

# Ancient Dutch Colony Chinsurah – A Neglected Destination with Tourism Potential & Great Archeological Value

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**Abstract - For centuries many of the European countries ventured in India for trade purpose. They found India as a land of treasure, and actually it was. They settled in different parts of India. Bengal was one of the places where they found cultivation, manufacturing & trading, all could be controlled easily. The Portuguese were the first to start trading in this region. The Dutch were the next. Beside the British, India faced colonization of the French, the Dutch, the Portuguese, the Armenian & the Dane.**

**In eastern part of India, the Dutch arrived in early 17th century and officially the colony was established in 3rd decade in Chinsurah. During their long stay they built several buildings including a fort and also a cemetery. At present in Chinsurah and around, the local people has very little or no knowledge about the past glory and as a result the historical buildings and monuments are not treated with special care.**

**This article is an approach to bring out the true essence of various tourism attractions in and around the Dutch influenced Chinsurah which are having great Archeological value. This would also create awareness in different levels about the remaining structures and would help to preserve them after necessary restauration.**

**Keywords: Chinsurah, Dutch in Bengal, Dutch Cemetery, VOC, Dutch Colony in India, Fort Gustavas**

## I. INTRODUCTION

India was always a target for invaders. Sometimes they wanted to conquer and sometimes took the role of traders. For the Europeans it all started with the arrival of Vasco-Da-Gama on 20th May 1498 at Calicut Port of India. That was the first European arrival in India by sea route. Then the Portuguese expanded to other parts of India including Bengal. In late 16th Century, they arrived in Bengal and had chosen Saptagram (Satgaon), a strategically important place suitable for trade on bank of the river Saraswati. But due to the crisis of water in the river and some other issues, they had shifted to Bandel on the bank of river Hooghly in the year 1579. After the Portuguese, in the beginning of the 17th Century, the Dutch arrived in Bengal. They selected a place south to the settlement of

the Portuguese on the bank of the same river Hooghly. The place was full of a type of cane called 'Chichira'. From this probably name the place 'Chuchura' or as the Hollanders pronounced 'Chinsurah' developed.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE & EXISTING RESEARCH WORK & PROJECTS IN THIS AREA



Fig.01 : Chinsurah in map of West Bengal  
Source : Author

1. On November 11, 2014, in The Telegraph, an article was published titled "Dutch in Chinsurah website". In this article, beside describing the importance of Chinsurah as Dutch Colony, it was mentioned about a project taken by a group of organisations to retrieve the glory of ancient Chinsurah and the connections with the Dutch.

As it is mentioned in the news - "Presidency University's website on the Dutch cemetery in Chinsurah was launched last Friday morning, and it was followed in the evening by the launch of the book, *The Dutch East India Company in India* by Bauke van der Pol, a Dutch anthropologist. Architect Aishwarya Tipnis has at the same time been working on a more comprehensive website on Dutch heritage in Chinsurah, and although it is only partly ready and will be launched late December, it will soon be linked with the Presidency University website.

Now, almost two centuries after the Dutch formally ceded their settlements to the British, Chinsurah is a provincial town in the state of West Bengal in India and its old glory hardly to be evidenced. As part of a larger attempt by the Embassy of the Netherlands, this project highlights and indeed preserves the importance of Chinsurah for both the Netherlands and India."

The article also covers that, though the sources of information are very limited, the project team has put their enormous effort to develop the website which provides details description about the Dutch Cemetery in Chinsurah. [<http://Dutchcemeterybengal.com/index.php>.]

2. An article is available in the internet titled "Photos: The forgotten history of Chinsurah, a part of Holland on the Ganges" [<https://scroll.in/roving/728222/photos-the-forgotten-history-of-chinsurah-a-part-of-holland-on-the-ganges>]. In this article the details of the projects are given with supporting photographs. We get lot of information about view and reason behind taking up this project on Chinsurah.

As mentioned in the article - "A lot of this historical richness is captured in "Dutch in Chinsurah", a cross-disciplinary project by Aishwarya Tipnis Architects in collaboration with the Presidency University Kolkata in which history, urban geography and architecture come together.

