

## B E Y O N D B O R D E R S

THE 200 YEAR  
LEGACY OF THE  
KOLKATA CHINESE



DISCOVER INDIA PROGRAM

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# **Beyond Borders: The 200 Year Legacy of The Kolkata Chinese**

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## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work incorporated in this report entitled "***Beyond Borders: The 200 Year Legacy of the Kolkata Chinese***" submitted by the undersigned Research Team was carried out under my mentorship. Such material as has been obtained from other sources has been duly acknowledged.

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## **Abstract**

For over two hundred years, Cheenapara, a Chinese community, has been living in the city of Kolkata. During this prolonged period of its stay in India, the community has vastly adapted its lifestyle and culture to suit the demands of the Indian geography, and the prevalent political and socio-economic scenario in the state of West Bengal. Our ethnographic case study is oriented toward understanding the lifestyle and cultural changes that this community has made to sustain in the Indian subcontinent.

Our principal aims and objectives in this study are as follows:

- To explore the culture, heritage and identity of the Chinese community in Kolkata
- To assess the political, social, cultural and lifestyle maintenance changes that have occurred in this community in the course of about two centuries
- To identify the principal factors that have contributed toward these changes
- To understand why Cheenapara is the only Chinatown of India
- To analyze why Kolkata's Chinese population of about 20,000 has dwindled to a mere 4000 (Datta, 2016)
- To examine the challenges imposed on this community by the Indian and Chinese governments by their political stances and military expeditions
- To investigate what the future holds in store for Kolkata's Cheenapara

These aims and objectives are essentially the sub-questions that characterize our two primary research questions. These are:

1. What are the important political, social, cultural and lifestyle changes that the Chinese in Kolkata have undergone/made to sustain in the Indian subcontinent?
2. What are the implications of these changes?

Our study population consists of the local, Chinese community members of Tiretta Bazar (Old Chinatown) and Tangra (New Chinatown). In this project, we employ nonprobability sampling. A mix of convenience, judgmental and snowball sampling is used to recruit our sample. Based on our secondary data analysis/literature review and using our discretion we created an initial list of interviewees. This judgmental sampling

directed us toward senior citizens, women, the younger generation, businessmen such as owners of tanneries, shoemakers, restaurants, dentists, beauty parlors and carpenters, religious heads and priests in temples and churches, educational administrators, artists, Indian citizens and other relevant individuals/organizational representatives engaged in the sustenance of the Chinese community. Using this initial sample we recruited our subsequent sample and through this snowballing technique, we reached out to other key persons in the Chinese community who can enlighten us on the culture, heritage, identity and lifestyle of the Kolkata Chinese. As we ask our existing interviewees to connect us to subsequent subjects from among their acquaintances, we ourselves engaged in building our network by approaching more subjects for our study based on accessibility and physical proximity. This technique is popularly referred to as convenience sampling. In this way, we conducted eighty-three interviews to analyze our research propositions.

Our study indicates that the lack of identity, economic opportunities, and even basic amenities, have together triggered Chinese outmigration. If nothing is done in the next five years, the Tiretti Bazaar and Tangra that we know, we have seen, will be gone. But despite the failures of the many individual and group efforts, and ubiquitous government apathy, there may still be hope for Kolkata's Chinese. With the efforts being put in by the CHA project and other revival initiatives, it is still not too late to protect, revive and preserve the culture and heritage of Cheenapara.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## CHEENAPARA: THE CHINESE ENCLAVE IN KOLKATA

### The History of Kolkata

Kolkata, the City of Joy, is simultaneously antiquated and modernistic--with Victorian era architecture neighboring high rise commercial structures (Chaudhuri, 2015). It is a city with a soul, and its people, despite the squalor and destitution, adore it. Cups of warm tea, refreshing and incessant monsoon rains, poetry and Rabindra Sangeet, travelling by trams and double-decker buses, are some of the key elements that constitute the everyday life of a Kolkatite (Lonely Planet, 2016). Formerly known as Calcutta, Kolkata is the capital of West Bengal. Situated in eastern India, along the banks of the Hooghly River, the city is essentially a consolidation of three West Bengal villages--Kulikata, Gobindapur and Sutanuti (Banerjee, 2012, p.1).



**Figure 1.1: The City of Kolkata as in 2016**

Note: Source: Google Maps. "Kolkata City Map." Google Maps. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Dec. 2016.

As Kolkata was one of the country's major trade routes and since the East India Company sought to protect its trade interests, the city was made the country's capital during the British Rule. With the Hooghly River running on one side and the salt lakes situated on the other, the Company could clearly prevent rivals and even their own armies and navies from gaining access to their trade routes (Ferguson p.24 cited by Cohen, 2016). Kolkata was also the biggest economy in Eastern India and it connected the North-Eastern states to the rest of the country (Cohen, 2016). At that time, Kolkata even served as India's cultural and intelligence center. Along with Mumbai (then Bombay) and Chennai (then Madras), Kolkata possessed the country's first Western education colleges--the Presidency and Scottish Church Colleges (Kulke and Rothermund, 1998, p.235).



**Figure 1.2. Military Map of the City of Kolkata as in 1836**

Note: *Military Operations Map of Kolkata*, National Library of India, 1836. Map. Kolkata.

## **The History of The Kolkata Chinese**

Given the locational, political, economic, cultural and intellectual significance of Kolkata, alongside the Bengali Hindus, numerous other communities also resided in the city. Among them are some minority communities such as the Bengali-Muslims, the Sindhis, the Biharis, the Agraharis, the Bohras, the South Indians, the Anglo-Indians, the Armenians, the Jews and the Chinese (Gupta, Mukherjee and Banerjee, 2009). In this ethnographic research project, we are concerned with the minority community, the Kolkata Chinese.

Most large nations have Chinatowns. The San Francisco Chinatown, the largest outside of Asia, is a huge tourist attraction (Astiadi, 2014). India was once home to multiple Chinatowns including Cheena Gully in Mumbai and some in Shillong (Dhapa, 2009). However, following the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the detainment of a large number of the Chinese, the many atrocities committed against them, and lack of government apology and subsequent redeeming efforts, resulted in their emigration to other countries (Datta, 2015). Given that currently, there are fewer than 4000 Chinese residing in Kolkata, we consider it critical to analyze the causes for the drastic decline in this population and, if and will this trend continue to erase a legacy of more than 230 years. We also want to know, if at least at this point in time, the political heads of India and China are taking some serious efforts to preserve what is one of the world's oldest Chinatowns. If indeed so, what are these initiatives and plans? Where do they lead the Kolkata Chinatowns in the next five years?

The first documented case of Chinese immigration to India was in a book titled *A Maritime Record* published in 1820 AD (Prakash and Lombard, 1999). The book states that there was a significant Chinese presence in Kolkata in the 18th century. However, the presence of Chinese words in the vocabulary of the local language of the time and the availability of Chinese artifacts, hint an earlier presence dating back to the fifth century (Prakash and Lombard, 1999). There exists a police record from 1788 which mentions a significant presence of Chinese in Kolkata. From the records of Li Van Phuc, a Vietnamese envoy, it is evident that there were several hundred Hakka Chinese in Kolkata in 1830. However, they were not Buddhist (Gupta, Mukherjee and Banerjee, 2009: 131).

The first large-scale influx of the Chinese to India was, however, chiefly determined by the presence of trade routes via sea to Britain and Portugal (Alabaster as cited by Mukhopadhyay, 1975). The numerous economic opportunities and incentives

that stemmed from these routes, and in particular, from opium and tea trade were key determinants of Chinese migration patterns to India. Back in the days, tea was in huge demand in Britain, as the beverage was available only in China. But the country had strict trade rules and traded only in silver (Roblin, 2016). Given that the British had only a limited amount of silver, the East India Company was given leeway to trade opium—a medicinal drug that was strictly regulated at that point in time (Roblin, 2016). Opium was grown in India and traded in exchange for tea. Soon millions of Chinese became addicted to opium which led China to declare a ban on opium trade (Roblin, 2016). Following the ban, the British declared war on China. The Opium Wars resulted in a colossal loss for the Chinese; for the British it was a significant win. They acquired free trade routes; engaged in unrestricted opium trade; obtained their favorite beverage, tea; and as bonus, had access to skilled laborers from China (Roblin, 2016).

The First World War, the Opium Wars, the Maoist Regime, the Sino-Japanese wars and the many other political upheavals resulted in thousands of Chinese migrating to India (Alabaster as cited by Mukhopadhyay, 1975). This number exponentially increased until the Sino-Indian war of 1962 (Biswas, 2004; The Observer, 2004). The Chinese who landed in India, started as sailors, carpenters, boat builders, sugarcane plantation and tea plantation workers, and gradually became tannery owners, shoe-makers and dentists (Alabaster as cited by Mukhopadhyay, 1975). Over time, they also started running restaurants and beauty salons (Biswas, 2004; The Observer, 2004; Sen, 2005; Datta, 2014).

Originally, the community was rather closed and marrying outside of the community was rare. They entered into wedlock in the Chinese Mainland and brought their spouses to India (Alabaster as cited by Mukhopadhyay, 1975). With the passage of time, the Chinese have opened up to other cultural influences so much so they have begun to celebrate Hindu festivals (Panday, 2009). The renowned Chinese Kali Temple was erected by one such Hindu-Chinese devotee. The Chinese also engaged in cuisine mergers: authentic Chinese cuisine blended with Indian spices gave way to the Indian-Chinese cuisine designed especially to suit the Indian palate. Notably, the Chinese run a large number of restaurants across the country (Datta, 2015).

## **Research Focus and Research Design**

### **Aims and Objectives, and Research Questions**

Our principal aims and objectives in this study are as follows:

- to explore the culture, heritage and identity of the Chinese community in Kolkata;
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## **Sampling, Data Collection Techniques and Research Methods**

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The research method we used is ethnographic case study. Our research topic is not limited to a single aspect; it encompasses the analysis of several key factors such as politics, economics, lifestyle, and the culture of a community. A combination of data collection methods such as participant observation, semi-structured interviews, archival document analysis and other secondary data analysis was employed to capture the essence of the place and the people. These research methods are customary in ethnographic research. In our role as participant observers, the team engaged in the on-going activities on field and recorded its observations. To do so, we obtained the prior permission and approval of the study group. After receiving the study group's approval, we spent time with the community to understand their attitudes and actions, and perceptions and practices. Importantly, we laid aside biases and viewed the phenomena from the lens of the sample/the study group while conducting research.

Our study is essentially a case study given that we are focusing on and analyzing a group/community and its relationship to a/few phenomena. Since this case study was conducted in our study group's real world context, it gave us a detail picture of what the

sample population is really like. Previously, we had collected secondary data sources such as newspaper and journals articles, book chapters, some archival documents, and photo and video documentaries. We extensively studied these sources and had identified trends and patterns along with gaps and limitations in previous research undertakings. Such analysis greatly helped us in filtering out our research aims and objectives and our research questions. This study will not be a comparative case study because Cheenapara in Kolkata is the only Chinatown of India; the remnants of Mumbai's Cheena Gully have almost completely vanished.

Nonetheless, it is a combination of descriptive and exploratory study. We provide in-depth, detailed descriptions of the characteristics of the study group and relevant phenomena. We also concurrently, investigated the reasons for past and present happenings and possible solutions for the future of the Chinese community. Our data is typically not measurable and verifiable, and hence, our research is fundamentally qualitative in nature. The key advantage of this technique is that it allows us to examine complex questions in-depth unlike quantitative methods. However, in addition to utilizing the flexibility afforded by qualitative research, we also engaged in some quantitative, descriptive analysis. Such analysis helped us to throw more light on the nature of our sample, in particular, its dispersion.

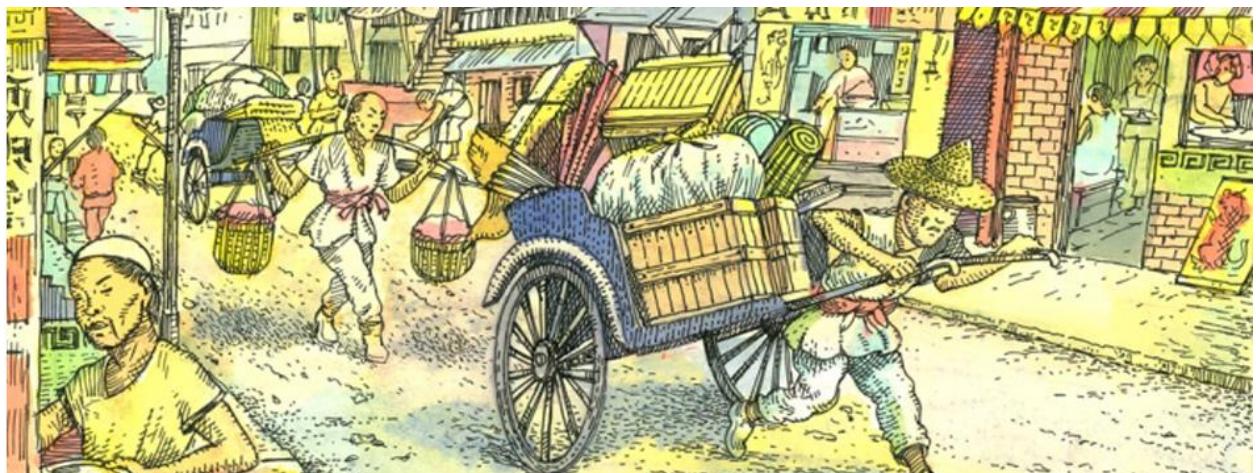
The rest of this report is organized as follows. Chapter Two includes an in-depth literature review/secondary data analysis that help us understand previous studies done in relation to our research propositions. Chapter Three elucidates the research design, sampling techniques, and data collection methods used in this study. Chapter Four and Chapter Five consist of detailed analysis of our data. Chapter Six concludes our study by making sense of our findings and providing suggestions for future steps.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CHEENAPARA: A TRIP BACK IN TIME

#### **Beyond Borders: Tracing Chinese Immigration into The Indian Subcontinent**

The first wave of Chinese immigration to India is attributed to the Hakka Chinese dating back to the late 18th century. Soon after, in the early 1800s, motivated by intentions of accumulating wealth and escaping political upheavals in the homeland, several Chinese workers moved to Mumbai and Kolkata (Bhatia, 2014). East India Company's connections with Hong Kong, the trade relationships that existed then between India and China, the famine that hit Central China in the late 18th century, the First World War, the Kuomintang (or the KMT, Chinese Nationalist Party) rule between 1928 and 1945, Mao Zedong's communist regime and the revolution in 1949 are some of the key factors that explain Chinese influx into the Indian subcontinent (Bhatia, 2014; Krishnan, 2013; Goenka, 2016). The immigrants, typically, took up odd jobs in the docks, and worked as sailors, carpenters and mechanics in the East India Company (Bhatia, 2014). Some of them set up leather tanneries and opened restaurants (Krishnan, 2013).



**Figure 2.1: Kolkata's Chinatown in the Mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century**

Note: Kolkata on Wheels (2016) Available at: <http://www.kolkataonwheels.com/road-history/ChinaTown.php>.

The earliest known Chinese occupancy of West Bengal dates back to around 1780 when Tong Achew came to Budge Budge with a group of 100 Chinese and tried to set up a sugar mill in the land offered by Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of India (Datta, 2014; The Observer, 2004). However, he died soon after and his mill was abandoned; but his workmen remained and more Chinese migrated to India (Datta, 2014; The Observer, 2004). After Achew died, the place came to be known Achipur after him. Even today, his grave and a Chinese temple are seen there (Biswas, 2002; Dhapa, 2008). Following Achew's death, the Chinese moved to Kolkata.

Kolkata's current Chinese population is a combination of people with Cantonese, Hakka and Hubei origins (Staff Reporter of The Telegraph, 2008). But the first and largest Chinese settlement is still the one at Tiretti Bazaar/Old Chinatown (Staff Reporter of The Telegraph, 2008). This marketplace was designed by the Italian architect and town planner, Edward Tiretti, in whose name the area is known till date (Datta, 2014). Tiretti Bazaar is well known for its authentic Chinese breakfast and the six famous Chinese temples (Datta, 2014). In course of years, a large section of the Chinese in Tiretti Bazaar moved to the eastern part of Kolkata in Tangra, and formed what is called the New Chinatown/Tangra which is famous for its Chinese restaurants and six Chinese Cemeteries (Datta, 2014).

The original Hakka immigrants had intended their migration to be a temporary one that was driven by economic quest (Nevatia, 2014). But the Communist Regime established in 1949 changed it all and Chinese politics forced the Chinese overseas to think against homecoming. However, in October 1962, India went to war with China and yet again, the Chinese psyche suffered. This time, it was not the loss of their motherland; it was their identity as Indian Chinese.

Over time, the Chinese became associated with professions such as shoe making, carpentry and dentistry (Biswas, 2002). Nevertheless, leather tanning continued to be their chief trade (The Observer, 2004). But the filth and squalor associated with the tanneries made scholars like Rudyard Kipling call Kolkata "the city of dreadful night," and Sir Robert Clive, the British adventurer, refer to it as "the most wicked place in the universe" (The Observer, 2004). In February 2002, the Supreme Court finally reacted to these and other criticisms on environmental degradation and health hazards. It ordered the closure of these tanneries on the eastern fringes of Kolkata which released untreated effluents into open drains (Mitra, 2002; Dhapa, 2008). It also ordered that tanneries be moved to an "ultra-modern tanning complex, the Calcutta Leather Complex (CLC) in

Bantala, 17 km south of Tangra,” that is equipped with proper waste treatment plants (Mitra, 2002: 1). Kolkata had 531 tanneries and 230 of these were in Tangra (Mitra, 2002; Dhapa, 2008). The death knell on tanneries meant yet another outmigration of the Kolkata Chinese.

Next to tanneries, running restaurants and beauty salons happened to be the dominant way of livelihood for the Kolkata Chinese (Mitra, 2002). But over time, these businesses have proved to be less profitable and the English-educated new generation began switching to corporate careers (Mitra, 2002). Chinese parents are also no longer content with the education they get from the local Chinese school (Pei May) and so they send them to English-medium schools such as St. Xavier’s or Don Bosco and then overseas for higher education (Mitra, 2002). And that simply means yet another steady exodus.

### **Mumbai’s Cheena Gully**

The early 1900s witnessed large-scale movement of Chinese into Mumbai, in particular, in and around the dock areas (Bhatia, 2014). As typical of immigrant populations, the Chinese also tried to recreate their ethnic culture and food and restaurants gave them the ideal start. Lok Jun, set up in 1895, was the oldest, and was followed by Kamling which stood on Churchgate Street near Marine Drive. Lok Jun was put up on what is presently called Shuklaji Street in Kamathipura; the street was named “Cheena Gully” as it was made of mostly Chinese residents and their small businesses (Bhatia, 2014). The Chinese also focused on reviving religious rites and rituals; they built a shrine in a three storey building in Mumbai dedicated to Kwan Kung or the warrior god. Kwan Kung is believed to remove all obstacles and bring prosperity (Bhatia, 2014). This temple has a lot of devotees and visitors during two occasions--the Chinese New Year and the Moon festival.

