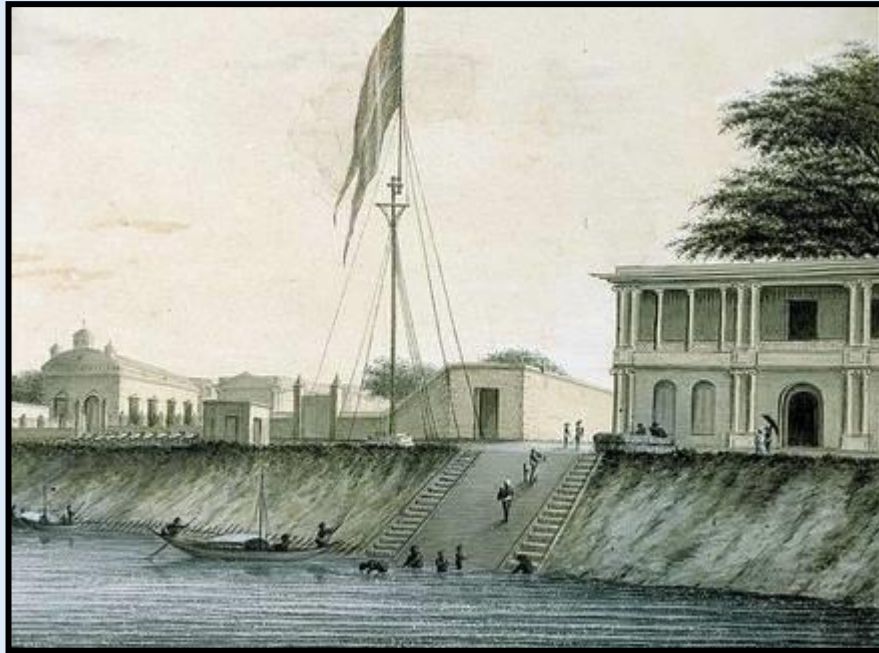




INTACH

CITIES AND THEIR LESSER KNOWN HERITAGE:
SERAMPORE



Serampore, a famous Danish settlement in the Hooghly district of West Bengal is known by many names. Some of them are Serampur, Srirampore or Shreerampur. This beautiful town, which is one of the few erstwhile Danish colonies of India, is located on the banks of the Hooghly River.

History

Serampore has a fairly modern history as it was setup in 1755 by the Danish Asian Company as a trading lodge on the Hooghly River in Bengal, 25 km north of the capital of Calcutta (Kolkata). Items such as silk and cotton were traded here. The lodge was named **Frederiksnagore**, but was usually called by its Indian name, Serampore. The English, French, Dutch and Portuguese also built trading logs along the Hooghly River.

In 1777, Serampore came directly under the Danish king. The city flourished especially during the tenure of Chief Ole Bie (1776-1805), and the current historic city center dates from his time. Bie remained in Serampore until his death and is buried in Danish cemetery here. Since Denmark remained neutral during the American War of Independence and the French Revolution, both Englishmen, Frenchmen and Dutchmen sought refuge in Serampore, either because of their

nationality or because they owed money away. In addition to the extra taxes the migrants contributed, the Danish merchant ships also benefited greatly from bringing English fortunes from India home to Europe under the neutral flag.

The English occupied Denmark from 1807-1814 and this became a turning point in the history of Serampore. In 1845, Denmark sold Serampore and Tranquebar to the English East India Company because of the control of the company in all parts of India and their exorbitant taxes. Serampore Municipality was set up separately in 1865 and it remained under the British until India's independence.

DID YOU KNOW...

The 200 year old Rajbari of Raghuram Goswami is the setting for some famous films, most notably 'Bhooter Bhoishyot' by Anik Dutta. It is said that when the Danes decided to hand over Serampore to the British, Raghuram Goswami had offered to buy out the town which the British declined.

Heritage Places of Serampore

Serampore College—This famous college was set up by the English Baptist missionaries in 1818. Standing off the river bank, the facade of the main college building consists of a well-designed portico surmounted by a pediment and supported by Ionic columns. Apart from the College Library it also houses the Carey Library and Research Centre.

Serampore Johnnagar Baptist Church—This church was founded by Rev. Dr. William Carey 1800 in the house that served as the first residence of Carey, Marshman and Ward. Services are still held every Sunday.

St Olav's Church - This church is also known as the Danish Church. It was built between 1800 and 1826. It has been restored under the project funded by the Danish government and won the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation in 2016. The facade still bears the monogram of King Christian VII of Denmark-Norway. The flat roofed church is fronted by a portico with double columns. Above the portico is a small bell tower with a clock.



Denmark Tavern - The 230 years old Denmark Tavern is near the Danish Church. Little is known about the founding of the tavern - a March 1786 advertisement in the Calcutta Gazette says that a Mr. Parr, formerly owner of London Tavern, has opened the Denmark Tavern and Hotel near the flagstaff in Serampore. This dining place is a unique heritage destination.



GoswamiRajbari-The Rajbari was built by RaghuramGoswami in 1800. The northern complex of the Rajbari contains a huge courtyard with fluted columns. There is a temple dedicated to Radha-madhav Jew. The family's annual Durga Puja is also held here.

ACTIVITY

1. Why did the Danish hand over Serampore to the British?
2. Find out some prominent personalities who are from Serampore.
3. Draw a sketch of the River Hooghly imagining how it must have been 200-250 years back when ships used to sail down the river.
4. Find out other Danish settlements/colonies that are in India.

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