Project leader Aishwarya Tipnis says they have valorised about 95 structures of heritage value in Chinsurah and plotted them on real time Google maps by open source Geographic Information System mapping. This enabled them to bring together all sorts of information about these places "such as history, architectural description, and state of preservation in one place," Tipnis wrote to Scroll.in. "Plus, we also have links to other online sources archives in Netherlands, etc. that have old maps and images about these in one place."

The project is funded by the Embassy of Kingdom of the Netherlands in India. "We hope this will become the starting point for urban planning and development of the town for the town," said Tipnis. "We want to freeze Chinsurah in time or make it like Amsterdam or Jakarta. We want to keep intact what is special about its individual identity in all the development that happens in the future."

3. Europe on the Hooghly, My Liveable City, Apr-Jun 2016, International Edition, ISSN 2455-2380. In this article Professor Paul Meurs & Marlijn Baarveld tell us how the heritage of Hooghly can inspire new developments and create a unique riverfront space
4. In the preface of booklet titled "Chinsurah – The Dutch Heritage" this Mr. Alphonsus Stoelinga, Ambassador of the Netherlands in India, has mentioned – "I am delighted to present a beautiful part of Bengal in this booklet. Chinsurah is not far from Kolkata and it was once the largest and most splendid trading post for the Dutch East India Company in India. The Embassy of the Netherlands in New Delhi is joining hands with the Tourism Department of West Bengal to showcase this idyllic spot on the banks of Ganga in an attempt to prompt you to explore the place. The Dutch had a lavish lifestyle in Chinsurah 400 years ago which is evident in the opulent buildings in the area thanks to the brisk business opportunities Bengal offered at that time. In the later days of the Dutch, Chinsurah was known as the rural retreat from Kolkata, where the wealthy spent their weekends. As heritage plays an important role in the identity of a place, a detailed architectural and cultural documentation of Chinsurah is also available on the website [www.Dutchinchinsurah.com](http://www.Dutchinchinsurah.com). I hope our efforts help you enjoy Chinsurah's character and rediscover its beautiful face."

### III. BEFORE THE DUTCH SETTLEMENT

Before the Dutch settlement, there were few villages located at that place and around. In the book 'Administration of The Hooghly District', the writer George Toynbee has mentioned that "..... Chinsurah is described in 1770 as 'requiring three quarter of an hour to walk around it'". This indicates that the area of Dutch-Chinsurah was very small where the VOC (Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie) office and residences of Dutch officials were located. The Fort Gustavas was also located within it. Before the settlement, this place, situated on the west bank of the river Hooghly, was full of plants known as Chichira cane. The villages around this place were Dharampur, Shandeswartala, Kanakshali & Koolihanda.

These localities, except Koolihanda, were very much developed, rich in culture & ethical values at that time. These areas were also renowned as educational hub for years. The activities of the Dutch were not limited to their small area. They reached the nearby villages, adored the local culture, given respect to the moral values and at the same time wanted a holistic development of these surrounding villages too. As trader they started, but in due course also looked after the administration with a friendly approach towards the local habitats.

Writer Akshay Chandra Sarkar has mentioned in his book 'Pita-Putra' (Father-Son) "... We had our residence outside Dutch-Chinsurah area, at a site facing the river Hooghly for the last 7 to 8 generations." Sri Akshay Chandra was born in 1846. Considering 25 years for a generation, it becomes clear that the educated & cultured family used to reside there since the middle of 17th Century. This village was known as Kanakshali.

Among the other villages around, Dharampur was the oldest. The name indicates that it has religious connection (Dharam – meaning Religion) and most probably it refers to Buddhism. History certifies that Dharampur is almost 1000 years old village.

Shandeswartala is named the God Sri Sri Shandeswar Mahadev. This locality is almost 1 km south to Dharampur & developed around the temple of Lord Shiva. The village is almost 500 years old as per West Bengal District Gazetteers : Hooghly, October 1972 – "... it is said that the Deity was installed by Digambar Halder in 16th Century."

Part of old Chinsurah was occupied by the persons who used to earn by offering physical labour. This area was known as Koolihanda.