Back in the days, the British were very suspicious of the Chinese nationals, and their clubs and associations, and so keenly watched their activities (Bhatia, 2014). Even the Chinese Seaman’s Association, founded in 1944, was under their radar. The Consulate of the Republic of China had to send a letter to the Bombay government explaining that the association was put in place solely for purposes of ensuring the well-being of sailors and to coordinate with shipping companies (Bhatia, 2014). The suspicious outlook created by the British continued long after they left the country and reached its zenith in 1962 after the Sino-Indian War.

With the advent of the war, dock jobs depleted and the Hakka, Canton, Hubei and Shandong Chinese started restaurants and beauty salons (Bhatia, 2014). Chinese beauticians were in demand in the city, particularly, Bollywood actresses were greatly in need of them (Bhatia, 2014). Leather goods were another source of livelihood for the Mumbai Chinese who got their raw material from the tanneries of Tangra, Kolkata's own Chinatown, and made shoes. A few managed to thrive as dentists. But post the 1962 War and mass Chinese internment in the miserable camps in Deoli, Rajasthan, what is left of Mumbai's "Cheena Gully" is a tiny Chinese community--who are ironically, today, more Indian than Chinese (Bhatia, 2014).



**Figure 2.2: The Kwan Kung Temple in Mumbai**

Note: Source: Bhatia (2014).

## **Comprehending The Lifestyle of The Kolkata Chinese: The Political, Social, Economic and Cultural Underpinnings of Cheenapara**

### **The Aftermath of the Sino-Indian War of 1962**

“No other city in India has had [a] prolonged, albeit erratic, contact with China” (Sen, 2005:3). Nevertheless, in 1962, when violent border aggressions broke out along the disputed Himalayan Indo-China border, the Chinese in Kolkata, for the first time, felt “unwanted” here (Dutta, 2012). Ananya Dutta, in an article published in *The Hindu* in 2012, points out that since 1780, the Sino migration to India was always intended to be temporary. That said, absent this disruption, history would have had a different story to tell about the Cheenapara in Kolkata. In particular, (a) to those who chose to stay in India to escape the Chinese political turmoil that followed the Second World War, (b) to those who learnt that nothing they owned remained in their homeland, and (c) to those who saw no hope of going back and starting afresh in Sino soil, India could have perhaps been a new home. But the 1962 border conflict turned the tables around and the city witnessed a gradual and steady decline in its Chinese population from about 20,000 to a mere 4,000 today (Dutta, 2012).

The citizen-like treatment accorded to the Chinese ceased post the 1962 conflict. Suspicions about being connected to Communist China led to arrests and the Indian government incarcerated thousands of Chinese-Indians in an internment camp in Deoli, in dry and hot Rajasthan (Goenka, 2016). The internees suffered there unlawfully for years without trial and several thousand others were repatriated to China and some chose to migrate to Canada (Sen, 2005; Dutta, 2012; Goenka, 2016). Almost all internees lost their properties--they were either sold off or looted (Dutta, 2012). Those that remained had severe restrictions on their movement (Sen, 2005). They were expected to report to the District Intelligence Branch regarding their whereabouts (Dutta, 2012). They were, typically, confined to the limits of Chinatown in Tangra (near Dhapa), and required to obtain special permits to go the Howrah railway station, the Dum Dum airport and to any place that was outside the restricted zone (Sen, 2005; Dutta, 2016). And the restrictions were relaxed only in the early 1980s.

Having lost their property, dismissed from jobs held in the private sector and in government agencies, the only occupations left to the Kolkata Chinese were the restaurant business, tanning and shoemaking (Sen, 2005). The terrible treatment of Chinese residents by the Indian government and the troubles and isolation of several thousand

innocent civilians after the Sino-Indian War are movingly presented in Rafeeq Elias's recent documentary, *The Legend of Fat Mama*.

In 1976, after a gap of 15 years, India and China restored diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level... Since then, the two countries have witnessed substantial growth in political and cultural relations. Bilateral trade has improved from a few million dollars to about \$14 billion a year... In 1998, the Central government finally allowed the naturalization of the ethnic Chinese living in Calcutta... (Sen, 2005: 2)

China also reopened its consulate office in Kolkata in 2007 after a gap of 45 years (The Telegraph, 2008).

### **Social and Economic Status**

The Tangra Chinese is predominantly concerned with manufacturing finished leather from raw skin and hides (Mitra, 2002). Their workplaces are typically located in the ground floor of their houses where they engage in activities such as “soaking, liming, pickling, chroming and tanning-under the unwavering attention of a patriarch” (Mitra, 2002:1). The workers are closely supervised by family members from their living quarters, and high compound walls prevent onlookers from outside from having a view of the manufacturing tasks (Mitra, 2002).

Unfortunately, the Hakka tanners are oblivious of the hazardous waste that emerges in the form of a greenish sludge that flows down the drains (Mitra, 2002). Consisting of chromium waste, this sludge poses major health threats (Mitra, 2002). In 2002, the Supreme Court ordered the closure/shift of these units to an ultra-modern facility in Bantala (Mitra, 2002). Despite the availability of treatment facilities and large amounts of water, the cheap labour at Tangra and the belongingness to “their loved ghetto” made Bantala unappealing to the tanners (Mitra, 2002). But regardless of their economical and emotional concerns, the leather economy was no more to be. Today, the vanishing tanneries have transformed to Chinese restaurants (Goenka, 2016).

The Chinese are especially critical of the West Bengal government. Previously, several hundreds of the population left to Canada, Australia, the US and Hong Kong in the 1940s and this out-migration has been attributed largely to a lack of protection for the Chinese owned tanneries against the extortion rackets (Biswas, 2002). Next, post the Sino-Indian War of 1962, the West Bengal government grossly failed to help sustain the Kolkata Chinese community amidst the suspicion-driven, arbitrary acts of the national

government (Biswas, 2002). Simultaneously, at this point in time, the Calcutta Improvement Trust (CIT) mowed down the shantytown in Sun Yatsen Street, Blackburn Lane and Phear's Lane (Das, 2003). A large synagogue and a huge playground near the once famous Nanking restaurant are also gone (Das, 2003). Not just buildings, but even Chinese businessmen succumbed to the destructive arm of the city. This time it was unionized labour that forced Chinese owners to abandon their famous shoe shops on Bentinck Street (Das, 2013). Gambling and opium dens now mar the once renowned Sea Ip Church and the once grand and now in shambles, Nanking restaurant (Das, 2003).

Even drinking water, a basic amenity, is unavailable in New Chinatown/Tangra. Drinking water has emerged as a huge problem across the country only in the recent years. But for Tangra residents, it has been a problem for many decades (Jawed, 2010). They do not get water supply from the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) and residents have had to purchase water which is delivered by the van rickshaw pullers (Jawed, 2010). Made up of a mere 2500 votes falling under ward number 58 and 66, Chinatown has little to deliver in terms of electoral voice and power (Jawed, 2010). For their part, the politicians have failed the Tangra people again and again. Paul Chung, the President of the Indian Chinese Association laments:

The Trinamool had promised a lot of things, but they forgot us as soon as they came to power. In fact, councilors blatantly ask for bribe when we go to them asking for developmental work at Tangra. The local administration at Tangra (the Chinese hub at the eastern part of the city and home to India's only Chinatown) helped us reclaim our Tung Oon Church, which was a heritage building (Nandi, 2016).

### **The Rites and Rituals of the Chinese**

Despite the socio-economic challenges that they confronted, the Indian Chinese have managed to successfully retain some of their key traditions and customs. This is particularly evident from the various festivals that they celebrate. The customary Chinese New Year (CNY), which is also popularly referred to as the Spring Festival, is the foremost among these. CNY celebration begins several days prior to the New Year and massive stages are set up at Tangra and Tiretti Bazaar (Datta, 2011). On New Year's Day, the conventional lion and dragon dance performances are held in the streets of Tangra and Tiretti Bazaar "accompanied by beating of drums and cymbals and ... loud firecrackers" (Datta, 2011: 3). On this day, people wear new, in particular, red clothes, make offerings to household deities, host reunion banquets for family and friends, and gift red envelopes stuffed with money to children (Time and Date, 2016). Each year is identified with a

particular animal name-from among the 12 animals associated with the Chinese zodiac. (Tang, 2017)

The second important Chinese festival is the Moon festival which is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar moon (Leon, 2009). The Chinese host a family dinner consisting of moon cakes, fruits, shell-boiled groundnuts, and tea, and appreciate the Moon (Leon, 2009). Another noteworthy Chinese festival is the Dragon Boat festival (Wu, 2016) or the Duanmu festival that is held on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese lunar calendar (Time and Date, 2016). During this festival, the Chinese people, typically, conduct dragon races; consume rice dumplings; drink realgar wine; wear talismans to keep away evil spirits; and hang pictures of Zhong Kui, a mythical guardian figure, on their doors (Time and Date, 2016).

### **Chinese Schools and Learning Mandarin**

Next to rites and rituals, preserving their language and educational system was imperative for the Kolkata Chinese. Built by a committee of the Chinese Tannery Owners' Association, the Pei May Chinese School in Kolkata is an 85 year-old school (Jawed, 2010). After Moi Kwang on CR Avenue was shut down due to lack of students, Pei May was the only Chinese school in India (Datta, 2014). Students at Pei May were not just taught Literature and Mathematics, but were also encouraged to interact in Mandarin. Though fourth and fifth generations of Kolkata Chinese still speak Chinese at home, the younger generation can barely read and/or write in their mother tongue (Datta, 2014). In an effort to revive their dying language, the school was especially concerned with teaching Mandarin (Datta, 2014). Even when there was a critical shortage of textbooks, the school managed to import them from China and Taiwan with the help of the Indian Chinese Association for Culture, Welfare and Development and The Chinese Embassy of India.

<b>Formal Name</b>	<b>Local Names</b>
Huaqiao	Hua Chiao/ Hwa Chiao
Jiahua	Chia Hua/ Chia Hwa
Jianguo	Chien Kuo
Meiguang	Mei Kuang
Minzhong	Min Chung
Peimei	Pei Moy/ Pei May
Shengxin	Sing Sum
Xinghua	Hsing Hua/ Hsing Hwa
Zhenhua	Chen Hua/ Chen Hwa
Zhonghua	Chung Hua/ Chung Hwa
Zhongshan	Chung Shan
Zhongzheng	Chung Cheng

**Table 2.1: List of All Chinese Schools that Existed in Kolkata**

Note- Source- Zhang, Xing. *Preserving Cultural Identity Through Education*. 1st ed. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2010. Print.

It is important to note here that the Pei May High School is now lost. It was closed in 2010 following infighting among the members of the school panel (Jawed, 2010). Liu Kuo Chao, one of the members, in December 2009, created a separate school committee and called himself the principal and president of the school (Jawed, 2010). Amidst allegations that he was trying to usurp the community's property, Liu maintained that the previous committee had no legal authority to run the school and moved court against that committee.

### **The Chinese Cuisine**

Food is another vital component of a country's culture and so was it to the Kolkata Chinese. Situated in the crowded street of Tiretti Bazaar, Gina Huan, a third generation Chinese resident's eatery, "is one of the few remaining places in India where one can buy authentic Chinese snacks like steamed pork buns, dim sum, and light, subtly sweet, sesame sprinkled deep-fried batter balls" (Krishnan, 2013:1). Despite the decline in authentic Chinese food, even now, visitors make it to the Sunday morning market between 6:30 and 8:30 am to have the traditional Tiretti Bazaar breakfast (Ghosh, 2015). The Sunday market is also the best place to shop for "Chinese cabbage, mustard greens, dumplings, homemade noodles, shumai, Chinese sausages, steamed glutinous rice, meatballs and so on" (Ghosh, 2015:1). Another place to taste traditional Chinese breakfast is the lane near the Lal Bazaar police station, where some Chinese hawkers sell warm pork momos, chicken sausages and prawn wafers stored in steel steamers (Nevatia, 2014).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **EXPLORING CHEENAPARA**

#### **Sampling Techniques, Study Sample, Sample Dispersion and Data Collection**

##### **Methods**

Our study was conducted largely in two areas: Tiretti Bazaar or Old Chinatown and Tangra or New Chinatown which are about five kilometres from each other. Besides these two areas, we also conducted several interviews in Bantala, a key industrial area that is located in the outskirts of Kolkata. An important category of our sample, the leather tannery owners, conducted business in this area. Our study also took us to Bentinck Street where we interviewed some businessmen engaged in the shoemaking business.

Our first stop was Tangra or New Chinatown. Our initial approach was that of convenience sampling. However, several scholars, photographers, individual activists, group activists, the Chinese Consulate representatives, and Indian government representatives had often visited the area and had interacted with the Chinese population there. Given that nothing concrete had emerged out of these discussions and discourses, the Chinese had become sceptical, pessimistic and reluctant to engage in one more conversation in which they had to share their professional challenges and personal problems. At this juncture, we reverted to our other option, the snowball sampling technique. We reached out to our contacts we had identified prior to our arrival and started scheduling our interviews with them. Following our interviews with our initial contacts, we made more visits to Tiretti Bazaar and Tangra. But this time, we referred to the people whom we had already interviewed, in particular, we mentioned the name of Ms. Monica Liu, the Restaurant Don who ran five restaurants in the area and who was previously a tannery owner. Monica Liu was also subject to the Deoli camp imprisonment during the Sino-Indian War of 1962. We also referred to Mr. Dominic Lee, the sauce factory owner and a fourth generation Chinese. Once they heard the names of these highly popular and respected individuals from the Chinese community, the Tiretti Bazaar and Tangra Chinese were more willing to discuss their culture, lifestyle and identity on the Indian soil.

In Kolkata, there are three notable Chinese communities--the Hakka, the Cantonese and the Hubei. While the Cantonese community came from the Guangdong province of China, the Hubei Community came from the Hubei province of Central China. The Hakkas were fundamentally nomadic in nature and have always been treated

as guests/temporary visitors. (Basu, 2011). The Cantonese were largely involved in shoe-making, carpentry and the leather tannery business. The Hubei, however, were mostly dentists. The Hakkas either bought and ran leather tanneries or started restaurants. This categorization is derived from our secondary data analysis which includes literature review of several journal articles and books, and archival document analysis. Based on this grouping, we covered the three communities and their respective professions in our study.

Once our snowball sampling and convenience sampling techniques started working, and our secondary data analysis helped us sort out our interviewees by profession, we decided to employ our third method as well--judgmental sampling. Using our discretion we identified groups of individuals who can help us understand the past, present and future of the Indian Chinese. The groups are as follows.

### ***Senior Citizens***

The elderly can provide extremely useful information, especially, in relation to historical events and in terms of connecting the various points in time. Who else is better equipped to educate us on the origin and evolution of Kolkata's Chinatown, the religious, cultural, and lifestyle transformations the population has undergone, the patterns of influx and outmigration of the Indian Chinese at various points in time, the political and socio-economic causes that triggered these events, and the future prospects that lay ahead of this community?

### ***Women***

Women are thought to be the embodiment of a community's culture. They are also believed to be the principal carriers of conventional norms and values from one generation to the next. Be it the teaching of their mother tongue, wearing traditional outfits and celebrating customary festivals, cooking indigenous food items, or practicing religious rites and rituals, it is the women in a family who help sustain ethnic groups in foreign lands. Any changes to their fundamental lifestyle and habits, women are likely the first to take note of them.

### ***Younger Generation***

While the senior citizens of a community effectively capture the past of a community, the women of a community can realistically portray their present status. That said, it is none

other than the younger generation of the community who can speak about the future of that community. With regard to the Kolkata Chinese, our research is to a large extent focussed on understanding if five years from now there would still be a Chinatown in Kolkata and if so, how flourishing it will be. And for that we need to first know if the younger generation will remain in India and for how long. Also, it is the younger generation that can speak about the extent to which ancient customs and traditions prevail in these modern times.

### ***Tannery Owners and Shoe-makers***

When the Chinese first migrated to India, they mostly started their careers as leather tannery owners and as shoemakers. As these occupations are largely generational, individuals engaged in these professions can provide critical social, economic and lifestyle-related information.

### ***Restaurant Owners***

Restaurant ownership is among the few remaining profitable occupations for the Kolkata Chinese. The combination of authentic Chinese cuisine and traditional Indian spices to form the Indian-Chinese cuisine is a significant cultural synthesis that needs elaboration. So it is important to study the individuals associated with the food industry.

### ***Dentists and Beauty Parlour Owners***

Dentistry and beauty parlour ownership are some of the other lucrative professions of the Kolkata Chinese. Ancient techniques of dentistry as well as cosmetology skills have been handed down from one generation to the next by the Chinese. It is imperative to understand the implications of these types of livelihood for the community at large.

### ***Carpenters***

Carpentry was an important business in which the Chinese engaged in when they first came to India. The past significance and the current decline of this profession need investigation and explanation.

### ***Religious Heads of Chinese Churches and Temples***

In-depth insights into the religious predispositions and practices of the Chinese can be best explicated by the religious heads of the Chinese Churches and Temples in Tiretti

Bazaar and Tangra. The history of norms and practices, the present-day modifications to these norms and practices, the likelihood of future generations being aware of the origin and evolution of these norms and practices, the avenues available to preserve and pass down these norms and practices can all be properly conveyed only by priests and monks.

### ***Educational Administrators***

Previously there were several Chinese schools in Kolkata which promoted the learning of the Chinese language and literature. But closure of almost all of these institutions is shocking and has to be analysed in the context of the community's cultural retention and revival efforts.

### ***Artists***

The Kolkata Chinese community continues to perform some of the key art forms prevalent in China even after more than two centuries post their relocation. For this reason, we chose to interview artists and glean their perspectives on the current form of the lion and dragon dances and the martial arts Tai Chi and Kung Fu. We also wanted learn about the factors that helped in retaining these art forms in India.

### ***Indian Citizens***

No community exists in vacuum or as an island. The native Indian population is a significant component of the subjects' real world context, and it is essential to ascertain the kind of interaction takes exists between the two communities. Also, interviewing the Indian community gives a new dimension to the state of affairs as it stems from the external environment

### ***Individual and Group Activists***

Social activists and members belonging to Chinese Welfare Clubs and Associations fought for the livelihood maintenance, the upkeep of social status and the cultural revival of their community. Hence, this group was also important in our study.

### ***Scholars and Historians***

Individuals who had previously ventured to study Chinatown are great resources in terms of research design, data collection and data analysis. They can help us distinguish facts

from myths based on their own research undertakings. Also, some of them were individual activists participating in revival efforts underway in Kolkata.

### ***Tourists***

During our field trip, we came across numerous tourists in Tiretti Bazaar and Tangra. We found it relevant and valuable to gain their perspectives on the Kolkata Chinese and the motivations that fostered their visits.

