economies in the world. The resultant growth in China and India's international diplomatic and economic influence has also increased the significance of their bilateral relationship.

The **Chinese community in India** are a community of immigrants from China and Indian-born people of Chinese ancestry. The immigration started in the late 18th century to work at the Calcutta port and Madras Port. The ethnic Chinese have contributed too many areas of the social and economic life of Kolkata. Today many are engaged in manufacturing and trade of leather products as well as Chinese restaurants. The community numbers about 4,000 with around 2,000 living in Kolkata and 400 families in Mumbai. There are Chinatowns in Kolkata (Chinatown, Kolkata) and Mumbai (Mumbai).

The first recorded Chinese settler in India is Tong Achew, a trader who landed near Budge Budge in late 18th century. Achew set up a sugar cane plantation along with a sugar

factory. Achew brought in a band of Chinese workers to work in his plantation and factory. This was the first Chinese settlement in India. Achew died shortly after and the Chinese settlers moved to Kolkata. The place came to be named as Achipur, after Tong Achew. Achew's grave and a Chinese temple are still seen in Achipur.

Kolkata, then known as Calcutta, was the capital of British Colonised India from 1772 to 1911. It was also geographically the easiest accessible metropolitan area from China by land. The first person of Chinese origin to arrive in Calcutta was Yang Tai Chow who arrived in 1778 AD. He worked in a sugar mill with the eventual goal of saving enough to start a tea trade. Many of the earliest immigrants worked on the Khidderpore docks. A police report in 1788 mentions a sizable Chinese population settled in the vicinity of Bow Bazaar Street. In 19<sup>th</sup> cen. many Chinese people came to India through Bengal and started their living in Calcutta. One of the main settlements was Achipur. In the central Calcutta near the Teritibazaar area, the Chinese people started their living centre. The name of this area is China Town. Now a day, China town is the important area for the travellers, Chinese materials, Chinese restaurants etc. We can say that the China Town is the important area of Chinese culture in the heart of Calcutta. There are many Chinese temples exists in the China town.

One of the earliest records of immigration from China can be found in a short treatise from 1820. These record hints that the first wave of immigration was of Hakkas but does not elaborate on the professions of these immigrants. According to a later police census, there were 362 in Calcutta in 1837. A common meeting place was the Temple of Guan Yu, the god of war, located in the Chinese quarter near Dharmatolla. The temple of Tian How, god of ocean, built in 1848 AD. A certain C. Alabaster mentions in 1849 that Cantonese carpenters congregated in the Bow Bazar Street area. As late as 2006, Bow Bazar is still noted for carpentry, but few of the workers or owners are now Chinese. The Chinatown is divided into two portions, Old Chinatown (Tiretta Bazar) and New Chinatown (Tangra).

There are four groups of Chinese people in China town. They are Hakkas, Cantonese, Hupe and Shanghaiian. In Tu E Pe is the name of a newspaper which has been published from China town. It is a daily newspaper of 195 pages. Now a day, we can see there are 2000 Chinese family in New Chinatown (Tangra). They are living with an area of 189 sq km.

Phoenix, Lucky Star, Night fitness Club are the important lion and dragon dance teams in Chinatown. Ling Liang Church is to most beautiful church in this area. Apart from these, we can also see there is a 60 years old Kali Bari exists in Chinatown. Chinese people celebrated their Chinese New Year Festival, Moon Festival, Seven sister festival every year. There are some associations exists in Chinatown, like Tannery Owners Association, South Tangra Youth Club, Restaurant Owners Association, Buddha light International etc. Tei Moi, the Chinese school is located in Chinatown. Chinese Breakfast is available in Tiretta Bazar in Central Kolkata every morning. An initiative, Cha project is designed to preserve Tiretti Bazaar, but will also develop Tangra.

Tangra is a region in east Kolkata that traditionally housed a large number of tanneries owned by people of Hakka Chinese origin. "47 South Tangra Road", may be the most confusing postal address, as it used to cover the whole of Chinatown Tangra with over 350 tanneries. Most of the standing structures have been built, over many years, by the industrious Hakka Chinese, upon marshy and reclaimed low lying land. Over the past several decades, it has served as the location of Calcutta's Chinatown. This is not a coincidence; the Hakka Chinese of Calcutta has gradually turned this part of the Kolkata into an important destination for sourcing finished and semi-finished leather. The Hakka Chinese specialized in the manufacture of leather and turned it into one of the major industries of West Bengal, providing employment to tens of thousands of local inhabitants. In addition to the huge volume of exports to the developing and developed countries, finished leather is supplied to the major shoe and leather goods manufacturers all over the country. Many made-to-order shoe shops in Kolkata are also run by entrepreneurs from this community.