#### IV. THE DUTCH IN CHINSURAH

Kozhikode (Calicut) was the most important trading port in Malabar coast when the Europeans started coming to India by sea route. The Portuguese arrived Kozhikode in 1498 and they opened the sea route for trading with India. Following the Portuguese, the Dutch arrived in India early 17th Century. In the year 1604 Admiral Steven van der Hagen reached Malabar. A defense and trade treaty was signed with the Zamorin of Kozhikode. Zamorin is title for the Hindu monarch in Kozhikode. Thus, a formal beginning of the relationship between the Netherlands and India was established and the two countries were involved in trading. A Dutch multinational company 'Vereenigde Oost Indische Compagnie' (Dutch East India Company) was formed which operated in India during 17th to 19th Century. In India the Dutch operated in various places. Their colonies were located in enclosed areas in some parts of India unlike the British who tried to encroach in all parts. The Dutch were well experienced in naval

operations. In the beginning they started in the coastal area and then they ventured inside the country on the banks of different major rivers for the settlements so that the waterways can be used easily for trading. Pulicat, Masulipattanam, Nagapatam, Surat, Ahmedabad, Patna, Hyderabad, Chinsurah were the places of their operations.

In Bengal they settled in Chinsurah. In the beginning they could not compete with the Portuguese in trade. But the Portuguese were involved in controversies with the Mughal emperor Shahajahan and were driven out by Mughal army. This situation was an opportunity for the Dutch, and they got the trade license from the Mughals and prospered. Almost 200 years they stayed in Chinsurah. They realized the importance of local people in establishing a colony in India. During their long stay, they mixed with the local people, adored their culture, and voluntarily got involved in many occasions. The Dutch developed the area by building Settlement, Fort, Factories, Church etc. Beside these, they also established a well-designed underground drainage system. Unfortunately, today only a few buildings & structures are existing.

Chinsurah was geographically very important location for them. As a hub between the Dutch capital of Amsterdam and the Dutch colony in Batavia (present day Indonesia), the town occupied a key position for the VOC. Chinsurah, for the Dutch, functioned as the headquarters of the VOC. The Dutch started developing the town exclusively for trade by building factories, warehouses, offices etc. They even involved the local merchants and craftsman in their trade. Apart from textiles, the items traded in Dutch India include precious stones, saltpeter, indigo, silk etc. Slowly Chinsurah became home for Dutch and Armenian merchants as well as native Bengali merchants. Unlike the British, the Dutch had no political intentions in India, but were solely interested in trade. To protect themselves from enemies and other possible invaders, the VOC director of Bengal commissioned a fort in Chinsurah in 1740. The fort, with four corner bastions, was named Gustavus after the Governor-General, Gustaaf Willem van Imhof. It was known for its size and strength.

Along the river Hooghly many of the European countries had their settlements. The Portuguese in Bandel, the Dutch in Chinsurah, the French in Chandannagore, the Danish in Srirampur and finally the British in Calcutta. Beside these Armenians were also present. Due to the presence of so many colonies of different European countries this region was called Europe of Bengal. Out of all settlements in India, Bengal was the most profitable region for trade.

The Dutch had chosen Chinsurah as a very active hub for trade. Within few years this place became the biggest and most beautiful settlement in Asia. The Dutch flourished their business from Chinsurah due to various reasons. It was strategically located between the Netherlands and

Batavia (Jakarta). In the warehouses along the riverbanks, there were stocks of cotton, ginger, hemp, opium and sugar ready for shipment to Persia, Japan, Batavia and Europe. Chinsurah was well connected with different places which were sources for various trade items. Potassium-nitrate and opium were transported via the River Ganges from Patna and Chapra, while the best silk from Kasimbazar was shipped to Chinsurah where it was stored and shipped to Batavia and Japan. Chinsurah flourished and the VOC complex expanded rapidly in the late 17th century. VOC was truly considered as a Multinational Company in those days. In the later days of the Dutch, Chinsurah was known as the rural retreat from Kolkata, where the wealthy spent their weekends.

In 1825, the Dutch possessions in India were exchanged with the British for Benkulu in Sumatra, Indonesia and the Dutch presence came to an end. In 1827 the British destroyed the fort and used its stones for roads & other buildings.