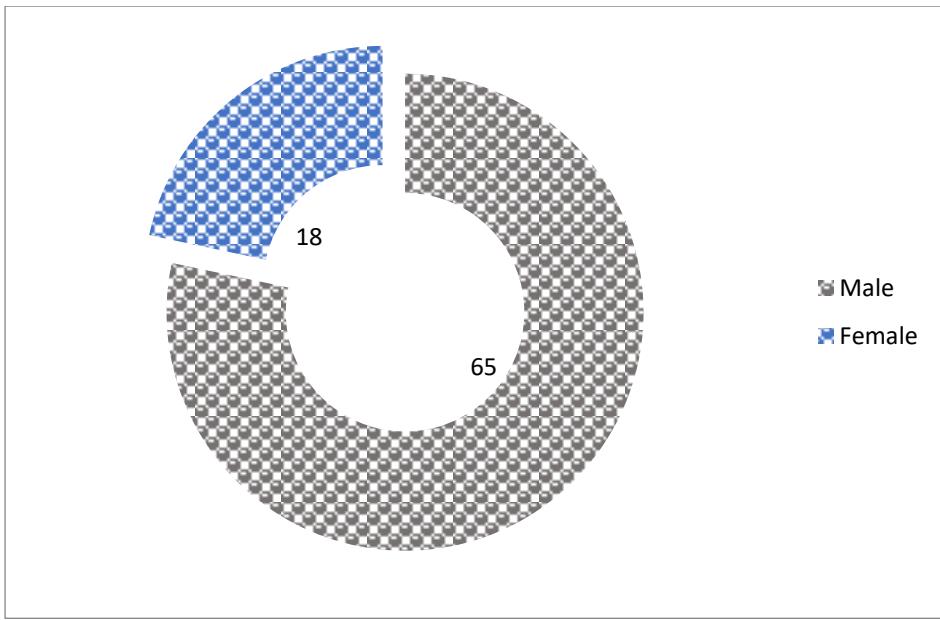
### ***Indian and Chinese Government Representatives***

Previous studies on Kolkata's Chinatown have largely limited themselves to local population, Chinese and Indian. At the most, they would reach out to social and political activists. However, we wanted to completely and comprehensively explore the real state of affairs and be able to comprehend with the future prospects of the Chinese community in India. So we decided to go to the Kolkata Municipality Corporation and interview key bureaucrats and political figures. We also planned to go to The Consulate General of The People's Republic of China in Kolkata and interact with the representatives there.

Thus using our three sampling techniques--snowball, convenience and judgmental--we went to the field. Further, for each of the categories discussed above, we used a specially designed questionnaire. A total of 17 questionnaires were used. However, it has to be noted that our interviews were semi-structured and so based on the respondent's answers, we built our follow-up questions. The questionnaires we used are provided in the Appendix in Table A1.

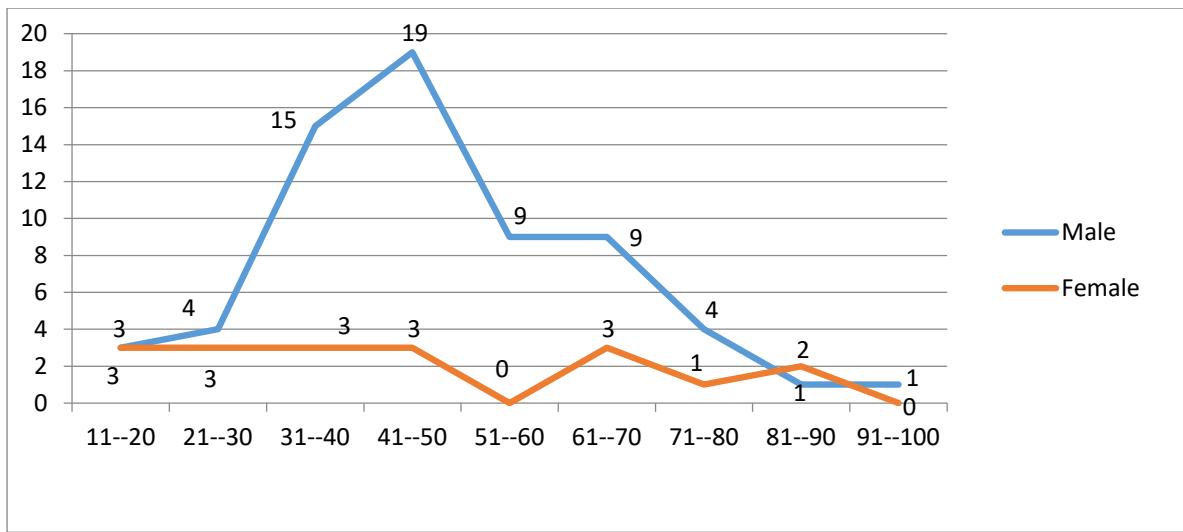
At this juncture, we like to note that apart from semi-structured interviews, archival document analysis and other secondary data analysis, we also collected data via participant observation. To comprehend the cultural and ethnic essence of the place and the people, we engaged in the on-going activities on field and recorded our observations. For instance, some of our team members themselves learnt the New Year Lion Dance, wore the customary outfit, and performed it during rehearsal sessions with other artists. Two other members participated in the Tai Chi martial arts class session. One learnt and played a few beats on the drum. Three other members participated in religious rituals such as writing Chinese calligraphy and reading the fortune sticks.

In all, we conducted a total of 83 interviews. Figure 3.1 gives the gender dispersion of our 83 interviewees.



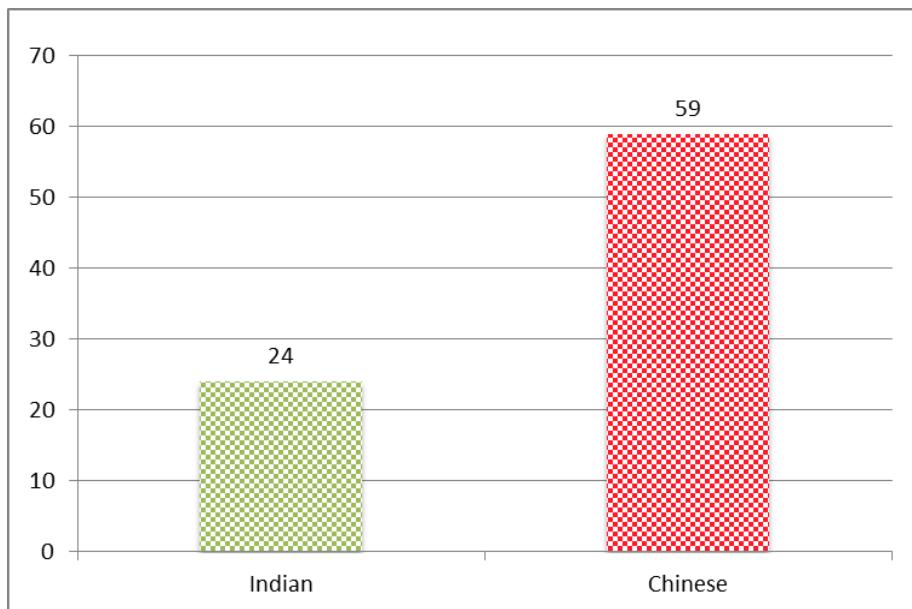
**Figure 3.1: Distribution of Sample by Gender**

On the other hand, Figure 3.2 gives the sample distribution by age. Among men, 19 belonged to the age range 41-50 and 15 were in the age range of 31-40. In each of the two age ranges, 51-60 and 61-70, there were 9 respondents. Among senior men, four were in the age range of 71-80, one belonged to age range 81-90 and one belonged to age range 91-100. Among the younger men, three were in the age range 11-20 and four were in the range 21-30. Among the 18 women we interviewed, in each of the five age ranges: 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, and 61-70, there were three respondents. Among the seniors, one belonged to range 71-80 and two belonged to the age range 81-90. None were in the age ranges 51-60 and 91-100.



**Figure 3.2: Distribution of Sample by Age**

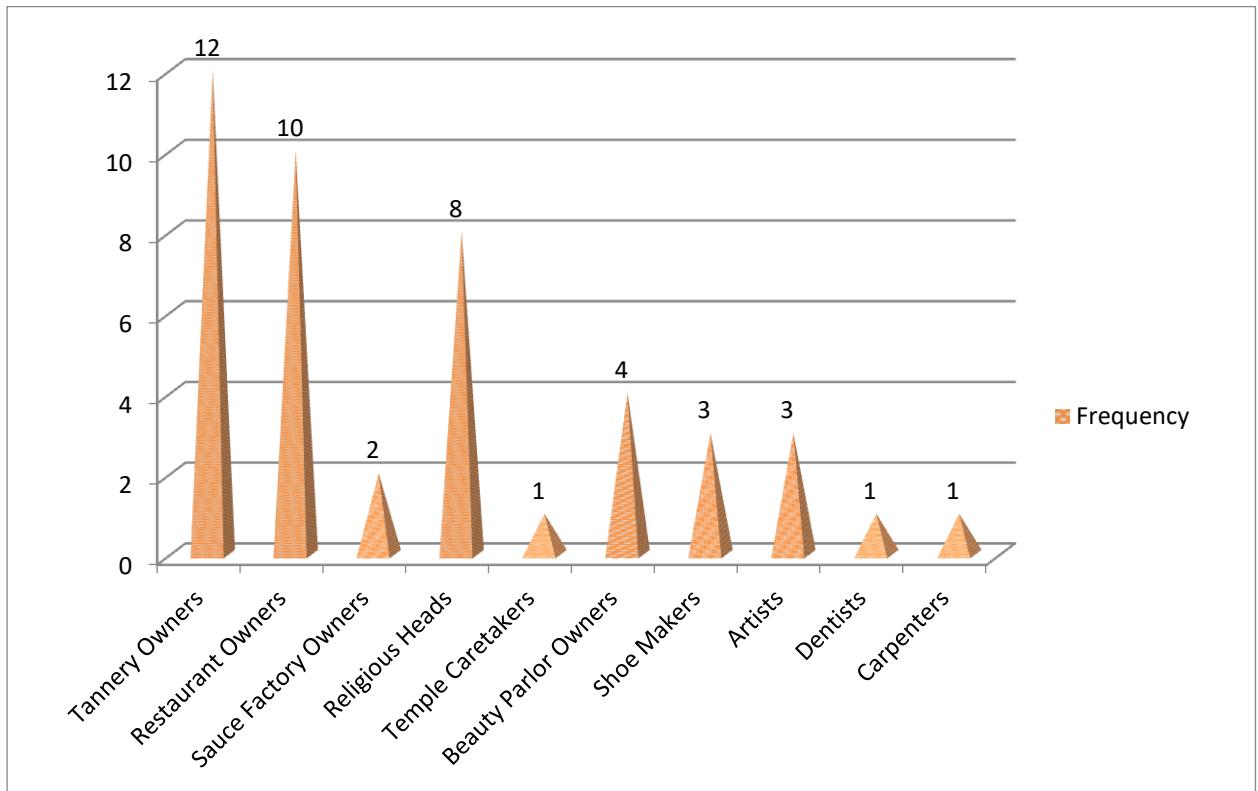
Our interviewees included both Indians and Indian Chinese. Their distribution is displayed in Figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.3: Distribution of Sample by Nationality**

Among the 59 Chinese we interviewed, 45 were working individuals. Figure 3.4 gives the breakdown of their occupations. Importantly, we had a large number of tannery owners, twelve of them. Next to tannery owners, we had ten restaurant owners; additionally, two others owned sauce factories, making it twelve in total from the food industry. Interestingly, religious heads happen to be the third largest category among our

interviewees--eight in total from the various Chinese churches and temples. One other interviewee worked as caretaker of the Chinese Kali Mandir in the Tangra area. Thus a total of 33 interviewees came from these three professional backgrounds. The next notable category is that of beauty parlour owners, four of them. We also interviewed three from the shoemaking industry and three artists. The categories with the least number of interviewees were carpentry and dentistry--one from each of these two professions.



**Figure 3.4: Distribution of Working Indian Chinese in Study Sample by Occupation**

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FACE TO FACE WITH CHEENAPARA**

#### **The Origin and Evolution of Kolkata's Chinatown**

##### **The History of Ezra Street, Achipur and Tiretti Bazaar and The Establishment of The Ancient Chinese Clubs**

Four Chinese club presidents were the first set of individuals we interviewed. These older gentlemen spoke to us about the initial waves of migration of the Chinese, Chinese trade and occupancy of Ezra Street, Achipur, and Tiretti Bazaar, and the establishment of the different Chinese clubs in Chinatown. The club presidents said that the Chinese are believed to have been in India long before the British. They pointed out that the Cantonese have six clubs in Tiretti Bazaar. The club presidents then elaborated on how immigrants from Chinese provinces came together to form these major clubs. When the migrants first came from Sea Ip, Canton, China, they needed a place to stay. As they were working class and had no money, they ventured into Ezra Street in Kolkata, which is older than Achipur. Along with the Sea Ip Club, two other clubs are believed to have originated in Ezra Street (Chinese Club Presidents, Personal Interview, 2016). The club presidents continued: people from Nam Hoi and Sunta in Canton got together and formed the Nam Soon club in 1820. Another club, Wuiling Weikun, accommodated other communities also. Following this, the Toong On club was formed. Other clubs are Hubei and Choon Ye Thong (Hakka). The clubs were place-specific and people could join these clubs only if their grandfathers came from the particular provinces to which these clubs and their founding members were associated. As one of the club presidents put it: “we can only join clubs of those parts of China that we belong to; if I come from Nam Hoi I can’t join Sea Ip club” (Lawrence, Personal Interview, 2016). The club members added that everyone knew which club they belonged to; and they would go there only. They said that any community member could join Gee Hing Club. There is one more club that is no more, Choong Hua. Lawrence, one of the club presidents mentioned about there being a Choong Hua Club in Darjeeling, as there is a Chinese community there too.

The club presidents next described the laws put in place by their forefathers for these various clubs. They had laid down rules specifying the need to come together and help these small clubs with their legal and other problems. Issues were discussed as a group and solved; when consensus was not reached a vote was taken. Earlier, every club

had regular monthly meetings and discussed the various measures taken and the effectiveness of those measures. Important points were noted for future reference.

Lawrence added that as per history, Ezra Street is older than Achipur. Chinese ships, loaded with merchants, typically, Chinese, Armenians, and Jews, spurred business in the area. It was in Ezra Street that all these communities stayed during the rule of the East India Company. Stan Road, which now has warehouses, was actually China Bazaar Street at that time. 100 years later it was turned into old China Bazaar Street as it became a commercial hub and people could no longer stay there. Gradually, people started moving further inwards. Even Achipur was deserted and the migrants moved into Tiretti Bazaar.

We are assuming that the clubs formed there. When the clubs met they started collecting money amongst themselves, raised funds for future then they started spreading and getting lands inside, not far from here though. People used to contribute for the future of our generation, but people now are diminishing (Lawrence, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **The History of Achipur**

“Then the businesses were flourishing. Acheew, a tea merchant, planned to open a sugar mill. After one year, he took permission from Lord Hastings and brought more labour from China. At that time, Hastings told him to take a horse and ride and cover as much land as he could in one hour. He promised to grant all the land covered. Acheew managed to attain a big chunk of land, where he established sugar mills. Sugar is called Chini because the Chinese started sugar mills and sugar production. The people working at the sugar mills ran away from there and came to Chinatown here, maybe because the Chinatown in the city was more flourishing and better than doing labour work there. Acheew told Hastings that he is going to bring more people here. There was a rule that anyone working under Acheew will not be permitted to live in Chinatown so that they would work and not run away. This is evidence that Chinatown existed in Kolkata much before Tong Acheew, before 1877. More importantly, on the map of 1875 Kolkata, there is a street near Tiretti Bazaar, China Bazaar Street, which furthermore serves as proof of a Chinatown existing before the Tiretti Bazaar Chinatown establishment” (Ahtat, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **Leather Tanneries, The Growth of The Hakkas, and The Development of Tangra**

Tansen Sen, scholar and historian, who has done considerable research on the Chinese community, was our next interviewee. Our interaction with him was largely centred on the origin and evolution of the Old and New Chinatowns. Sen started his conversation by describing how the first Chinese migrants were, typically, Cantonese who took up carpentry, shoemaking and the leather tannery business as their chief occupation. The Hakkas, who followed them, were either running tanneries or restaurants. He said that as typical of several communities, the Chinese also, usually, set up places of worship and native place associations when they settle on foreign soil. Day-to-day social interaction, traditional religious practices and even weddings happen to be the key activities of these clubs, community centres and temples/churches. Sen also pointed out how the clubs/community centres served to settle legal disputes. Members of the community preferred to bypass legal bodies and settle issues at these community-specific places (Tansen Sen, Personal Interview, 2016).

Sen continued his narration with a discussion about the development of Tangra or what is now popularly referred to as New Chinatown. Development of the Tangra area dates back roughly to about 1900. The area at that time was occupied by Muslims who were in the tannery business. Due to various religious issues, the Hindus were not engaged in tannery activities. The Hakkas who were making shoes in Tiretti Bazaar thought that it might be profitable to make the leather they used to create the shoes. And so, some of them started buying the tanneries in Tangra. Following their purchase, these people relocated from Tiretti Bazaar to Tangra--which was both very dirty as well as infested with mosquitoes. During that time, the Cantonese despised the Hakkas as they were very poor. Internal strife among the two communities back in the homeland and place-based differences had previously put them at loggerheads. And these differences were carried forward on the immigrant soil as well. Next, Sen noted how in the initial stages, the Cantonese, who were carpenters, were doing much better financially than the Hakkas. But soon after the tannery purchases, the Hakkas became economically sounder than the Cantonese; in fact, they became richer than all other Chinese communities in India.

However, things did not remain so for long. Sen explained how the Chinese set up their tanneries on the ground floor of their houses and resided upstairs. When environmental pollution forced the Indian local government to order the tanneries to

move to Bantala, it meant that the tannery people had to move their residences as well. As an alternative, the population started converting tanneries to restaurants; interestingly, previously, Tangra had only small eateries and no restaurants as such. Today, several of the restaurants we dine at in the area were originally leather tanneries.