Food from Tangra is a distinct variety of traditional Hakka Chinese cuisine adapted to Indian ingredients and the Bengali palate. This has spread to the rest of India, along with the recipes earlier unique to Tangra. Tangra is now the most popular destination for Chinese food. Chinese food sold in Tangra restaurants are now known all over the world as 'Hakka Style' Chinese food.

The success of "Hakka style" Chinese food in the rest of India encouraged a migration of many Chinese families to other cities as the economic fortunes of Tangra decayed. Many landmark Chinese eateries, including Nanking, Waldorf, Peiping and Fat Mama have closed or changed hands and fortunes. The once prosperous Calcutta Chinese community is now clearly in decline. However, a boom in Tangra's unique Indian-Chinese food is attracting a lot of attention these days and the cuisine will probably live on in Kolkata and in the global Indian Diaspora.

Kolkata Chinatown is changing rapidly. The population is no longer renewed by waves of migration and many traditional professions such as dentistry, laundry and tannery are no longer the preserve of the Chinese. The West Bengal government, under direction from the Supreme Court, recently moved all tanneries to Bantala, a suburb in the east of Kolkata. However, Tangra has been an integral part of the culture of the Chinese community in India. Now a day, we can see the Chinatown is becoming less importance in Kolkata. Chinese people are living in unhygienic condition. Their economical condition is going to down every day. Illegal tanneries, chemical factories are one the main reason for their poor physical structure. The economical condition also reflects their buildings, rooms, factories etc. Earlier we can see there was popularity on Chinese dental clinic. But now in the time of globalisation, citizens do not visit their dental clinic as earlier. So it is one of the reasons of their poor economical condition. Chinatown is famous for delicious foods like – Momo, Chowmin, and Noodles etc. But after the development of many Chinese restaurants in Kolkata like Mainland China, Tung Fung etc people rarely visit to Chinatown now. Chinatown's glorious days are going faded day by day.

**Conclusion:** Chinatown is one of the important areas in Calcutta, but now the condition of this area is going to a dark phase due to economic, social condition and globalisation. So, we have to highlight their condition to the Government to take some decision on their favour. We have to take an important role to focus Chinatown to the whole world and to make Indo China relationship quite better than earlier. Government have to take vital decision on Chinatown for their welfare and we think that Chinatown will become the best tourism spot. Commercial tourism is the best way to bring a light on Chinatown and to build a good relationship between Indo China. Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited China on 15<sup>th</sup> May, 2015. Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave a speech on the culture and civilization of India and China and their friendship. It is one positive way for the good relationship between India and China. Government have to take an initial step to promote Chinatown as one of the important tourism spot, the centre to know the culture of China.

### References:

1. Claudine, S. Bengal as Reflected in two South-East Asian Travelogues from the Early Nineteenth Century". In Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1800. New Delhi: Manohar Publication, 1999
2. Hassan, A. The Chinese in Calcutta: A Study of Racial Minority. In Aspects of Society And Culture in Calcutta, 85- 9, 1982
3. [http://jawharsircar.com/assets/pdf/The\\_Chinese\\_of\\_Calcutta\\_Jawhar\\_Sircar.pdf](http://jawharsircar.com/assets/pdf/The_Chinese_of_Calcutta_Jawhar_Sircar.pdf)
4. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/narendra-modis-china-mongolia-and-south-korea-visit/specialcoverage/47267682.cms>
5. <http://www.rebuildchinatown.org>
6. <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/prime-minister-narendra-modis-china-visit/article7231248.ece>
7. Key, John. China A History. London : Harper Collins Publishers, 2009
8. Key, John. The Honourable Company. London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991
9. Kwai-YunLi and Camp, Deoli . An Oral History of Chinese Indians from 1962 to 1966. Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, 2011
10. Mandal, Banasree and Basu, Dr. Sanghamitra. 'Revitalization of China Town - Tangra, Kolkata : An Inclusive Approach for a Marginalized Community', 2014
11. Mayhew, S. A Dictionary of Geography , Fourth Edition, London : Oxford University Press, 2009
12. Shelland, B. Calcutta's Chinatown. Cornhill Magazine, 57 (September), 277-85, 1924