#### V. THE DUTCH & THE LOCAL PEOPLE

The Dutch were very gentle & always shown respect to the local people & their culture. Though they had built a church in Chinsurah, but never tried to impose Christianity among the local people. Rather they concentrated on the other practical factors like development of the land & improvement of lifestyle of the local habitats. Formation of well-planned buildings, Factories, Fort, Drainage System, plantation of trees, distribution & Control of Land use, were few of the major contributions toward the development of Chinsurah.

In the area of art & culture also the influences of the Hollanders were noticed in this place. They had constructed open stage for performing art. To improve the living style & provide comfort in this hot & humid region of Bengal, the introduced 'Man-Drawn-Pankha'. This is actually a large piece of framed & decorated cloth, hanging from ceiling & can be moved to-and-fro from outside the room with the help of attached rope, to air the persons in the room. The cool breeze would provide real comfort before the age of electricity in hot & humid Bengal.

In order to provide safe & secured life to the habitants, the Dutch introduced a proper law & order system. This administration system may be considered the base of present-day Municipality services in Chinsurah.

The Hollanders came to India as traders. They identified various items which could be produced in India & had good market elsewhere, like Saltpeter, Spices, Cotton (Maslin), Indigo etc. They identified local people with good skill and offered them job. Even the persons with good knowledge of accountancy were of high demand.

They used to pay handsome pay packages to those who had sound clerical quality.

#### VI. DUTCH HERITAGE PLACES IN CHINSURAH

##### **Residence Bungalow of Divisional Commissioner of Burdwan (VOC Emblem)**

Located near Ferry Ghat and close to Madrasah the original building once served as the residence of the Dutch Governor of Chinsurah. In the same place the British built the present one in 19th Century. It has high degree of historic significance as till date it embodies the VOC emblem from the North Gate of the Fort Gustavus. The VOC emblem is set at the staircase in the bungalow. This building is situated in a large compound decorated with beautiful garden beside the river Hooghly. Inside the compound there are two cannons with the VOC logo on them. Presently entry to this area is restricted as it is now the residence of the Divisional Commissioner of Burdwan.

##### **Hooghly Mohsin College, College Road**

In Chinsurah Hooghly Mohsin College is located by the river Hooghly. Once upon a time it was one of the garden houses of the Dutch known as "Welgeleegen" meaning "well situated". This name was to indicate the beautiful position of the house on the river bank. It was a pleasure house built by Albert Sichterman, Director of the VOC in Bengal. In the course of time it was restructured by General Perron, a French General in the Scindia army in 1804-1805 into a Palladian mansion. Finally, it was bought by Jagmohan Seal in 1834 and became the Hooghly Mohsin College in 1836.



Fig.02 : VOC Emblem

Source : <http://www.dutchinchinsurah.com/overview.php>

##### **Dutch Drains**

The Dutch constructed underground canals made of brick, to discharge the effluence and waste water from Chinsurah into the river Hooghly. The drain canals were well

specious – almost 16' in height & 12' wide. The Dutch also used these to escape in case of any attack by enemies. Canoe was very useful for this purpose inside the canals. Presently the drains are significant as the physical remains of Dutch engineering and water works in working conditions embodying both historical and technological significance.

### **Chuchura Shiv Chandra Shome Training Academy, Shandeshwartala**

Shome Training Academy also known as 'Shome Bari' is located near Shyambabu Ghat adjacent to the Shandeshwartala Temple. This was a grand pleasure house by the river Hooghly, this was the home of the Shome family, rich merchants of Chinsurah and deans of the VOC. In this place grand ball dances were hosted by the family for the Dutch and the English. Presently it is used as secondary school known as the 'Shome Training Academy'.

### **Hooghly Madrasah, Chinsurah**

Located near Bara Bazar and new Ferry-Ghat (Launch-Ghat), close to the river Hooghly is the only surviving remains of the Fort Gustavus. The buildings of Hooghly Madrasah were part of the Dutch Garrison. An old wall of the artillery and four cannons are still visible at the site. Presently this building is used as a Madrasah and is home to several children.