Sen concluded his chat by explaining the major difference between Tangra and Tiretti Bazaar. In Tiretti Bazaar, there are Muslims nearby, and the Chinese mix with other communities--there are no walls per se. In contrast, Tangra, has walls, high physical walls. As the tannery owners became rich, they were vulnerable to theft and so these walls were constructed. However, these walls also cut off the Chinese population from the rest of Calcutta. And hence emerged this gated community (Tansen Sen, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **Shifting The Tangra Tanneries to Bantala**

"I have lived abroad for 16 years. My dad had to retire at some point. He had this leather tannery so he called me here, and I wanted to try something new. So I said yeah, and I came here. I have been here for 12 years now. Our old tannery in Tangra started in 1972 and we shifted to Bantala about 12 years ago. I think one of the reasons behind most Chinese leaving is the shifting of the industry. If you see in foreign countries, if there's a shifting of the whole industry, there's some government assistance. We have had zero assistance from the government. This is all our money we have spent in. We paid Rs. 600 per sq/ft. 20 years ago, which was expensive for outskirts; today, the rate may sound reasonable. So I don't know what subsidies they are talking about. The shifting may have played an important role in people's economic conditions. It wasn't easy for people with smaller units to shift their tanneries, because of the finance part. A lot of them moved on from that business. Like some have migrated, and some have changed their business. I export leather to Vietnam and Hong Kong. There is competition from leather producers in China. Additionally, demand for PVC and faux leather has also increased in the recent years. A piece of leather, depending on the quality and type of leather, can cost about rupees 130 to 150" (Dominic, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **Political Unrest, War Injustice and Identity Crisis**

The President of Indian Chinese Association in Kolkata, Beanie Law, helped us understand the milieu of the Chinese better, when he narrated past political events that contributed to the identity crisis of the Chinese in India. India became independent in 1947, and in 1950, the Indian constitution came to force. The Indian government believed that people who were born before August 15, 1950 are not Indians. Until independence, India was a colony of Britain. Hence, Indians were British subjects by law, unless they had obtained a UK passport or citizenship in any other country. Post-independence and the inception of the Indian constitution on 26th January 1950, the Indians were no longer British subordinates. However, quite a few Indians, still retained the British passport sans the status of a citizen, and so did not get recognized as Indian citizens.

The Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) Card was introduced in September 2002, which permitted individuals to prove their Indian origin (that is, for those who held passports of countries other than China, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka). Several amendments were made to the Citizenship Act of 1955 and the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme was introduced in 2006--which acts as a lifetime visa of India. In 2011, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Manmohan Singh, declared that PIO and OCI would be merged. In 2015, the current Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, announced that those holding PIO cards are automatically eligible for OCI. Additionally, POI scheme has been discontinued since 2015 and individuals can now apply only for OCI. But holding either POI or OCI does not mean citizenship, only that the individuals will enjoy certain legal rights as Indian nationals.

The Chinese could not keep pace with all the amendments, primarily, because they were labourers, and were either not educated or literate. They could not assess the requirements to sort out legal matters such as citizenship and property ownership. “The Chinese community as a whole has not given a lot of importance to education. In those days, if your son has finished class eight, he would be instructed to leave school and help out with the tannery work. People in Tangra then, were not very well-off, so they could use all the labour help they could get” (Dominic Lee, 2016). A lot of Chinese people along with some Indians, born at or before that time, wanted jobs when they were about 15 years old, or wanted to move abroad after the 1962 War for work. The Indian government refused to give them citizenship at that time. Their parents, who had come to India as labourers, and some to set up businesses, never thought of migrating abroad. When they applied that they were born in India, their old passport got rejected. The only

jobs they were getting back then were in the ships. So they had to go to the Chinese Embassy to get some documents issued. Those who got the documents issued, went for work. Some of them held UK passports, and therefore, were not recognized as Indian citizens, and till date have not acquired the status of a citizen.

### **Neither Here, Nor There**

The President of Indian Chinese Association in Kolkata, Beanie Law, has been helping the Chinese elderly acquire OCI cards. He claims, “The government is very adamant about not giving the Chinese a status of citizenship. They are saying that we have not given it to anybody, so I have to file another RTI to find out whether Bangladeshis and Pakistanis have been issued the OCI cards. The government says to get citizenship you have to give up your passport, whichever passport you hold. All these people are saying ‘if we give up our passport, go to the British embassy or Chinese embassy and say we don’t want this passport, and then when we apply and they refuse to give us citizenship, we would never be able to travel’. I said let’s see, give it up, but they don’t trust the government because it keeps coming up with new laws. One old guy in Tiretti Bazar still has the rejection letter, which does not state any reasons of why his passport was turned down”. Otherwise, the Chinese who were born in India had to pay Rs. 7,500 to Rs. 8,000 every year to stay in the country (Beanie Law, Personal Interview, 2016).

The Chinese are very apprehensive of the government, especially after the 1962 Sino-India War. In 1962, the Chinese were compelled to leave after the war as they were very upset by the way the government was treating them, as aliens. Racism was rampant then. And Francis points out:

We are not retaliating people; we are peaceful. If there is too much suppression, or we feel stifled, we don’t defend ourselves, but walk away. So those were the days our forefathers came here. We were very hardworking people and did not depend on others. We had our own indigenous concept of working; we had only one aim-- get some money (Francis, Personal Interview, 2016).

The sentiments of the Chinese have been gravely hurt because of the government’s injustice towards them, not only then, but also by its indifference to the community now. During the 1962 War, a lot of people were arrested and put in Alipur jail, in Assam jail, and 3000 more were sent to Deoli, Rajasthan. Large numbers of Chinese were also subject to house arrest. The last person was released in 1965. Government had no

documented proof that these people were spies. Yet, an Act passed back then allowed them to arrest and detain without warrant or reason. After they were released, a lot of them were given the opportunity to go back to China or leave India. Several of them went back to China. The Chinese government even sent two to three ships for them. A few came back to Kolkata, but many left to the US and other countries.

The rest were put on a train from Rajasthan and informed that they were now going to Kolkata. They were brought to the Howrah station and were left there. Four long years had passed, and houses and property had been taken away or looted. They did not know where to go, so they stayed at the temples for a few days. Luckily, the temples had some funds so they took care of them.

Last year (2015), two Americans and one Canadian who were there in the camp, came to India and held a symposium in Delhi and Kolkata. In Delhi about 200 people had come to listen to their stories, about how they were tortured in the camps and how they ended up settling abroad. Quite a few government officials also attended the symposium, and said they would try to do something for them. The Chinese demanded that the government build a monument in Deoli, but they turned down the request mainly because they refuse to acknowledge that they had committed a crime. This is a crime against humanity (Beanie Law, Personal Interview, 2016).

Government apathy has continued unchanged over the years. Not only the

Chinese, but also people of other ethnicities, residing in Tiretti Bazaar and Tangra, especially, are troubled by their filthy surroundings that adversely affect their living conditions and standards of living. Nevertheless, the Chinese community happens to be at the receiving end of this because their temples and cemeteries are lying in a pathetic condition. Beanie Law remarked that they have about four to five large cemeteries, each belonging to a different region of China--Hakka, Hupei, and Cantonese. One of their cemeteries in Tangra has been taken over by locals. They are building shops and houses inside their cemetery. They have thrown out everything, even the buried. The law protects cemeteries all over India; however, that fact does not seem to inhibit the Kolkata municipal corporation's intentions of building a market in that space. A few Chinese did file a case against this, but there seems to be no response or progress of the case. Similarly, Chinese temples in Tiretti Bazar are also suffering from lack of protection and maintenance.

### **Political Apathy**

“It is so ridiculous, the front side is a dumpster and the backside was supposed to be a public urinal. If you saw that structure they built, which is now abandoned, they were going make a public urinal at the backside. So we told them that this is a temple, and these are historic temples and they are heritage buildings according to your heritage list. And you are talking about building a dumpster right in front of them. They refused to stop. So a case had to be filed to stop them from building it in front of a temple, which is such a common sense thing a child can tell you that this is not appropriate. There is a mosque two lane down; will they dare to build a urinal in front of that mosque? They had rebuilt the main sewage drain outside the temple and the old drain to which the temple’s sewage line was joining was disconnected, and was never reconnected to the new one. The water would overflow and come out on the street, so we complained and told you could have reconnected our sewage line to the new one. Applications after applications were sent to the corporation. And it is common sense, basic human rights to have a sewage line connected to the drain but the councillor of that ward is so ridiculous. She asked: “Why did you all file a case against us? Let us build this urinal and this dumpster, and we will connect your sewage line tomorrow. Give a signed declaration that we have no objection to building of this dumpster and this urinal, and tomorrow itself, don’t worry, I will give the funds and make the line.” She said that with a very straight face. We had to bribe people to get the sewage line fixed. This is the kind of apathy that these people have. So it was a threat, if you don’t sign and give this, we won’t connect your line. You can imagine how much you can expect from the government. A sewage line they would not give us. Years have passed but they have been unable to relocate the dumping ground. Right in front of the temple they have dug up the road, not only dumping there. They absolutely don’t care” (Beanie Law, Personal Interview, 2016).

“If you get very involved in politics you can get targeted for supporting certain candidates or parties. There is a bias, and I wouldn’t blame the politics; I would blame the person who is ruling. Jiska Shakti uska bhakti” (Francis, 2016). Lawrence, a senior citizen who recently retired from a shipping job, says the way the Chinese are treated is despicable. One of the reasons that he mentioned as to why there are no Chinese representatives in the government is discrimination. He believes that even if the Chinese tried to contest in the elections, they would be accused of trying to spread communism. He detests the discourse of politics to such an extent that when he was asked how the recent phenomenon of demonetization in India had affected their business, he replied “Don’t talk to Chinese people about demonetization, we are not in politics. We cannot say anything about demonetization”. In fact, he pointed out how discrimination is practiced in routine life.

You instinctively look at me as a foreigner because of my physical features. It’s an instinct in you. If I go to a vendor, he will charge me more for a good that is worth much less. And if you go to the same vendor, he will charge you the normal price. Chinese are very hard-working people. People who left India are big shots in Canada, while we are stuck here and achieved nothing (Lawrence, Personal Interview, 2016).

Mr. G.M. Kapur, an active member in the CHA project, justified Chinese unwillingness to get involved in politics. He argued that when you have a meagre 2,000 people, out of whom a 1000 may cast their vote, no politician is likely to take up their cause. He adds that nobody is bothered about these people. Except for some people in the minorities’ commission, who have from time to time raised their voice.

### **Socio-Economic Conditions Post-The Tannery Shift**

Besides tanning, the Chinese indulged in inherited professions passed down from one generation to the next. Dentistry and beautification are key among them. In Kolkata, the vast majority of local Indians prefer Chinese to Indian dentists. Peter Liu is a famous dentist who resides near Alipore in Kolkata. He got his B.D.S from Patna and inherited his trade from his father and grandfather. He is married to a Punjabi-Indian and has two children both of whom speak Mandarin and Hakka. Liu's family continues to follow traditional Chinese rituals and travel to Achipur every year for an annual pilgrimage. Liu notes that: "In spite of the fact that they weren't educated (my grandfather and father), they were better dentists than educated Indian dentists. They were not educated in it, but they were experienced in it. We actually provide personal care to our patients, which you will not find among other dentists" (Liu, Personal Interview, 2016).

As regard salon ownership, there was a time when Chinese conventional methods of beautification and skincare were in much demand and brought in great profits (Lana, Personal interview, 2016). However, this business is not that lucrative any more. As Juanita, a beauty parlor owner, remarks:

Earlier, when we used to work, it was very different. Customers would give tips and consider the hairdresser's tips too, and they liked your work. But nowadays customers are too demanding. They want their look in a particular way. We try to suggest what suits their hair best, but they don't want to listen to that, they only want what they think is right--which mostly comes from what they see on the Internet (Juanita, Personal Interview, 2016).

Lyvia Wu, the owner of Pinktree salon in Tangra, is an exception. Even while the Chinese cosmetology industry is declining, Wu has a thriving business and owns one of the largest Chinese-run beauty parlors in Kolkata. She graduated from Wella and her salon is known for its flagship venture of Spa parties. She was born and raised in Mumbai and spent a vast majority of her childhood in the Cheena Gully there. Her children are Canadian citizens and despite her success in the profession, she will eventually migrate to Canada along with her family. Her mother and sister own famous salons in Mumbai. Lyvia's husband is a former tannery owner turned leather trader. She believes that in ten to fifteen years there will be no Chinese remaining in India (Lyvia Wu, Personal Interview, 2016).

Ahkuu is a 95 year old Chinese, recalls how he once earned his livelihood by selling Chinese books imported from Hong Kong. With the sharp decline in the Chinese population after the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the book selling business was not sustainable and so he opened a restaurant. He has a few Indian friends, but originally he had problems

making friends because of his lack of fluency in any of the local languages. He believes that government intervention, if any, is too late now as the population has decreased so drastically (Ahkuu, Personal Interview, 2016).

KSD, a retired shoe-maker and avid Mahjong player, discussed his profession. He quit the shoemaking business due to lack of demand and due to immense competition from brands like Bata. He has a son who has immigrated to Canada. His son sends KSD the money he requires. When he runs out of money, or when there is a delay in his son sending him money, KSD is forced to borrow money from street vendors and generous Indian friends. He, however, does not borrow any money from the Chinese. He did not leave India with his family because he loved the people and the food here. Now, he does want to leave, but unfortunately, he has no money (KSD, Personal Interview, 2016).

## **Chinese Culture and Heritage**

### **Religion and Customs**

The Kolkata Chinese are deeply religious and have a very strong sense of community. “We Chinese here are much more traditional than those in Shanghai and Beijing, we still follow the traditional Chinese rituals but over there they have become completely Americanized. All Western influences have entered their lives.” (Anonymous Woman, Personal Interview, 2016). The Kolkata Chinese, despite being such a small population, had not been given minority community status. So community members took the matters into their own hands. “There are sometimes when we have issues here because now we have so few people here. In fact, there was just a situation here, but with one phone call, it was solved. Now they have a helpline also on Whatsapp--that we’re only supposed to message if there’s an emergency” (Lyvia Wu, Personal Interview, 2016).

From our interview with Ahtat, we learnt a lot about Chinese Churches and their customary practices. He notes that the Chinese community follows a variety of religions and celebrates numerous festivals. The Chinese churches in Tiretti Bazar house Taoist Gods. At Sea Ip Church, devotees mainly worship Kwun Yam, who is a very merciful princess-goddess. They generally pray to this Iran goddess in times of sorrow and trouble, offering vegetarian food. At Nam Soon Church, she is worshipped as Mother Kwun Yam. The warrior god’s name is Kwan Tai, who is an honest god. He is believed to have three brothers. One of the brothers stands by his side; his elder brother is the king, Lou Pan Cham, and the other is Kwan Hum. The Sea Ip Church has a collection of weapons that are believed to have been used by the gods and goddesses during war. Nam Soon Church accommodates the same artefacts, roof hangings, weapons, gods and Kwun Yam, along with a few other Chinese gods. However, the Nam Soon Church and its holdings are maintained and preserved better than the Sea Ip Church and its contents.

Ahtat, also spoke about the typical offering by devotees in these Churches. The offering consists of a square or rectangular white paper, called Joss paper. It is generally rice paper that has meaningful proverbs written on it, and some sheets of gold and silver foil stuck to it (representing gold and silver). Joss paper is also referred to as “ghost money,” as it is burnt to ensure that the ancestral spirits have everything they need or want in their after-life. It is also a way of paying homage to the ancestors. The Joss paper is lit by a candle then placed in a rectangular cauldron-like vessel. When the paper is being lit, the drum is played and a bell is rung thrice to signify that the worshippers are God’s subordinates. Other offerings that are not burned are fruits and flowers. For Sam

Sing, a Taoist trio of Kwan Woon Cheung, Tin Hou, and Min Cheong Emperor, are served three types of food; one from the sea (fish), one from the land (beef) and one from the sky (bird). The trio are known as ‘Three Saints’ (Ahtat, Personal Interview, 2016).

Ahtat mentioned another key Chinese belief, Chhing or the Fortune Sticks. He explains the tradition as follows. One shakes an open cylinder filled with numbered sticks until one of the sticks falls out. You calculate all the numbers on that stick and derive one final number. You match that number with the number on the fortune booklets that will tell you your fortune. In total, there are 100 numbers. These fortunes have been handed down from generation to generation and there is no specific fortune writer. The set shown to us was brought from Hong Kong. Previously, all were printed in Chinese, now there are English copies too. There is no lucky number because people find it hard to shake and take out that lucky number if there is one. So whichever stick falls out they believe in that fortune. Before shaking, one bows three times in front of the Gods and proceed. People particularly pray for marriage, health and safety. However, it is very difficult to predict all these fortunes. The proverbs are difficult to understand they are rather ambiguous and much depends on the interpreter. For instance, “moon is on the sky” is interpreted as something good is likely to come into one’s life as moon is always intended to be good fortune. The Chinese are ardent believers of fortune sticks. In particular, in Achipur, everyone practices this. Every year, people go there and worship their good life on earth. “We also worship heavenly God, and have Chinese equivalents of Hindu celestial beings like Vishwakarma and Yamraj. Our philosophy and religious symbolism are very similar to Hinduism” (Ahtat, Personal Interview, 2016).

In addition to the conventional Taoist Gods, the Chinese worshipped Bodhisattvas, and also Buddha himself. Though they are aware of numerous forms of Buddha, at the Fo Guang Shan Buddha temple in Tangra, the 80th form and the 1000th form are housed and worshipped. This temple is associated with Humanistic Buddhism: “We all are human and so was Buddha born a human. Hence, we believe that Buddha gave his religion to humanity” (Anonymous Devotee, Personal Interview, 2016). The temple monks elaborated the history and practices of the temple. This temple itself was donated to the Chinese in 1980. Mostly, Chinese people visit and pray at this temple. Yet, though occasionally, like on Buddha Jayanti or Buddha’s birthday, a few Bengali people also come. Every month, on average, there is a footfall of 30 Chinese. But on Mondays, there are more Chinese people because they have less work. Moreover, on Monday, the pooja is in the afternoon. So, they can attend it. Typically, poojas are done on full-moon

days. They temple gets religious books written in Chinese from Delhi; also some devotees donate them. The temple also conducts calligraphy training (Buddhist Monks, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **At the Crossroads of Culture**

“Different families have different practices and beliefs. In my case, my parents were Buddhists. But they weren’t rigid believers; they were very liberal. My elder brother was a Buddhist, but he would also worship Kali, Durga and all. I have become a Christian because I used to go Christian churches. In those days, 50 years ago, most of the Chinese were poor, so when they went for English education, they converted to Christianity. They were influenced by the priests and all. Many Chinese were also Kali bhakts, they organize Kali pooja also. Another influence for Hindu worshippers could be marrying Nepalis, who were Hindus. In general, you can’t see cultural shifts really except religious following. Taoism and Confucianism became very intermingled. Influences of Christianity and Hinduism were also visible. That is why the Indian Chinese became a unique population. It is all individual; it cannot be generalized. Some are still in transition. In Singapore and Malaysia, they have large communities. So they have developed their own unique celebration. But with our population, it was not exactly possible” (Dominic Lee, Personal Interview, 2016).

Like Dominic Lee, a large number of the Chinese adopted Christianity as their religion. Their education in missionary schools had motivated them to convert to Christianity. Overtime, the Chinese mingled with the Indian communities around them and started believing in several religions simultaneously. They do not have a rigid religious structure or following; they practice Christianity, Taoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism concurrently. This is the reason why we saw many Chinese worship Kali; in fact, in Tangra, the temple is named ‘Chinese Kali Mandir.’