### **Hooghly Collegiate School**

This is one of the oldest buildings in Chinsurah. the building of the Collegiate School dates back to the Dutch times. Part of the Dutch Governor's pleasure garden facing the river, it was bought by a local merchant Prankrishna Halder in the 19th century. A 'thakurdalan' (elevated & cemented courtyard) was added by him and Durga Puja (main festival in Bengal) celebration started here. Presently it is a government school for the boys.

### **Chinsurah Court Building**

This building was built on the remains of the Fort Gustavus by the British. With a typical style of the British Military architecture, the building is robust in its design with a linear layout approximately 266 m in length and was part of the British Cantonment at Chinsurah.

### **Dutch Cemetery (18th-19th Century)**

It was also necessary for the Dutch to select a place to be used as cemetery to keep the deceased bodies in peace. The cemetery is most probably the only place where we still find the mortal remains of the Hollanders, in true sense, intact. The Dutch Cemetery is located at the north of connection of Phool Pukur Road & Dharampur. Today this place is better known as 'Gorosthan Morh' after the

cemetery (in Bengali language Cemetery is called 'Gorosthan' & Junction is 'morh').



Fig.04 : Shandeswar Temple

Source : Author



Fig.04 : Dutch Cemetery

Source : Author

Earlier the Old Dutch Cemetery was located at the west of the Fort Gustavus. Louis Taillefert, then Director of the VOC in Bengal, relocated it from the original position to this place. During the rule of VOC, this area was on the outskirts of the town Chinsurah. The cemetery roughly measures 7400 square meter and enclosed by thick & high boundary wall. Inside the cemetery a large number of graves in the form of mausoleums, obelisks, tombs, pyramidal shaped grave and simple gravestones are present. The cemetery was active during 18th & 19th Century. Some of the prominent people buried here are Daniel Overbeck, Gregorius Herklots, a high official in

the VOC, and George Vernet, another VOC director. The oldest record is that of Cornelis de Jonge (Jong) who died in the year 1743 and the last recorded burial was held in 1887 that of Emma Draper. Beside the Dutch, one can find graves of some British and may be of some Portuguese & Armenian also. The cemetery is protected as a national monument by the Archaeological Survey of India. One can feel the calmness in this area under the shades of ancient & mature trees with well maintained pathways towards the tombs, decorated with flowery garden.

#### **Tomb of Susanna Anna Maria, Kaeipara, Dharampur**

This two storied octagonal tomb of Dutch lady Susanna Anna Maria is located near Khadinamore, Khudiram Pally, Kaeipara, Chinsurah was built in 1809. It has Corinthian columns and semi-circular arched openings. The ornamentation is in the form of dentil cornice bands, pediments and floral patterns in stucco. This Neo-Classical & Baroque style monument with a dome at the top is dome situated in the middle of a large garden by GT Road. Just like the Dutch Cemetery this monument is also protected by the Archaeological Survey of India. Susanna Anna Maria married twice: once Pieter Brueys, a prominent merchant and a director of Dutch Administration of Bengal, and later, After the death of Pieter in 1783, Susanna Anna Maria Brueys got married again, to Thomas Yeats, a well-established Englishman of Colonial Bengal.

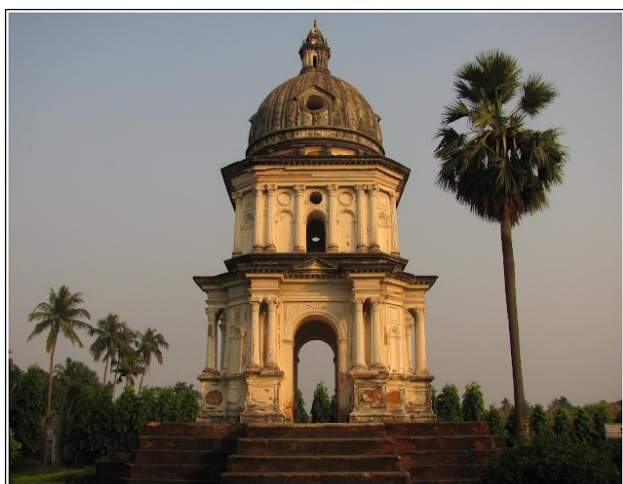


Fig.03 : Tomb of Susanna Anna Maria

Source :

<http://sohamchandra.blogspot.com/2015/11/susanna-anna-marias-tomb-chinsurah.html>

#### **Circuit House (Old Dutch Church), College Road**

The Circuit House was built on the site of the Old Dutch Church at Ghanta Ghat and is significant for its historical association with the site. At this place the Dutch built a Church which was abounded and finally demolished in the last century.