For Christmas, the Christian Chinese attend a midnight mass at the Chinese Church in Tangra. The next morning, they all meet at a community hall and celebrate Christmas together. It is basically just a merry reunion where they have dance performances by children. The major Chinese festival is the Chinese New Year, preparations for which had started at least a month before, especially, in Tangra. Yellow and red light bulbs (the prime colours of the Chinese), were being assembled; lion dance

practices had begun, and people had started cleaning their houses as Hindus do during Diwali.

We have some dragon shows, dragon boat festival and we have these clubs. We would like to expand this culture but people assemble only during the Chinese New Year or weddings because everybody is looking for their own bread and butter. We still follow the old traditions- every 1st day and the 15th day of a month we have to burn incense and people come and pray. People still exercise it (Ahtat, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **The Bhai-Bhai Relationship--A Brotherhood that Spans Borders**

The Hindu communities celebrate the Chinese New Year with as much zeal as Saraswati Pooja, which falls on the same day every year. A Hindu devotee said, “We set up banners to celebrate the Saraswati Pooja and Chinese New Year at the same time. We have an association for the same, Chattawala Gali Association. We distribute the essentials needed for educational purposes for the poor from this association. We donate stationery items. A lot of Chinese people visit Kolkata for the New Year and during Christmas time. And a lot of people visit this place only for Chinese food. They all meet up together for festivals and occasions and feast. They worship in one of their churches and then start off with New Year celebrations. They make a lot of food and distribute it during special occasions to the poor and celebrate their festivals. We are good to each other and have a great rapport; we call them for our festivals and they invite us for their festivals. We live in peace and harmony. We heard that the government is not helping out the Chinese and it is one of the main reasons for the decrease in the population” (Anonymous Indian, Personal Interview, 2016).



**Figure 4.1: The 200 Year Cultural Legacy of The Kolkata Chinese**

**Note:** From Top Left: *Nam Soon Church in Tiretti Bazaar, Lion Dance Rehearsal, Joss Papers and Offerings, Chinese Woman Receiving Communion during Christmas Mass in Tangra, Chinese Child Praying during Christmas Mass, Offerings for Worship at Tangra's Chinese Church, Chhing - Chinese Fortune Sticks.*

**Source-** Discover India Program 2016-2017

Initially, interracial marriages were taboo in the Chinese community. Those who married outside their race were treated as social outcasts. But the migrating Chinese labor force could not avoid interracial marriages. They had come to seek work and therefore, had not brought their spouses along with them. Moreover, the population that migrated to India was quite young; most of them still bachelors. Consequently, they either had to get married or re-married to the Indians. It is important to note here that the people in Tangra were particularly orthodox. About 30-40 years ago, particularly the Hakkas, never wanted to marry outside the Hakka community. When they married someone from Hupei or Cantonese, they were treated as an outcast, as half-cast or mix-breed. There were no religious reasons behind this; the community was just conservative. Initially, the Hakka did not mix with other people; they would only communicate amongst themselves. Even today, most of them are rather aloof to people outside their community. However, over time, some of them have opened up. In recent times, the Hakkas have reduced in size and are such a small ethnic community, that within-community marriages has become rather less likely or even unlikely. Today, they are content even if their children find a Chinese partner.

Tiretti Bazar, conversely, is a multi-cultural area, with Jews, Muslims, Marwadis, Gujaratis, Parsis, etc., who reside and conduct business alongside with the Chinese in the area. Since the area has been a commercial hub for a long time, there are more Chinese ‘hybrids’ in Tiretti Bazar than in Tangra.

### **Traditional Chinese Weddings**

In Chinese weddings, the boy’s family has to give gold and money. The boy’s family decides how many tables of food should be served. 10 people sit at each table. Six chickens, six bottles of whisky, six coconuts, two suparis are offered, out of all these everything is accepted by the girl’s family except one or two from each food item which is given back as a gesture of dignity and respect (Ahtat, Personal Interview, 2016).

One unique cultural practice of the Chinese that is still treasured by the Kolkata Chinese is the Lion Dance that is performed during Chinese New Year celebration, and sometimes during weddings. The lion dance is essentially a Chinese martial art form. In Tiretti Bazar and Tangra, only two Chinese, one in each area, still teach and carry forward the legacy. When we attended a lion dance practice, we were shocked to see how only a few Chinese students learned and practiced the lion dance. In Tiretti Bazar there were about 15 youngsters. But in Tangra, there was only one student, the rest were all Indians, except the coach, James Liao, who was Chinese. He explained the reason for the decline of interest among Chinese students and also clarified why the traditional Chinese art appealed to Indian students.

There used to be Chinese students, but they couldn't cope up with my intensity. So they all left. Also, the Chinese population has decreased. Hence, I have to teach Indian kids coming in. They have more passion in this art, so the standard can go higher. I don't care Chinese or Non-Chinese, what I care about is people should love the art. Otherwise, it will affect my passion. If they don't like it, it will be like I am forcing them and it will affect the whole group (James Liao, personal interview, 2016).

We observed that there was a disparity not just in the number of lion dance students in Tiretti Bazaar and Tangra, but also between the rehearsal venues in the two areas. While the practice in Tiretti Bazar took place in Gee Hing Club, training in Tangra happened in a tannery-turned-studio, where the machinery was still there. The studio was located in a narrow, unpaved, and isolated street of Tangra. It was dingy, with no proper supply of electricity or water, and swarmed with mosquitoes. These conditions did not seem to bother the coach or the students. The Tangra studio, however, had on display a splendid collection of photos, posters, and banners of students' participation and success in various events and competitions.

Mr. Liao further explained the actual performance. He said that poles or stilts with a broad base set up for the lions to dance on. The lion jumps from one pole to another, with the costume on. The poles are supposed to be a symbolic representation of mountains, and the significance of this that the lion has to go through a lot of obstacles to find the treasure. The treasure in this context could be food, or maybe even a scroll. The Chinese believe whatever is written on the scroll, when it comes out of lion's mouth, becomes true. Mostly, the Chinese write their dreams and wishes on these scrolls. This tradition is a part of only the cultural shows, not an element of competitions. In competitions, the focus is on the synchronization of the drumming with the movement of

the head and tail, and on how much life one can bring to the lion. The drumming is symbolic of the lion's heartbeat. So every move counts and it is one of the toughest sports. The mattress used for exercises and rehearsals are very expensive; likewise, the costumes are also costly. Each of the lion costumes at Tangra cost about rupees six lakhs and can go up to twice this amount (James Liao, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **The Chinese Lion Dance**

"Our troupe's name is Chinese Stars and it is the oldest troupe of Kolkata. It is performed on a huge scale during the Chinese New Year. The lion dance is similar to the dragon dance. Since it is the New Year, the lions and costumes are also designed to look vivid and spirited. We actually go for parades for three days. We go to temples to pray and we go inside the houses of the Chinese, with the lion still on, as we believe that the lion is supposed to bring spirits, which bring good luck into our homes. The origin of the lion dance, as we have heard it, goes like this. It actually started from an opera group, to please the emperors of that time. The cultural significance is that the lion was a mythical creature which was very mischievous and his head was chopped off by the Jade emperor. Seeing the dead body thrown on earth, the goddess of mercy, she pitied the lion and tied a red ribbon around his head. So that's why whenever you see a Lion, there's a red ribbon tied around his neck. There's also one ceremony for it. The significance of the red colour can also be traced back to a legend. In the olden ages, there used to be a creature named Nian. He lived in the mountains, and during new years, he used to come down to terrorize and attack the people who lived at the bottom. The villagers used red papers and firecrackers to get rid of Nian, and after that he never came back. That is why we change the red papers of our house every year" (Henry Liao, Personal Interview, 2016).

## **Chinese Education System**

During the course of our study, we learnt that Chinese schools in the area existed largely for Chinese students who would eventually return to their home country. And so the schools followed the Chinese Board of Education and taught Chinese languages. The schools themselves were run by Native Place Associations. These associations also managed other significant aspects of the lives of the Chinese community. Importantly, the schools taught the language of the community that set it up; for instance, Hakka or Cantonese and thereby, preserved sub-regional identities. An extensive study conducted by Zhang Xing aided by Tansen Sen on Chinese schools revealed that their schooling was a significant portion of the preservation of Chinese identities.

### **Learning the Chinese Language**

“In around 1912, 1913 the Government of China ruled that all overseas Chinese schools should teach in Mandarin. They sent teachers to all these schools in Southeast Asia, even Calcutta, to teach them Mandarin. But these schools in India, they did not teach in the Indian way. Their curriculum was all Chinese. The reason for that is, because these people were not seen as migrants, they were seen as temporary residents outside China. They were expected to go back to China, and if they went back they would need to know Chinese, the culture, history, etc. Things changed in the 1950’s when the Grace Ling Liang and Sacred Heart Schools were established by the missionaries. Sacred Hearts School was established by the Belgian missionaries. The missionaries wanted to work among the Minority classes--the idea was to convert them to Christianity of course. So some of them identified the Chinese community and established schools which continued to have Chinese curriculum but they also introduced foreign languages, especially, English into the curriculum. Grace Ling Liang was founded by missionaries from Hong Kong. They, then, totally changed their curriculum, especially, after the 1962 war and introduced the Indian curriculum. So if you’re going to college in India, that’s what you’re going to have to take, the 10th and 12th grade exams, right? None of the other schools have that. English is the medium of prescription. So even if you didn’t want to stay in India, you can go to some other place afterwards. Grace Ling Liang is the only functioning school. Pei Mey has closed down. It was still continuing to teach Chinese, but after 1962 the schools closed down and they were not allowed to go to schools or they were detained in camps. So between 1962 and early 1970’s, many of these people didn’t get proper training in languages. When the schools were allowed to reopen, the first thing they wanted to do was to teach their own language. But internal issues within the community in Tangra forced them to close down” (Tansen Sen, Personal Interview, 2016).

The Ni Hao School in Kolkata teaches the Chinese language and culture along with Indian and IB boards. The material used to teach the students is authentic Chinese material imported from China. It aims to simplify Chinese and teach students about the Chinese culture and heritage in a flexible and inexpensive manner. (Ayaan, Personal Interview, 2016).

## **Indian-Chinese Cuisine**

One can find numerous Chinese restaurants in Tangra and a few around Kolkata. The places in Tangra are very popular and frequented by locals and tourists alike. Interestingly, the vast majority of the Tangra restaurants arose after the Supreme Court ordered that the leather tanneries in the area shift to Bantala. Former tannery owners converted their tanneries to restaurants. Not just the place, but also the menu underwent transformation. Authentic Chinese cuisine was too bland for the Indian palate, which led to the synthesis and creation of the Indian-Chinese cuisine. This involves the merger of traditional Chinese delicacies with Indian spices. “We Chinese don’t take chilli, so you can see my food doesn’t have masala. Actually, we make food in that way so that Indian people will love it. Indians love chilli and onion, to every food we add onion and chilli” (Monica Liu, Personal Interview, 2016). Today, the Indian-Chinese cuisine has become immensely famous across the world. In fact, even some restaurants in North America, serve the fusion cuisine.

Monica Liu, the famous ‘Don of Chinatown,’ owns five different restaurants in Kolkata. *Beijing* is her biggest and most acclaimed restaurant. Food offered here is the closest to authentic Chinese cuisine. Her other restaurants, *Kim Ling*, *Tung Fa* and two Mandarin restaurants are some of Kolkata’s most popular eating joints. Her jovial nature and delicious food make her the perfect hostess. Liu was taught how to cook by her parents who owned a restaurant in Shillong until the Sino-Indian War of 1962. Unfortunately, during the war, her family, like those of many others was detained in Deoli, Rajasthan. She speaks of growing up in abject poverty and having to save a single bottle guard (preserved in salted water) for an entire month as her sole addition to food aside from the traditional ‘dal and bhaat’ (rice and lentil soup) (Monica Liu, Personal Interview, 2016).

Like Monica, Henry Hao is also a restaurant owner. His *Golden Empire* restaurant in Tangra is also quite famous, especially for its shrimp and chilly chicken. Besides managing his restaurant, Henry also performs religious rituals at the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist temple every day. Furthermore, he also paints in traditional Chinese brush painting styles and adorns the walls of his restaurant with his ethnic artwork. Immensely religious, Henry follows the customs of the Medieval Chinese and ensures that his

children, though educated in Western forms, never forget their roots (Henry Hao, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **The Woes of Chinese Businessmen**

A restaurateur who wished to remain anonymous stated that opening restaurants and obtaining licenses was very tough in Kolkata. “There has always been trouble doing anything in India, be it little or big. We have to follow the rules and laws. We tried to issue a license to run the restaurant but the procedure was extremely troublesome. So we asked if they want under table money, because they are so corrupt. They would make us visit the offices several times. Each time, saying one or the other paper is missing--without approving anything. We have applied but are still unable to issue the license. The police frequently arrest some of my staff and create hassles. These troubles will remain; there is no way out really except bribery. They don’t let us live in peace” (Anonymous, Personal Interview, 2016).



**Figure 4.2: A Snapshot of A Section of The Study Sample**

**Note:** From Top Left: Ahtat - President of Nam Soon Church, Rangan Datta - Journalist, Blogger and Researcher, Beanie Law - President of The Indian Chinese Association, Dominic Lee- Owner of Pou Chong Sauce Factory, Tansen Sen - Scholar and Historian, G.M. Kapur - State Convener of INTACH.

Source- *Discover India Program 2016-2017*

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE INSIDE STORY**

#### **Reviving Cheenapara: Myth or Reality?**

Having conversed with the Indian Chinese and the Indians in Tangra and Tiretti Bazaar, we thought it was essential for us to meet the representatives of the Chinese Government in India as well as with our own bureaucrats and political representatives and uncover the inside story. Are the two governments really engaged in meaningful and significant revival initiatives or is it all just rhetoric? So first, we headed to The Consulate General of The People's Republic of China in Salt Lake City, Kolkata. And there, we managed to get an extensive interview from the Senior Assistant for Political and Media Affairs, Yashi Surana.

#### **The Consulate General of the People's Republic in China**

##### ***The Senior Assistant for Political and Media Affairs***

Yashi Surana said that she has been in the said position for nearly eight months and that she was involved in many of the key activities that were carried out by the Consulate. Most importantly, she was very interested in discussing the various cultural and academic exchange programmes and initiatives that were underway in recent times.

Yashi's conversation was centered on explaining about the various Indian delegations to China. To begin with, she discussed in detail, the film delegation. From September 24 to October 1, 2016, a governmental film delegation from West Bengal, India, visited China; a visit that was the first of its kind. The delegation, under the leadership of the Principal Secretary of the Department of Information and Cultural Affairs, Government of West Bengal, Mr. Atri Bhattacharya, included many key personalities. Mr. Yadab Mondal, CEO of Nandan Film Centre and Director of Kolkata International Film Festival; Deepak Adhikari , MP and famous actor; Mrs. Rituparna Sengupta, Mr. Shrikant Mohta, Mr. Anindya Chatterjee, Ms. Raima Sen, Ms. Nusrat Jahan and Mr. Ravi Sharma, all of whom went as representatives from the region's film-making base--Tollywood (nickname of the Telugu Film Industry). Mr. Cai Zhifeng, Deputy Consul General of the Consulate General of The People's Republic of China in Kolkata, accompanied the delegation. Notable events during the visit include: visiting Madame Weng Tiehui, Vice Mayor of Shanghai, and Mr. Zhang Hongsen, Director-General of the China Film Bureau; screening an exclusive collection of Tollywood films

in the Communication University of China and the Shanghai Vancouver Film School; and conducting several meetings and discussions with the China Film Company Ltd. (the Organizing Committee of Beijing International Film Festival) and the Shanghai International Film & TV Festivals Co. Ltd. (Yashi Surana, Personal Interview, 2016).

Following this, Yashi spoke about a twelve-member Indian delegation that she personally accompanied to the two major Chinese cities, Shanghai and Beijing. During the 2016 Durga Pooja, the Chinese consulate in Kolkata, participated in a big way and even awarded the best pandals/tents. Starting on October 6 (Panchami), consulate members toured for three days the various tents in the city. Awards were given based on aesthetics, safety and environmental protection and the winners got an all-paid trip to China. It was these Durga Pooja awardees that Yashi accompanied to China. She said that profound interactions with the Chinese communities in the two cities, in particular, with the older citizens, exposed the Indian visitors to Chinese culture and ethnicity. Among other things, she discussed the interracial marriages between the Indians and the Chinese. She pointed out that several of them had left the country and settled in China. She spoke about meeting one such couple during her visit to Shanghai. The husband was Indian and the wife was Chinese. The husband was pursuing his Ph. D. and was now settled in China with a Chinese citizenship that was facilitated by the interracial marriage. Yashi noted that Shanghai was flooded with Indians. She said that Indian restaurants and spices were very popular in the city. Those Indians settled in the city were primarily involved in the food industry, or worked as sales persons and taxi drivers. Some of them, however, had white collar jobs. She also noted that the Shanghai Chinese were very warm and welcoming and businesses were thriving well in the city. These she thought were the chief causes that attracted and retained Indian communities there.

Next, Yashi spoke to us about the international seminar on Xuan Zang that was held by the Consulate General in cooperation with Nalanda University, Rajgir, Bihar, India at the Oberoi Grand Hotel, Kolkata, India on the 7th November, 2016. Xuan Zang, is a seventh century Chinese Buddhist monk, scholar, explorer, and translator. He not only recorded the interactions between China and India that occurred during the early Tang dynasty, but also contributed toward these bilateral interactions and took initiatives in China-India diplomacy. The temple of Xuan Zang and other Chinese Buddhist structures in India are indicative of the bond that existed between the two countries several centuries ago. The Consul General, Mr. Ma Zhanwu and Dr. Gopa Sabharwal, the Vice Chancellor of Nalanda University, inaugurated the seminar in which twelve eminent

scholars from China, India and UK participated. Over 80 people from the mainstream media, University of Calcutta, Visva Bharati University, think-tanks, and the local Chinese community attended the event. The seminar focussed on four topics, namely, Xuan Zang and Buddhist Exchanges between China and India, Xuan Zang and Archaeology in India and China, Buddhism and Cultural Ties between China and India, and History as Guide for Strengthening Bilateral Relations.

Yashi then made note of the various MoUs that major West Bengal universities have signed with their Yunnan counterparts. University of Calcutta, Rabindra Bharati University and Visva Bharati have initiated exchange programmes with Yunnan University. Additionally, West Bengal students benefit from the medical education provided by Dali Medical University and Kunming Medical College in the Yunnan Province. All these initiatives, she said, were made possible by the 9th Kolkata to Kunming (K2K) Forum held in 2013.

Yashi spoke of another key academic initiative of the Consulate which is the inauguration of the New Horizon Computer Learning Center in Alipore, Kolkata on 9th November, 2016. This venture was undertaken in association with the Rotary Club of Calcutta Millennium. The Consul General, Mr. Ma Zhanwu and Mr. Janab Firad Hakim, Minister of Urban Development of the State Government of West Bengal initiated the project which is geared toward providing training facilities for underprivileged Indian girls in Alipore. Projects like these clearly show that the Chinese Consulate is focused not just on reaching out and helping the Chinese in Kolkata, but that it is also eager to contribute toward the welfare of the Indians in the city (Yashi Surana, Personal Interview, 2016).

Then Yashi spoke about the visits the Chinese population made to their home country. In addition to China, the Consulate also provided visas for Hong Kong and Taiwan. She, however, quickly added that though the Chinese visited their homeland, they considered themselves as Indians and not as Chinese. In fact, many of them did not know either Mandarin or Cantonese. They converse in Bengali, Hindi and/or English for the most part. But they do retain their traditional rites, rituals and religious practices as is evident from their celebrations such as the Spring Festival/The Chinese New Year that they celebrate in January. This festival is essentially intended to honour the Chinese deities and ancestors. It is also the homecoming festival, as on New Year eve, the Chinese families have a family reunion dinner. She also mentioned that most recently, on June 26th, 2016, the Consulate General of the People's Republic of China along with the

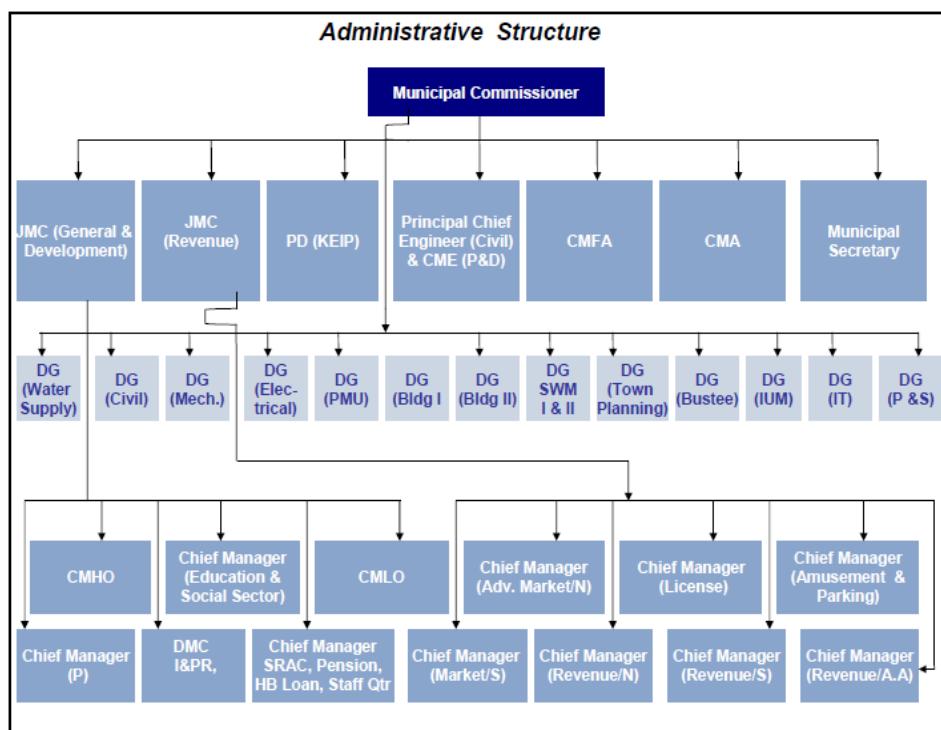
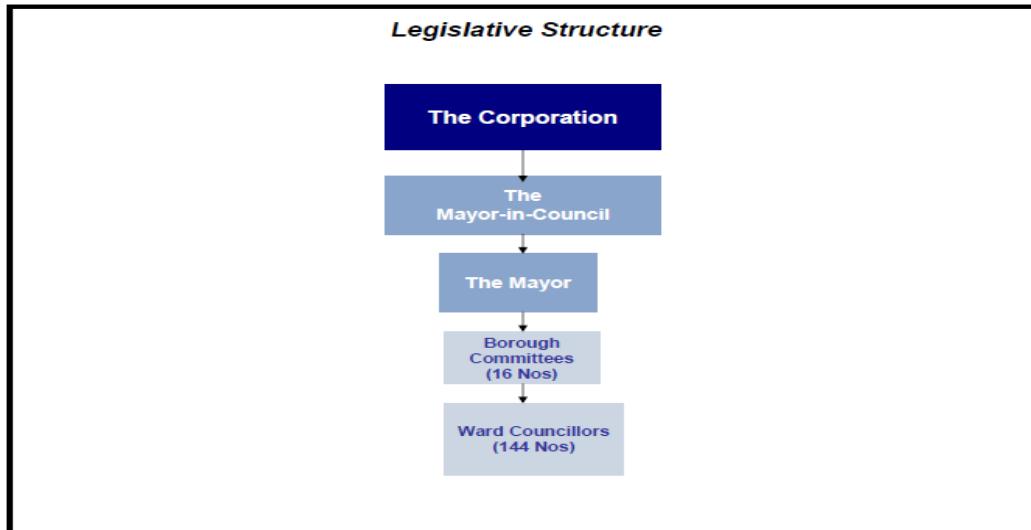
Indian Chinese Association for Culture, Welfare and Development, under the leadership of Consul General, Ma Zhanwu, conducted the “All India’s First Dragon Boat Festival Gala” in Rabindra Sarobar, Kolkata, India. She remarked that more than six thousand people from across the country attended this event. She also informed us that the Consulate of the People's Republic of China, on September 14th, 2016, celebrated the Moon festival. The Deputy Consul General, Cai Zhifeng along with more than two dozen Chinese representatives in Kolkata gathered at the Consulate General of China to celebrate this Mid-autumn festival. Yashi pointed out that the traditional Chinese New Year Lion and Dragon Dances and the martial arts form Tai Chi are all still performed in Tangra and Tiretti Bazaar. She noted that a few artists like Mr. James Liao and online lessons have helped sustain these traditions.

As regards outmigration, Yashi thought the lack of employment as a key driver. According to her, today, very few thrive as dentists. And beauty salons are only a few in Tangra as the upscale Chinese beauty salons are spread out in other well-off areas in Kolkata. She noted that, that said, even today, the Chinese own huge amounts of land which includes the Buddhist temples in the area.

Yashi concluded by describing how the current Consul General Mr. Ma Zhanwu was very outgoing, dynamic, and personally reached out to the Indian Chinese in Kolkata. She says that his interactions are genuine and not driven by the zeal to attract media-attention. He also had close ties with West Bengal political representatives. Even the Honourable Chief Minister of West Bengal, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, had invited the Consul to her house where he celebrated Durga Pooja with her (Yashi Surana, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **The Kolkata Municipal Corporation**

Given the depth of information and elaborate explanations of the various initiatives of the Consulate provided by Yashi Surana, it was important to know what was happening on the other side as well. So we proceeded to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation on S. N. Banerjee Road to get updates on the Indian governmental undertakings with regard to reviving the Chinese community in Kolkata. We aimed to focus on the municipality's administrative structure as it was the implementing unit of the policy decisions of the city at large. However, we also wanted to get some political perspective on the issue, as it is the elected representatives who make the policies that affect the Kolkata community.



**Figure 5.1: The Legislative and Administrative Structures of The Kolkata Municipal Corporation**

**Note:** Source: <https://www.kmcgov.in/KMCPortal/downloads/structure.pdf>

### *The Municipal Secretary of Kolkata*

Our first request for an interview was directed toward the assistant of Mr. Harihar Prasad Mandal, who is the Municipal Secretary of Kolkata (and is a West Bengal Civil Service (Executive)). The assistant conveyed the message to Mr. Mandal and he was very

receptive and immediately agreed for an interview even though no prior appointment was made. The question directed toward him was: What initiatives have been taken toward the revival of Kolkata's Chinatown? To this he stated that several cultural exchange initiatives and education based MoUs have been proposed/signed between India and China via the Kunming to Kolkata forum. When asked about further details, and about the CHA project, in particular, he replied as follows. The tourism department is in charge of that project and the best person to discuss about it would be Mr. P. K. Dhua, Director General (Civil). He said that the West Bengal government had proposed about the revival initiatives and that only a draft is in place. This news was dismaying and so further probing into the political scenario seemed inevitable. That led to the request for an interview with Mr. Dhua. Mr. Mandal was kind enough to send his assistant to accompany us to Mr. Dhua's office and also asked his assistant to inform Mr. Dhua to help us with our research project via answers to questions on the Chinatown revival initiatives (Harihar Prasad Mandal, Personal Interview, 2016).

### ***The Director General (Civil)***

Mr. P. K. Dhua, who is the Director General (Civil), welcomed us. However, unlike Mr. Mandal had stated, Mr. Dhua did not know much about the CHA project/or maybe he chose to not give the detailed answers. He said that two or three meetings with the Chinese delegates had occurred. But apart from that he said that nothing concrete has evolved yet. A draft is likely there, but no funds have been allotted and no actions are underway yet. He, however, made personal calls to Mr. Subrata Seal, Director General (Project Management Unit) and Mr. Subhasish Chattopadhyay, Director General (Solid Waste Management) and asked them to help us with answers to our policy-based questions. As Mr. Chatterjee was on leave, Mr. Dhua asked his assistant to take us to Mr. Seal's office. Further, he also offered us a cup of warm tea (P. K. Dhua, Personal Interview, 2016).

### ***The Director General (Project Management Unit)***

We started our interview with Mr. Subrata Seal, Director General (Project Management Unit), by asking about what he knew about the CHA Project. Mr. Seal replied that as per the direction of the West Bengal State Government, the State tourism department was responsible for the project. As far the implementation process is concerned, it falls under the jurisdiction of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. The West Bengal Tourism

Department Head had apparently conducted some meetings with the Kolkata Police as well as with the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. But Mr. Seal made it rather clear that the proposed 100 crore project has just been discussed, and that nothing was in place yet. He added that he has neither seen the draft, nor has participated in the preparation of the draft. The only progress according to him is the captioning regarding the creation of food courts.

He however outlined the various phases that would potentially be a part of the proposed project. He said that dealing with the roads and the open drainage system would take priority over all other issues. Next, he pointed out the need to deal with garbage removal, mosquito control, and electricity-related issues. Following these issues, he stressed the need to clear public property encroachers. To him, dealing with the roadside homeless people who occupied public property was extremely important. According to him, without addressing this issue, the remaining key phases of the project, especially those related to heritage revival, cannot be successfully implemented. In fact, he thought they cannot even be initiated without fixing this central problem (Subrata Seal, Personal Interview, 2016). Mr. Seal's insights clarified to us the root problems and so we decided to meet the Director General of Solid Waste Management, Mr. Subhasish Chattopadhyay. He, however, was available only on the following day.

### ***The Director General (Solid Waste Management)***

The Director General of Solid Waste Management, Mr. Subhasish Chattopadhyay, started responding to our question on the CHA project and Chinatown revival initiatives as follows. He began by describing the CHA Project as an initiative developed by a few people from Singapore. He stated that they prepared and presented reports that discussed important problems such as housing, building construction, drainage and solid waste treatment/ management. At this juncture, he pointed out the lack of a comprehensive plan in place for dealing with solid waste management in Chinatown.

Mr. Chattopadhyay mentioned the following as the key activities of the department: collection of waste from households, commercial and institutional areas; transportation of waste to landfill sites; maintenance of landfill sites; and street sweeping and washing. However, we did notice that garbage disposal was not just a problem, but a menace in Tangra as well as in Tiretti Bazaar. When probed deeper, he stated that collection, treatment and disposal are the three key components of solid waste management. Day-to-day disposal has to be first quantified, then collected, then

segregated, then treated, and finally disposed. Waste collected from street sweeping and from households in carts (termed as primary collection) is loaded onto transporting garbage trucks (termed as secondary collection). These trucks transfer the garbage to disposal sites. Unfortunately, the waste is not sorted and segregated at source. Instead, they are collected and stored in waste containers whose size and numbers depend on the width of the street and the amount of waste generated. The waste from the bins is then transferred to open dump areas by municipality-owned trucks. Open dumping is currently the only option used by Kolkata for municipal solid waste management. Mr. Chattopadhyay remarked that Chinatown appears to be dumped with garbage. He said that, however, that is not the case. It is new garbage that is piled there and there is constant collection of waste from the area. But he did agree that there was no pest control or even mosquito repellents sprayed by the KMC. He said that the health department was in charge of those duties. He said the CHA Project should potentially help deal with this problem as well as help set up a comprehensive waste management plan for Chinatown, which has forever been absent from that part of the city.

While discussing SWM, Mr. Chattopadhyay also pointed out the absence of proper sewage and drainage systems from the area. Whenever the waste generation is not substantial enough, it is directed to the mainstream. But he clearly stated that in this area also, no specific plan was in place with regard to Chinatown. Should the revival plan take off, the department would have to follow an existing plan, or generate a new plan, or simply direct it to the mainstream. But which direction to take is not clear yet as the project is still only in discussion agenda and is yet to actually make it to government agenda (Subhasish Chattopadhyay, Personal Interview, 2016). On that note, we headed to Mr. Amit Kumar Roy, Director General, Sewerage and Drainage.

### ***Director General (Sewerage and Drainage)***

Mr. Amit Kumar Roy, Director General (Sewerage and Drainage), was very willing to enlighten us on the reason for the dirt and open drainage that ruin both Old and New Chinatown. Mr. Amit Kumar started his conversation by giving us a detail description of the sewerage and drainage system that is in place in the city of Kolkata. He noted that Kolkata has a hybrid sewerage system that combines both underground and surface drainage systems. In this hybrid system, about eighty percent of the 144 municipal wards have underground drainage system in place. Of the remaining twenty percent, some

wards are in the process of getting converted from the surface to the underground drainage plan under the Kolkata Environmental Improvement Project (KEIP).

The principal activities of the sewerage and drainage department are: draining waste water from the city; operating and maintaining different drainage pumping stations in the city; cleaning and maintaining sewers, both open and covered drains; removing water logs and cleaning choked sewers; according sanction to residential drainage plans and in some cases, taking care of its connection to city sewerage through the engineering department in the different borough offices.

Being the seventh largest metropolitan city in India, and consisting of a mammoth population of 4.5 million, the city of Kolkata suffers from major inconsistencies in water supply and sewerage services across the city. An ageing water system and an inadequate sewerage system have to be dealt with and for those purposes the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been providing loans since the year 2000. It has particularly assisted KMC in the expansion of the sewerage coverage through the Kolkata Environmental Improvement Project. The Kolkata Environmental Improvement Investment Program (KEIIP) is a larger venture that is intended to help the city engage in sewer network expansion and in becoming more efficient in water supply.

Under the KEIP phase I project, wards 1 to 6, 122, 123, 128, and 129 get converted from surface drain systems to underground drainage systems. Under KEIP phase II project, wards 111, 112, 113 and 114 are likely to get transformed to underground drainage systems. However, Mr. Amit Kumar Roy remarked that it is unfortunate that Chinatown area falls under neither of these phases of the KEIP program and hence, the area is unlikely to have underground drainage system. And so the small scale industry effluents will have to continue to flow into the surface drain (Amit Kumar Roy, Personal Interview, 2016). Following this, we voiced our thoughts on why there is inconsistent potable water supply in Chinatown despite the KEIIP initiative. To this query, he directed us to Mr. B. K. Maiti, Director General, Water Supply.

### ***Director General (Water Supply)***

Mr. B. K. Maiti, Director General, Water Supply, was at a meeting and hence, he directed one of his subordinates, Mr. Amitava Pal, Deputy Chief Engineer-I, Water Supply Department to answer to our queries on the Chinatown revival initiatives.

Mr. Pal began by describing the functions of the water supply department. He said that the water supply department engages in the following key activities: (1) Drawing

water from the Hooghly river, the main water source for the city; treating the drawn water at the Indira Gandhi Water Treatment Plant at Palta Water Works; and then sending the treated water to Tallah pumping station wherein it is stored temporarily before being distributed to the city. (2) Distribution of treated water via seven zones (Central, North, South, West, Jadavpur Unit, SSU/GRU, and Tube Well (TW)) based on hydraulic pattern and best engineering practices. (3) Supplying water for other activities such as shipping, for regular use, and for emergency handling of maintenance works.

Mr. Pal said that there were plans to change all pipelines in the city gradually and as need arises. The reasons were ageing pipes, and the rise in population (along with the concomitant increase in demand). In particular, he pointed out the difference between the day and night population of the city. Currently, as per the 2011 census, Kolkata has a population of nearly 5 million people residing in about a mere 181 square kilometres. Importantly, currently, Kolkata has a floating population of about 1 crore who come from adjacent areas for job-related purposes, for commercial activities, and for rendering services. This means that the city has to cater to the water needs of two different kinds of populations. And notably, the daytime needs of the city are higher. In the city, typically, there are four different time slots during which potable water is supplied. These slots are: 6 am to 9 am; 11:30 am to 12 pm; 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm or at times 6 pm; and finally, 7:30 pm to 9 pm. Mr. Pal noted that Chinatown also has water supply during these four slots. He also added that KMC charges rupees seven per 1,000 litres of water for domestic use (includes government hospitals, housing complexes—both rental and ownership, and private housing estates with less than 25 percent of non-residential use), rupees twelve per 1,000 litres for industrial and commercial use (includes multi-storied buildings with 25 percent or more commercial areas), and rupees fifteen for private hospitals, defence establishments, railway establishments, other commercial establishments, and domestic areas which are partly commercial. So Mr. Pal almost denied the existence of any potable water problem in Chinatown and added that developmental work was underway there as anywhere else in Kolkata—but as per the requirements/ or as need arises (Amitava Pal, Personal Interview, 2016). This conclusion then took us to our next stop, the highest bureaucratic/administrative authority in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation, the Municipal Commissioner, Mr. Khalil Ahmed, IAS.

### ***The Municipal Commissioner***

The Kolkata Municipal Corporation Municipal Commissioner, Mr. Khalil Ahmed, IAS, was kind enough to accommodate our request for an interview even without prior appointment. However, our interaction with him was rather brief. When we asked about government activities in terms of reviving Chinatown, he said that several initiatives are being taken. When further probed about the details of these initiatives, he replied that the Department of Town Planning can best answer that question. He said the relevant tasks were delegated to them and asked his assistant to take us over to the Department of Town Planning and instructed him to ask Mr. Kalyan Gaine, the Assistant Engineer, to help us with our research queries (Khalil Ahmed, Personal Interview, 2016).