#### **Obelisk, Near Dutch Cemetery (Gorosthan)**

This obelisk is Historically significant as the remainder of the Dutch presence in town. This marked the northern extent of the Dutch town, the other markers in the town have now almost disappeared. There are some scattered pillars still existing notifying the boundary of Dutch settlement. Today these are referred as Cantonment Boundary Pillars.

### **VII. OTHER HERITAGE PLACES IN CHINSURAH**

#### **Shandeswar Temple**

Almost 500 years ago this Shiv temple known as Shandeswar Temple was established on the bank of the river Hooghly. The local fishermen found the deity from the river and the temple was created by the landlord. Later the Dutch Governor presented two brass drums to the shrine. Some other temples are also there within the temple complex. After few reformations the temple got the present multistoried form which is made of marble.

#### **Ghorir Morh (Clock Tower)**

The Clock Tower is located at the junction of main roads at the heart of the town. The Clock Tower was installed by the British in 1914 to commemorate the memory of Albert Edward (King Edward VII). This beautiful clock is made of steel & till date the clock is in working condition. It has four dials facing four directions and at the top there is a bell which sound periodically. Four hanging lanterns on the corners enhanced the look of the tower. The junction named after the Clock Tower and is known as 'Ghorir Morh' in Bengali (Clock – 'Ghori, Junction – 'Morh'). This is an important landmark in Chinsurah.

#### **Armenian Church of St. John the Baptist, Armani Tala**

Historically significant as one of the oldest churches of worship in Bengal since 1695, the present Armenian Church is built in the 19th Century the foundation of which was laid by the last Dutch Governor of Chinsurah, Daniel Anthony Overbeck. It is an urban marker in the physical fabric of Chinsurah, with its spire visible from a distance.

#### **Moti Masjid, Motijheel, Chinsurah**

The only Shia mosque in Chinsurah was constructed in the 1830s by the Persian merchant Nusratulla Khan. Khan Jahan Khan, the last faujdar (imperial Muslim administrator) of Bengal, lies buried here. The mosque is situated in a large open space on a raised plinth. The building is a good example of the amalgamation of the Mughal and colonial styles. Worship is performed at the mosque till date.

VIII. OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST AROUND  
 CHINSURAH

**Bandel Church, Bandel**

Located on the bank of the river Hooghly, Bandel Church is close to town Chinsurah. Founded by the Portuguese, The Basilica of the Holy Rosary commonly known as Bandel Church is one of the oldest Christian churches in West Bengal, India. It stands as a memorial to the Portuguese settlement in Bengal. Founded in 1599, it is dedicated to Nossa Senhora do Rosário, Our Lady of the Rosary.

**Hooghly Imambara, Hooghly**

Located on the bank of the river Hooghly, Hooghly Imambara is a dedicated place for the Shia Muslim. This place is almost equidistant from both Bandel Church & Chinsurah. Visitors can reach there by road, train or by boat also. This Imambara has prayer hall combined with a Mosque. It was constructed in the year 1861. The construction was initiated by Muhammad Mohsin in 1841 and completed in 1861. A Large clock is assembled on the clock tower over the main entrance. The dial of the clock has the numbers marked in Persian numerical. The clock is fixed between two minarets and has three bells which sounds periodically. Till date the clock gives accurate time. Inside the mosque one can find decorations with marbles, candles, hanging lanterns and inscription from the Quran on the walls. Outside, in the garden, a Sundial is also mounted which shows the local time.