### ***The Town Planning Engineer***

Our next stop was at the Kolkata Municipal Corporation's Department of Town Planning. Mr. Kalyan Gaine, the Assistant Engineer, led us to his room. In response to our query on revival initiatives for Kolkata's Chinatown, he said that he will be back in a moment. In a few minutes, he came back with a huge file in his hand. The information which Mr. Gaine gave was heretofore not known. He opened the file and showed us the name—"Chinatown Project." When asked if this was the CHA project, he said "No." This was a separate project and what he had in his hands was a draft copy prepared about a year ago with the help of Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC). The project detailed several initiatives in various key areas that needed attention and revival. These include, most importantly, infrastructure; that is, more efficient and regular water supply, better sewerage services and an underground drainage system, street lighting, and parks. Among other things, the project also focused on helping the livelihood of the Chinese population. That is, ensuring that their businesses did not deteriorate. Mr. Gaine, however, pointed out that the draft was only in the initial stage and for almost a year now, no progress has been made. The project proposed that the various initiatives could be taken care of through tenders. And both private as well as public/government contractors can make bids for these tenders. He also noted that there have been no complaints from the Chinese population in ward 58/the Tangra area. He said he only wished the project will soon see the light of day (Kalyan Gaine, Personal Interview, 2016). On that note, we decided we should, perhaps, talk to the key political representative of the city and went to the Mayor, Mr. Sovan Chatterjee's office.

### ***The Mayor***

We then went directly to the Mayor, Mr. Sovan Chatterjee's office and contacted his personal assistant for an interview. At first, he was reluctant. However, he later agreed to get us a few minutes, provided the Mayor returned early from his meetings. It being a Friday, the end of the week, the Mayor was very busy and had to deal with five files in a span of a few minutes after returning from his meetings. Mr. Amlan Lahin, the Mayor's PA, therefore, asked us to return on Tuesday. But exactly, when the time came for our interview on Tuesday, a major fire accident in a nearby jute godown had the mayor rushing to the accident site. So we could not manage to get his views.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **WHITHERTO NOW?**

#### **A Glimpse of Hope: The Revival Initiatives**

“Discrimination, lack of opportunity and unfavourable circumstances are just some of the varied reasons cited by those boarding the next plane out” (Nevatia, 2014: 1). Given these problems, how are the Indian and Chinese governments reacting and what efforts are they taking to halt this steady and continuous evacuation?

#### **The Kolkata to Kunming (K2K) Forum**

The Kolkata to Kunming is a civilian initiative that was begun by some researchers and members of civil society groups from Yunnan Province of China and from Kolkata in the year 2002 (Centre for Studies in International Relations Development, 2013). The effort received almost no Indian institutional or governmental support. To the contrary, the Chinese government was quick to provide both institutional and financial support and the Yunnan Development Research Centre (YDRC) became the nodal organisation facilitating the K2K (CSIRD, 2013). This forum is the only platform that allows for sub-regional cooperation between India and China. Amongst the various outcomes of the K2K Forum meetings, notable is the MoU's that almost all major universities of West Bengal have entered into with their Yunnan counterparts (CSIRD, 2013). University of Calcutta, Rabindra Bharati University and Visva Bharati have all started exchange programmes with Yunnan University. The remaining objectives are outlined in Table 6.1.

Facilitate cooperative ties among the commercial associations from India and China
Organize trade fairs, promote joint ventures, collaborate in R&D, enable mutual technology transfer
Promote small and medium enterprises and provide them market access in both provinces
Establish trade and cultural centres in Kolkata and Kunming
Aid in bringing about symbiotic commercial, academic and cultural interactions
Promote mutual cultural understanding via organizing mutual cultural exhibitions in Kolkata and Kunming
Memorandum of Understanding between universities and other academic institutes in both the provinces
Create K2K Cultural Forum and K2K Educational Forum to enhance mutual interactions in these fields

**Table 6.1: Objectives of the 9<sup>th</sup> K2K Forum**

**Note:** Table prepared with the help of document published by the Centre for Studies in International Relations Development in 2013.

Following this, in 2014, the 10<sup>th</sup> K2K forum was held. The highlights of this forum include signing of many MoUs: three business MoUs, one media collaboration MoU between Zee TV and Yunnan International Channel; and academic MoUs signed by Vidyasagar University and Kalyani University of West Bengal with Yunnan Normal University (CSIRD, 2014). A cultural festival exhibiting Indian Classical dance forms along with a handicraft fair displaying east Indian handicrafts were also organized as part of forum events (CSIRD, 2014). The 11<sup>th</sup> K2K forum was conducted between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2015. A “Kunming Week” was organized between November 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> during which industrial products of Yunnan, Yunnan food, culture and tourist attractiveness were showcased (CSIRD, 2015). Further, several cultural programmes were also conducted during this week long event (CSIRD, 2015).

### **The Cha Project**

Early in 2013, a few prominent citizens and the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), presented a proposal to revive Kolkata’s Chinatown and promote tourism there (Krishnan, 2013). Interestingly, the city’s government authorities consented to partner in this effort called the “Cha or Tea Project” that is intended to preserve Old

Chinatown/Tiretta Bazaar and develop New Chinatown/Tangra (Krishnan, 2013). The proposed 100 crore project is “the brainchild of a Singaporean conglomerate called Buzzmedia” (Nevatia, 2014:3). Key intents of the project include (1) restoration and heritage conservation 2) makeover of streetscapes 3) business revival and 4) preservation of history (Javed, 2016).

<b><i>Revival and Conversion Plans</i></b>
Reviving The Toong On Church and The Six Temples in its vicinity
Converting the Blackburn Lane, Damzen Lane, Chattawala Gully, Sun Yet Sun Street, Lu Shun Lane and Bentinck Street into Food Streets
Establishing an elaborate entrance gate to Chinatown to showcase 18th century Chinese architecture
Provide branding, retail consultation, and design to help resurrect traditional crafts
<b><i>Waste Management Plans</i></b>
Identifying better garbage disposal solutions
Working with the local government and the community and developing user-friendly solutions, especially for the poor and small businesses
Ensuring better livelihood and standard of living for ragpickers and sorters
Creating awareness among residents and businesses on garbage separation and composting
Providing tools for a cleaner environment

**Table 6.2: Important Objectives of the CHA Project**

Note: Table prepared with with the help of the official website of the Cha Project:  
<http://www.thechaproject.com/>

[T]he ... buildings of Chinatown are a unique endowment, the like of which exists in no other Indian city; if properly restored these buildings could become a huge draw for visitors and serve to revitalize a decaying neighbourhood. Only time will tell whether this legacy will be squandered or cherished (Ghosh, 2015: 58).

## **The Future**

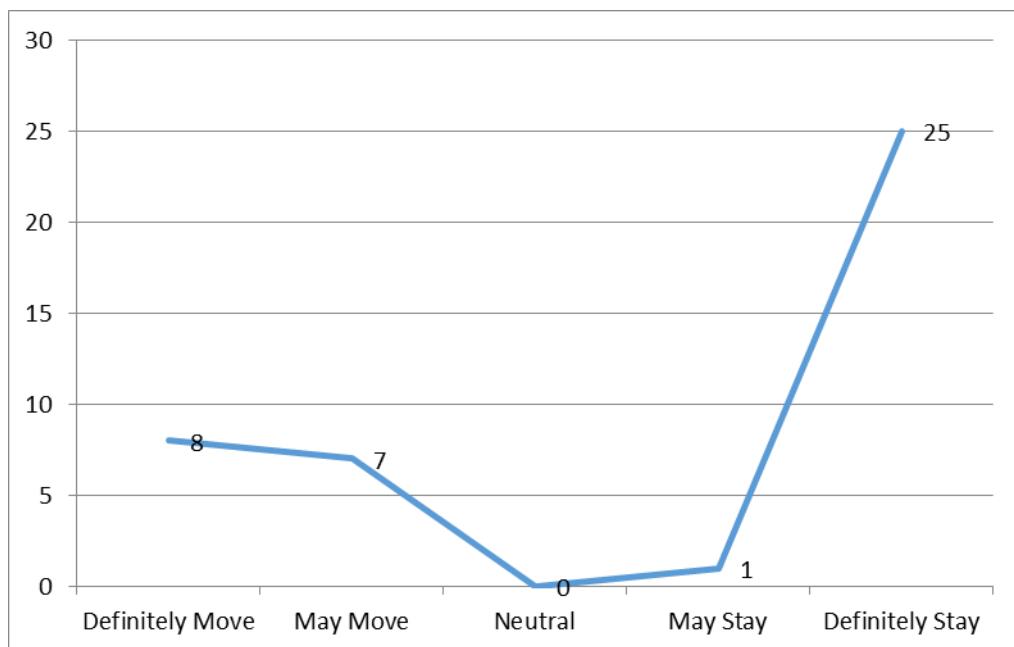
The future of Kolkata's Chinese communities seems rather uncertain, perhaps, even bleak. The Sino-Indian War, the continued apathy of the Indian and West Bengal governments, the shifting of the Tangra leather tanneries to Bantala, and the sparse job opportunities (which are also becoming increasingly competitive), have together successfully managed to pack off the bulk of the Indian Chinese in Kolkata. The Chinese who are left in Tiretti Bazaar and Tangra are mostly either senior citizens, or the younger generation, especially, teenagers. Most of the Chinese children get their education from IB schools. After graduation, they typically, go abroad for higher studies and then, tend to stay there permanently. Almost all the adolescents we interviewed, stated that they planned to move to Canada after completing their schooling. "In the 9th grade I started thinking about which college I wanted to go to. I know I want to study in the US or Canada, because I was thinking of my prospects in India and I can't see any, I can only see myself living in Canada" (Isabella, Personal Interview, 2016).

## **The Silent Cries**

"There was no cooperation from the government at that time. This planning (revival initiatives) is going to take a very, very long time, like a century. Since the previous century, we have been hearing this. Our forefathers have heard about it, and there is absolutely no development or progress in the planning. I will give you an example, first they shut the tanneries and now we have to move from here and shift to Bantala. Everybody gave up everything here, invested a huge sum of capital and now they are saying that place is not valid and we have to go shift somewhere else, somewhere at the border of Bihar or somewhere else. If I could leave, I would. But I don't have any money. All we are asking for are the basic necessities--food, clothing and shelter, but they are not even willing to give us that much" (Cynthia, Personal Interview, 2016).

The lack of identity, economic opportunities, and even basic amenities have together triggered Chinese outmigration. “A group of people went to Canada and they used that network to start going to Toronto. That became one of the main destinations of people trying to get out of India. Thus this became a re-migration of the Chinese, and Toronto has the largest population of Indian Chinese” (Tansen Sen, Personal Interview, 2016). In fact, Toronto’s Chinatown has a sub-sect of the Kolkata Chinese.

On the other hand, our data clearly indicate that out of 41 Chinese people who were asked about the probability of their continued stay in Kolkata, 25 have stated that they would definitely stay. That is nearly 61 percent of the respondents. Both the activists engaged in revival attempts and government officials who procrastinate policy decisions need to take note of these numbers.



**Figure 6.1: Probability of Chinese Outmigration from Kolkata**

“If nothing is done in the next 5 years, the Tangra that you know, you have seen, will be gone. It will all be malls, hotels, and multi-storied buildings” (Personal Interview, Beanie Law, 2016). In Tangra, the Chinese people are selling off their land, even though some never owned it. They were not literate and had little knowledge about property and legal matters, so they had not bought property legally. They just lived there and paid rent, and therefore, now they are being removed from their homes. Tangra has now become a gold mine; it is a huge open plot of land, that real estate owners can exploit at will.

### **The Lost Land**

“You can’t develop Tangra as the New Chinatown. We had a plan before, but slowly one by one, the Chinese in Tangra are being eaten up by individual real-estate tycoons. Before all these problems, about 15-20 years ago, we had suggested and proposed to the government to grant that land and declare it as Chinatown, then revive it fully with modern architecture and sewage system. But now I don’t think it’s possible. Actually, they have more to gain by selling off commercially. There are hardly 1000 Chinese in Tangra. The temples are still here and they have history and heritage, but New Chinatown does not have as much. Individual tourist guides conduct Chinatown walks and all because it has other communities’ monuments. We proposed to accommodate the evicted Tangra residents here in Tiretti Bazaar. In fact, that whole line was an empty open compound. So we proposed to have a Chinese institute and our museums, but the West Bengal government did not respond at all” (Dominic Lee, Personal Interview, 2016)

Nonetheless, we believe that there is a need for a Chinatown for two significant reasons. One, it gives the people belonging to that ethnicity a unique identity, and two, it rejuvenates economic activity for the Chinese, as well as aids the tourist departments of the West Bengal and Indian governments to generate more revenue.

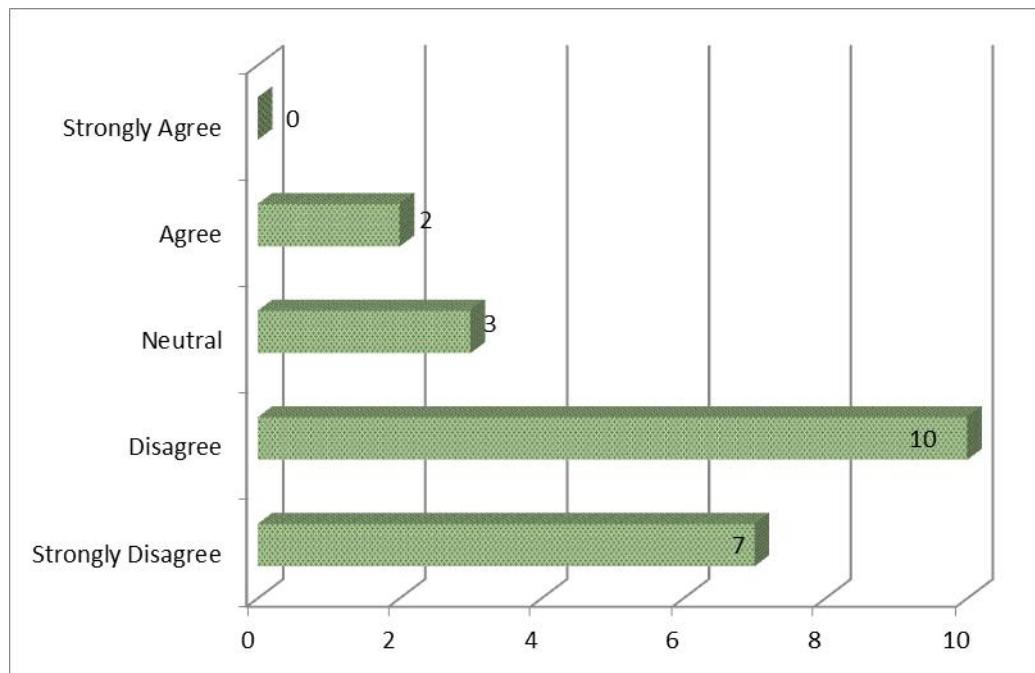
### The Quest for Identity

“Geographically there is no place that the small community can identify with. If you don't have a place that you can identify with, you don't feel that you are a part of it. For instance is there a Muslim town? Is there a Hindu town? Yes, there are plenty, like Haridwar, Najadgarh. Why does America have so many Chinatowns in the main cities? It is just that, if I can identify myself with something, then I feel like a part of the city. If I melt and I disappear, then I have no identity. There is a heritage to which you live. There are multiple needs for Chinatown. Those who are willing to stay here, and not in Canada. They must be earning more here; otherwise, they would migrate to wherever there are better economic opportunities. Similarly, if you give the emigrated opportunities like this, an exclusive market where you will be able to sell whatever you want and make a life for yourself, I am sure they will consider returning. **If one person comes, the others will follow.** That is the need for Chinatown. The Chinese themselves are not educated, but they thought if I send my child out, to Canada, then my job is done. Because of lack of education and awareness, and general fear of the system, they never legalized the papers or property. It is easier to go to Canada than any other place, plus a large group had emigrated there. Because a group is already there, it helps them bring other people. It has an easier immigration policy than America. USA takes in only educated people. Canada has a different system; it takes into account your family members. Toronto is only Indians and Chinese, and most of them from Kolkata” (Personal Interview, Beanie Law, 2016).

The laments and cries of citizens like Cynthia are definitely reasonable. In our own investigation of Indian bureaucratic performance, we found out that there is still nothing concrete that has emerged in terms of policy decisions, project goals, budget allocation, program formulation and resource allocation. The topmost administrators have clearly stated that some talks have occurred and that the issue is still in discussion agenda stage. There is no indication or time frame with regard to pushing this critical matter to government decision making agenda. Each department pointed its fingers at the other. The tourism department sent us to the project management unit, which directed us to the solid waste management department, which in turn led us to the sewerage and drainage department, which steered us to the water supply department, which next drove us toward the town planning unit. Not to mention, that in the course of this journey, we had met

with the Kolkata Municipal Secretary, the Kolkata Municipality Commissioner, and almost met with the Honorable Mayor, himself.

Additionally, our data clearly indicate that a large portion of the Kolkata Chinese feel that the Indian government has especially been indifferent to their problems and concerns. 22 people were questioned if they agree that the Indian government is offering some kind of support to redeem their livelihood difficulties and/or engage in Chinatown revival initiatives. 17 of them thought that government support was absent, three were neutral--they neither thought government supported or neglected them. Only two felt there was some government support.



**Figure 6.2: Is The Indian Government Supporting The Chinese Community?**

But despite the failures of the many individual and group initiatives, and ubiquitous government apathy, there may still be hope for Kolkata's Chinese.

With the efforts being put in by the CHA project and other revival initiatives, I think what we have been trying to do with this revival project is to give them something economically, so that this place can be preserved. I think if they buy into this, because they have their own land and identity (which is worth preserving), if they can figure out a way to self-sustain themselves using the neighbourhood they are in, it will be good for the community (Tansen Sen, Personal Interview, 2016).

G. M. Kapur adds that there will be a heritage trail which would connect about seven of the temples in the vicinity. Those very people who have shunned that area would be attracted to it, yet again. It would give a sense of pride to the Chinese who live there that their area is being revived, creating more business and cultural opportunities--while simultaneously, giving them a feeling of belonging. "The main thing is that, today, they are alienated. They don't have the feeling of being a part of the cultural milieu of the city" (G.M. Kapur, Personal Interview, 2016).

### **Kolkata Tourism Department Welcomes You!**

“Nowadays Buddhist tourism is huge and India is the origin of Buddhism. So loads of people visit India from Taiwan and Thailand and come to see the Buddhist pilgrimage places. They fly into Kolkata airport and drive off the same day to Bodhgaya. They don’t even pause in Kolkata. If a proper Chinatown comes up, there are six temples here itself that they can visit. A plane-load of tourists, if they spend \$200 in Kolkata, the amount of commerce that will happen is mind-boggling--if you can attract them. As soon as they visit the temple, there is a market, you eat and buy. The foresight is required. This money is being spent in Bihar” (Beanie Law, Personal Interview, 2016).

With enough effort, anything is possible. And on that optimistic note, we conclude our analysis here. However, a year from now, we intend to revisit a “**Revitalized Cheenapara**” and take account of the progress of the revival initiatives.