**Hanseswari Temple, Bansheria**

Hanseswari Temple, a Hindu Temple of goddess Hangseswari is situated in the town of Bansheria in Hooghly District. Bansheria is an industrial town close to Bandel. Rani Hanseswari was the mother of Raja Nrisingha Deb Roy, hence the deity is worshipped as Maa Hanseswari. The deity is worshipped as a form of Maa Kali in Hindu mythology. Within the temple complex another temple of Ananta Basudeba is situated which has beautiful terracotta art. The Hanseswari temple has a distinctive architecture different from the usual pattern present in this area, consisting 13 miners or Ratnas, each built as a blooming lotus bud.

**Chandannagore, Earlier French Colony**

Toward south from Chinsurah the French had their settlement in Chandannagore. Just like the Dutch, the French also developed the town and decorated with their architecture blended with Indian culture. One can visit various places like Strand, Museum, The Sacred Heart Church, French Cemetery, Patal Bari (Under Ground House), Nandadulal Temple etc.

IX. PRESENT SITUATION OF THE HERITAGE  
 BUILDINGS & MONUMENTS

Chinsurah is rich in heritage buildings blended with natural beauty in the form of decorated garden and open view of the river Hooghly. Beside the buildings other places of historical importance are also main attraction of Chinsurah. Out of the above mentioned sites, only two are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India: the Dutch Cemetery and the Tomb of Susanna Anna Maria. The Hooghly Imambara, Moti Jheel Mosque and Bankim Bhawan are protected by the West Bengal Heritage Commission. Other building and monuments are somehow neglected and slowly facing the inevitable effect of time. Ultimately these would be destroyed if no care is taken immediately.

INITIATIVE TAKEN WITHIN CHINSURAH

Though Chinsurah is known as a place for the scholars & intellectuals for centuries, the historical importance of Dutch colony is somehow neglected. Lately Archeological Survey of India has recognized the Dutch Cemetery as a heritage place in Chinsurah, but the importance is not popularized to make it a potential tourist spot. In recent years few organisations have taken the initiative to restore the glory of the fading Dutch colony in this beautiful heritage rich town Chinsurah.

The first initiative was taken in 1979, by a Library in Chinsurah called “Chinsurah Kishore Pragati Sangha”. The Dutch Ambassador was invited, and a healthy relationship was established again. Followed by this incident, in the last three decades numerous activities had taken place within the town and also in Kolkata for the development of the heritage properties within Chinsurah. India Netherlands Friendship Society (INFS) took the main initiative in amalgaming all concerned bodies for this unique activity. This table shows the activities that has taken place in past 40 years within Chinsurah.

1979	On 11th November 1979, Chinsurah Kishore Pragati Sangha, a library in Chinsurah, first invited the Dutch ambassador Dr. H. Leopold & his wife Mrs. G. Leopold. Dutch Govt. sanctioned and handed over financial assistance of Rs.32,000/- for the development of the library.
1984	Formation of India Netherlands Friendship Society (INFS), an organization to cultivate cultural understanding between India and Netherlands was established in 1984 and registered in 1986.

1985	<p>In the year 1985 INFS invited the then ambassador Mrs. E. M. Schoo (Eegje Marjolein Schoo served as Netherlands' Ambassador to India from 01 June 1987 to 01 January 1991) and her husband Mr. Aäron (Arie) Pais to pay a visit to Chinsurah.</p> <p>Within this decade the proposal for preservation of the Dutch Cemetery &amp; the Tomb of Lady Anna Maria was placed by the venerable president of INFS Dr. N. R. Roy to Archaeological Survey of India through Mr. Anil Basu, the then MP. The proposal was accepted, and these places were acquired for preservation. The Netherlands Embassy fully cooperated in this activity.</p>
1990	<p>In 1990 INFS took the initiative and invited Mr. U. E. E. Vroom, president of Dutch overseas foundation (CNO), and Mrs. M. P. Woolf (CNO Keeper). Various places with Dutch memories were shown to them. Dutch Cemetery, Tomb of Anna Maria was also included. On the 2nd day of their visit a fruitful meeting on Dutch attachment with Chinsurah was arranged at Govt. Art College, Kolkata. Padmabhusan Chintamani Kar, Principal of Govt. Art College chaired the session.</p>
1991	<p>Mr. H. J. du Marchie Sarvaas, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands visited Chinsurah.</p>
1993	<p>In 1993 the friendship day function was held in the compound of the Burdwan divisional commissioner's bungalow where Netherlands consul in Kolkata, Mrs. R. Zavier was present. The Divisional Bungalow was a portion of Fort Gustavas.</p>
1997	<p>One of the Dutch Counsellors visited Chinsurah in 1997 to observe their onetime residence.</p>
2006	<p>Mr. Johannes Hendrik Schutte, Press &amp; Cultural Affairs Head, (presently Director-General Service for Education, Ministry of Education Culture and Science at Groningen in the northern Netherland) was invited by INFS &amp; paid a visit.</p>
2014	<p>In the year 2014 Dutch India Shaved Heritage (DISH) was formed in Amsterdam, Holland.</p>

#### X. COMMUNICATION & OTHER FACILITIES FOR THE POTENTIAL TOURISTS

- Chinsurah is well connected from Kolkata by Railways, Roadways and also by Waterways. One can cover this 40 km distance by public transport system. This district Head quarter Chinsurah, has 3 railway stations – Chuchura, Hooghly & Hooghly-Ghat. On the other side of the river Hooghly, the railway station Naihati connects with Sealdah, one of the railway stations of Kolkata.
- State Highway - 6 (G. T. Road) & State Highway - 13 (Delhi Road) are also connecting Chinsurah with other places of West Bengal and around. Regular bus services available for nearby towns like Arambag, Bankura, Purulia, Deegha, Krishnanagar, Srirampur, Bardhaman, Medinipur etc.
- Different types of conveyance like Bus, Auto, Toto, Riksha etc. are used as local transportation facility.
- Some hotels like Welcome, Standard, Blue Diamond, Renu etc. are offering food & lodging to the tourists and visitors at a very budget price. Restaurants like Mrityunjay, Banerjee Cabin, Tower View etc. serves quality food. Numerous eateries catering mostly local cuisine (Bengali Cuisine) are spread over this small town. Beside local cuisine, these eateries also offer Chinese, South Indian and North Indian & Moglai foods. One can taste various types of Bengali sweets in Chinsurah in their original form.
- A One-Day tour is sufficient to visit all the places of tourist interest within the town Chinsurah. To cover the nearby areas, a weekend tour programme is suggested. Certified guide is not available. Little study about the area is suggested before the visit.

#### XI. CONCLUSION

Many of the buildings & places of historical interest in Chinsurah are now occupied by different organization both Govt. & Non-Govt. Some of these are private properties also. In Recent years, a cross-disciplinary project by Aishwarya Tipnis Architects of New Delhi, in collaboration with the Presidency University, Kolkata has been started in which history, urban geography and architecture all come together. The project is funded by the Embassy of Kingdom of the Netherlands in India.

But as the building and other places are blended with local habitat, it is required to reach to the local people and create awareness among them about the importance of old heritage.

Present generation has no idea about the Dutch settlement & history of Chinsurah. INFS (India Netherlands Friendship Society) was formed almost 35 years ago and



the had taken initiative within the town Chinsurah for creating awareness through different movements.

It is surprising that even in Netherlands, the Dutch citizens are aware of the Colonies in Jakarta, Malacca and Amboina in Southeast Asia, they were largely ignorant about the settlement in India which was one of the most important at that time.

Jointly, if all the concerned bodied take proper initiative, the heritage value of this town can be restored in international level. This could be blended with tourism to develop a potential spot of tourism interest among the locals & people from other places including foreigners.

To create the awareness, the following actions may be taken :

1. Community engagement activities like Heritage Walk, Road Show etc.
2. Training of local Historians about the town
3. Training of Guides
4. Development of riverfront & other natural attractions
5. Blending of Heritage with Present day Festivals
6. Spreading awareness messages through social networking media like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram etc.
7. Placing related signage in different places to remind people about the rich culture of the town
8. Identifying the important dates & celebrating them with cultural programme.

These activities along with online development of related sites would definitely create awareness both locally & globally.

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