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## Appendix

<b>Serial No.</b>	<b>Questionnaire Category</b>	<b>Questions</b>
A.1.	<b>Senior Citizens</b>	<p>1. When did you first come to India?</p> <p>2. Are you retired?</p> <p>3. What are your plans after retirement?</p> <p>4. Does the Indian government provide you with pensions?</p> <p>5. Did you envision a brighter economic future for yourself when you first came and how has this modified overtime?</p> <p>6. What changes have you observed throughout your lifetime?</p> <p>7. How have the occupations changed across your lifetime?</p> <p>8. Do you see any cultural shifts/ generation gaps among the younger generations?</p> <p>9. What made you stay in Chinatown?</p> <p>10. How do you feel about the Indian government? Why?</p> <p>11. Do you feel closer ties to China or India and why?</p> <p>12. What are your thoughts on the future of the Indian Chinese population?</p> <p>13. What are the differences you have observed between the Chinese and Indian systems of education?</p> <p>14. Can you tell us about how the Indo-China war affected you?</p> <p>15. How well have you managed to merge with the native Indians?</p> <p>16. How much do you know and how do you feel about the revival projects undertaken?</p> <p>17. With the revival projects do you think your economic aims and dreams will be reopened once</p>

		again?
A.2.	<b>Women</b>	<p>1. Have you faced any problems as a Chinese woman in India?</p> <p>2. How have the rites and religious practices changed overtime?</p> <p>3. Do you think you have fundamentally altered your traditional cultural and religious practices?</p> <p>5. What do you think about the safety and security with regard to your life in Kolkata?</p> <p>6. Do you have any prominent memories of your times in Chinatown?</p> <p>7. How do you feel about the Indian government? Why?</p> <p>8. Do you feel closer ties to China or India and why?</p> <p>9. What are your thoughts on the future of the Indian Chinese population?</p> <p>10. How much do you know and how do you feel about the revival projects undertaken?</p>
A.3.	<b>Younger Generation</b>	<p>1. Do you know anything about the cultural or religious practices which you inherited from your forefathers or has it changed drastically?</p> <p>2. What is your view on the closure of the leather tanneries?</p> <p>3. Do you think it has affected your future?</p> <p>4. Do you think it is for the good (you can have better education and move to white collar jobs) or is it for the worse (signalling the complete dismantle of economic foundation of Chinatown)?</p> <p>5. How fluent are you in Chinese languages (Mandarin, Cantonese, etc)?</p> <p>6. Do you plan on migrating to foreign nations after you complete your education?</p> <p>7. Do you have ideas for the revival of Chinatown?</p> <p>8. What are your aspirations?</p> <p>9. Are you currently employed in any organisations?</p>

		<p>10. What are your views on the Indian Army, would you be open to contributing to them in any way?</p> <p>11. What are your views on the Indian government?</p> <p>12. Have you ever been to China, do you feel connected to it?</p>
<b>A.4.</b>	<b>Tannery Owners</b>	<p>1. What was the inspiration behind starting your own business?</p> <p>2. For how many generations has your family been engaged in leather tanning?</p> <p>3. Other than operating tanneries, which alternate business would you have engaged in?</p> <p>4. Did any government policies affect your businesses, if yes in what way?</p> <p>5. Is your consumption level satisfied by the profits?</p> <p>6. How did Demonetization affect you?</p> <p>7. What has changed in the recent years, after Supreme Court's actions?</p> <p>8. How did the shutting of the tanneries affect you?</p> <p>9. Have you been economically challenged?</p> <p>10. Do you see environmental degradation as serious as the government sees it?</p> <p>11. Who are your consumers/ target market?</p> <p>12. Do you have trade contacts in China?</p> <p>13. Who are your employees?</p> <p>14. Do you face discrimination in terms of formal employment?</p> <p>15. If given a chance, what changes would you make to Bantala?</p> <p>16. What kind of competition do you face?</p> <p>17. How long do you expect to continue in the same business?</p>
<b>A.5.</b>	<b>Shoe-makers</b>	<p>1. What was the inspiration behind starting your own business?</p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Other than shoe making, which alternate business would you have engaged in?</li> <li>3. Did any government policies affect your businesses, if yes in what way?</li> <li>4. Is your consumption level satisfied by the profits?</li> <li>5. Where do you get your raw materials from?</li> <li>6. Has the closure of tanneries affected your business? If yes, how?</li> <li>7. How did Demonetization affect you?</li> <li>8. Who are your consumers/ target market?</li> <li>9. Do you have trade contacts in China?</li> <li>10. Who are your employees (if any)?</li> <li>11. Do you face discrimination in terms of formal employment?</li> <li>12. Where do you market your finished products?</li> <li>13. What kind of competition do you face?</li> <li>14. Are other communities or businesses picking up your skills and producing your products?</li> <li>15. Do you see your children getting into the same business?</li> </ol>
A.6.	<b>Restaurant Owners</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What was the inspiration behind starting your own business?</li> <li>2. Other than operating restaurants, which alternate business would you have engaged in?</li> <li>3. Did any government policies affect your businesses, if yes in what way? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is your consumption level satisfied by the profits?</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Who are your employees?</li> <li>5. How authentic is the Chinese food you serve? Has there been any kind of influence on the variety of dishes you make? If so, why?</li> <li>6. Do other communities or restaurants pick up your skills and food?</li> <li>7. Which dishes are the most popular? What is the</li> </ol>

		<p>demand of these food products?</p> <p>8. What kind of competition do you face?</p>
A.7.	<b>Dentists</b>	<p>1. Where did you complete your education?</p> <p>2. Can you tell us in detail about your patient visits on a daily/weekly basis?</p> <p>3. What kind of social strata frequent your clinics?</p> <p>4. What are the key differences between Chinese and India dental practices?</p> <p>5. Do you see yourself continuing to stay in India and your children inheriting your profession and skills?</p> <p>6. What challenges do you face in your profession in the recent years?</p> <p>7. Do you think that there are many other Chinese practicing dentistry?</p> <p>8. How many of you still practice this form of dentistry in this area?</p>
A.8.	<b>Beauty Parlour Owners</b>	<p>1. What was the inspiration behind starting your own business?</p> <p>2. Have you been trained in cosmetology?</p> <p>3. Did any government policies affect your businesses, if yes in what way? Is your consumption level satisfied by the profits?</p> <p>4. How did Demonetization affect you?</p> <p>5. Who are your consumers/ target market?</p> <p>6. Do you have contacts in China?</p> <p>7. Who are your employees?</p> <p>8. Do you face discrimination in terms of formal employment?</p> <p>9. What are your dominant beauty treatments for which you have clients coming here?</p> <p>10. What is exclusive about Chinese beauty parlors?</p> <p>11. Do you have celebrity visiting your parlours?</p> <p>12. What are the sections of society frequent your</p>

		<p>parlors?</p> <p>13. Who is your most severe competition or chief competitors?</p> <p>14. What kind of beauty practices do you import from China and practice here?</p> <p>15. Do you have unisex parlors?</p> <p>16. Is this a profitable business?</p> <p>17. Do you see your profession dying and your children inheriting your profession? If not, what profession do you think they would be practising?</p>
A.9.	<b>Carpenters</b>	<p>1. What kind of specific work do you engage in?</p> <p>2. Is this your only occupation?</p> <p>3. Is this a profitable business?</p> <p>4. What are the challenges you face in carrying out your profession?</p> <p>5. Have you lost market for wooden goods given the liking for metal and plastic items?</p> <p>6. Do you get enough business or work to do?</p> <p>7. Have there been any new changes in your profession in recent years? What and why?</p> <p>8. Do you get assistance from other members of the family?</p> <p>9. Where is your store located?</p> <p>10. How expensive is the rent for your office space</p> <p>11. Other than carpentry shoe making leather tanning etc what professions do local Chinese people engage in?</p>
A.10.	<b>Religious Heads: Churches</b>	<p>1. What are your religious beliefs?</p> <p>2. Please tell us something in detail about your religion</p> <p>3. Please tell us about the symbolization of artefacts, etc?</p> <p>4. Have any of the artefacts, artillery and cultural remnants been restored? And if so, what was the process of restoration?</p>

		<p>5. How have your religious beliefs morphed over time?</p> <p>6. Do you work in other places as well?</p> <p>7. How do you manage the maintenance of the churches?</p> <p>8. Could you describe the devotees?</p> <p>9. When was it incorporated?</p> <p>10. Is it affiliated with the Vatican?</p> <p>11. What connections does this Church share with the other churches in the city?</p> <p>12. What kind of challenges has the church faced in terms of existence and survival?</p> <p>13. What kind of cooperation do you get from the local govt and state govt in running this church?</p> <p>14. How big are the crowds that visit the church for occasions?</p> <p>15. Other popular neighboring churches ?</p> <p>16. How is this one different from other churches?</p> <p>17. What kind of power authority exists in this church?</p> <p>18. Do you have any Archival docs talking about the history and immigration of Chinese into this country?</p> <p>19. And about traditional religious practices</p> <p>20. What activities had the church engaged in on terms of helping the Chinese community sustain in kolkata?</p> <p>21. What kind of welfare and relief activities does the church involve itself in during times of emergency of natural calamity?</p> <p>22. Do you receive any kind of charity of donations and from whom?</p> <p>23. Does the church have any political connections? Or is it politically active in any ways?</p>
A.11.	<b>Religious Heads: Temples</b>	<p>1. What are your religious beliefs?</p> <p>2. Please tell us something in detail about your religion</p> <p>3. Tell us about the symbolization of artefacts, etc?</p>

		<p>4. Have any of the artefacts, artillery and cultural remanence restored? And if so, what was the process of restoration?</p> <p>5. How have your religious beliefs morphed over time?</p> <p>6. Do you work in other places as well?</p> <p>7. How do you manage the maintenance of the temples?</p> <p>8. Describe the temple devotees?</p> <p>9. What kind of shifts have the Chinese Buddhist temples undergone in recent times in terms of religious rites and practice?</p> <p>10. What kind of adaptations has the Chinese community undergone in terms of embracing Hinduism?</p> <p>11. How religious are the current Chinese population?</p> <p>12. How has the shift occurred in their religious adherence?</p>
<b>A.12.</b>	<b>Educational Administrators</b>	<p>1. What is exclusive about the education offered by Chinese schools in chinatown?</p> <p>2. How is the Chinese school in chinatown different from other Chinese schools across the world?</p> <p>3. What steps have you taken to bridge this gap?</p> <p>4. How do you compare the Chinese schools in Kolkata with the traditional Indian schools?</p> <p>5. Is the Chinese education comparatively more difficult than Indian and does this factor contribute to the dropping of students?</p> <p>6. Do Indian students come and study in Chinese schools?</p> <p>7. How do you get/import your book's from China and Taiwan or are they locally available?</p> <p>8. How expensive are they?</p> <p>9. Do you host any festivals and cultural practices of your community in this school?</p> <p>10. How has the revival project helped you in reopening this school?</p>

		<p>11. How else did the revival initiatives enhance your existence and survival?</p> <p>12. Where do you get your funds from?</p> <p>13. What do you think contributed to the decline and closure of Chinese schools?</p> <p>14. How would you compare and classify the schools in Kolkata with Chinatown?</p> <p>15. What board of education do they study?</p> <p>16. What are your ideas for the revival of traditional Chinese schools?</p> <p>17. What are your views on student exchange programs, scholarships, etc?</p> <p>18. Fee structures and payment cycles?</p> <p>19. What are the opportunities for the Chinese students?</p> <p>20. What extracurricular activities do the students perform?</p>
A.13.	<b>Artists</b>	<p>1. Which art form do you practice? What is the significance does this art form carry in terms of Chinese culture and heritage?</p> <p>2. Do you have students to whom you are passing over this tradition and art form?</p> <p>3. What kind of challenges did you face and are facing in terms of practising this art, using it as a form of earning your livelihood and projecting the Chinese culture in larger population?</p> <p>4. Can you talk about other Chinese art forms that are struggling?</p> <p>5. Are there art forms in Chinatown?</p> <p>6. Can you give us the names of your other artisan friends with whom we can talk regarding the topics we have discussed with you?</p> <p>7. Can you please talk to us about the dragon dance, moon festival, and any other prominent festivals that you are aware of?</p> <p>8. Are these festivals still celebrated in the way as they</p>

		are celebrated in China?
A.14.	<b>Indian Citizens</b>	<p>1. How long have you worked here for?</p> <p>2. Tell us a bit about your profession?</p> <p>3. Tell us about your professional relationship with the Chinese?</p> <p>4. Are they friendly to you?</p> <p>5. How much do you know about the Chinese community in Kolkata?</p>
A.15.	<b>Individual and Group Activists</b>	<p>1. What motivated you to study the Chinese community in Kolkata?</p> <p>2. What were the key research questions that you studied?</p> <p>3. What data collection methods and data analysis did you employ in your study?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Who were the people you interviewed?</li> <li>b. How long did your interviews last?</li> <li>c. Did you have an interview that had structured questions?</li> </ul> <p>4. What in your opinion motivated the Chinese migration to India and why do they continue to stay here?</p> <p>5. Can you discuss the origin and evolution of Old Chinatown and New Chinatown—the Tangra and Tiretti Bazaars?</p> <p>6. What are some of the major transformations that the Chinese community has undergone during the course of their stay in the Indian subcontinent? Let us start with their religious practices and traditional rituals</p> <p>7. How does Cheenapara's architecture differ from authentic Chinese architecture? And to what extent does it resemble the architecture of Chinatowns worldwide?</p> <p>8. What are the socio-cultural and economic effects that the Chinese have had on Kolkata?</p> <p>9. Can you discuss about the political participation and</p>

		<p>linkages of Kolkata's Chinese community?</p> <p>10. What are some of the major lifestyle transformations the Chinese community has undergone in terms of its occupational and educational patterns? And why have these changes occurred? Also, please discuss the transformations in their food habits.</p> <p>11. Can you tell us something about Mumbai's Chinatown? Does it even exist today?</p> <p>12. What in your opinion are some of the key differences between the Chinatowns in Mumbai and Kolkata?</p> <p>13. What factors have contributed to the decline in the Chinese population in India—both in Mumbai and in Kolkata?</p> <p>14. Can you elaborate on the Cha Project and your role in it?</p> <p>15. What other solutions do you propose to revitalize Chinatown?</p> <p>16. Do you have any contacts in the municipal corporation or the state tourism department that would be helpful for our research? Or perhaps, even some local guides who speak both Mandarin and English?</p> <p>17. Are there any other additional themes or concepts that you think may help us in our research?</p>
A.16.	Scholars	<p>1. What motivated you to study the Chinese community and Indo-China relations?</p> <p>2. What were the key research questions that you studied?</p> <p>3. What in your opinion motivated the Chinese migration to India and why do they continue to stay here?</p> <p>4. Can you discuss the origin and evolution of Old Chinatown and New Chinatown—the Tangra and Tiretti Bazaars?</p> <p>5. Which do you think had a bigger impact—tanneries or Sino-Indian war?</p> <p>6. What are some of the major transformations that the</p>

		<p>Chinese community has undergone during the course of their stay in the Indian subcontinent? Let us start with their religious practices and traditional rituals.</p> <p>7. What are the socio-cultural and economic effects that the Chinese have had on Kolkata?</p> <p>8. Can you discuss about the political participation and linkages of Kolkata's Chinese community?</p> <p>9. Can you tell us about the Chinese schools and their impact on the culture of the Chinese people?</p> <p>10. What are some of the major lifestyle transformations the Chinese community has undergone in terms of its occupational and educational patterns? And why have these changes occurred? Also, please discuss the transformations in their food habits.</p> <p>11. What factors have contributed to the decline in the Chinese population in India—both in Mumbai and in Kolkata?</p> <p>12. Could you tell us briefly about the Chinese migration patterns worldwide?</p> <p>13. What can you tell us about the Chinese migration and history in Kolkata?</p> <p>14. Tell us about Buddhism among the Indian Chinese.</p> <p>15. Are there any other additional themes or concepts that you think may help us in our research?</p>
<b>A.17.</b>	<b>Indian and Chinese Government Representatives</b>	<p>1. What are the revival initiatives that the government has engaged in?</p>

## Glossary

1. **Achipur**- Place of pilgrimage in West Bengal, where the first Chinese settler passed away
2. **Baozi and jaozi**- steamed dumplings native to China
3. **Boddhisatva**- an individual who delays nirvana out of compassion for others, in Buddhism
4. **Cantonese**-Chinese people originating from the Guangdong province of China
5. **Cheena Gully**- Mumbai's Chinatown that no longer exists
6. **Cheenapara**-China town
7. **Chhing**- numbered sticks which are used to predict fortune
8. **Dharti**-earth
9. **Dim sum**- A style of Cantonese cuisine which involves the preparation of small portions of food served in small baskets or plates
10. **Dongzhi**- Winter Solstice festival celebrated on 22<sup>nd</sup> December by the Chinese
11. **Duanmu**- the Dragon festival held on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Lunar calendar.
12. **Durga**- Hindu warrior Goddess, has innumerable forms
13. **Ganesh**- Hindu patron God of arts and sciences, has the head of an elephant
14. **Guanyin**- Taoist Goddess of Mercy, also called Kwun Yam
15. **Hakka**-Nomadic Chinese people
16. **Hubei**- People from the Hubei province of Central China
17. **Jhamela**- trouble, problems
18. **Jiska shakti uska bhakti**- Hindi proverb signifying that the strongest man will win
19. **Joss**-Sheets of paper burned in traditional Chinese ancestor and deity worship ceremonies and during funerals. Also known as ghost or spirit paper
20. **Kali**- Hindu Goddess believed to be the destroyer of evil forces, an alternate form of Durga
21. **Kwan Hum**- Beloved Taoist deity who held weapons
22. **Kwan Tai**- the brother of Kwun Yam, a deified general in Taoism
23. **Kwun Yam**- the other name for the Taoist Goddess of Mercy
24. **Lou Pan Cham**- Taoist God King
25. **Mata**- mother
26. **Minguo**- A calendar followed in Taiwan. 1912 is considered to be the first year of the calendar

27. ***Momos***- steamed dumplings originating in South East Asia, variations of Baozi and jaozi of China
28. ***Nam Hoi***- A place in China
29. ***Nian***- mythological Chinese beast that comes out of hiding during the Chinese New Year
30. ***Paani me reh ke magarmach se dushmani***- Hindi proverb meaning it is unwise to anger the strong individuals whose home you live in
31. ***Pita***- father
32. ***Pooja***- the act of worship
33. ***Saraswati***-Hindu Goddess of Wisdom
34. ***Sea Ip***- A Canton province and a church in Tiretti Bazaar, Kolkata
35. ***Shumai***- traditional Chinese dumplings served as dim sum by the Cantonese
36. ***Supari***- Areca nut of the areca tree
37. ***Tangra Bazaar***- Locality in Kolkata, India, the New Chinatown where the Chinese communities moved after the tanneries were ordered to be moved.
38. ***Tangyuan***- rice balls made by mixing glutinous rice and water
39. ***Tiretti Bazaar***- A locality in Kolkata, India, known as the Old Chinatown where the Chinese immigrants first settled
40. ***Vishwakarma***- In Hinduism, the personification of the creator
41. ***Yamraj***- Hindu God of death
42. ***Zhong Kui***- Guardian figure that vanquishes evil, a common motif of the Dragon festival