

Tourism and Rural Development in Respect of Malda District, West Bengal, India

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ABSTRACT

Malda district is one of the backward district of West Bengal. Different strategies and systematic planning techniques are taken by time to time for rural development in India. Among these tourism industry acts as a major engine of economic development of most part of the India as well as world. It has also emerged as an important segment of the Indian economy. Gour and Hazrat Pandua, the two most powerful and prosperous cities of Medieval period are situated in Malda district (24040'20"N-25032'08"N and 87045'50"E-88028'10"E), West Bengal. Many picturesque heritage relics are still pronouncing their ancient glorious stories. With its glorified past history and heritage buildings (monuments, mosques etc.) and folk songs like Gambhira and Aalkap and large Fazli mangoes, the Mango city would be an important tourist destination (both domestic and international tourist). The present paper is an attempt to focus the role of tourism for rural development in Malda district.

1. Introduction

Malda district of West Bengal is situated between the latitudes 24°40'20"N-25°32'08"N and 87°45'50"E-88°28'10"E longitude. The district is bounded on the north by the Purnea (district of West Bengal), on the south by Murshidabad, on the east by South Dinajpur and North Dinajpur (district of West Bengal) and Rajshahi (Bangladesh) and on the west by Murshidabad, the Santhal Paraganas. The total area of the district according to Surveyor General of India is 3733 sq kms (source: - Census of India, 2001). The district total population is 3290468 whereas the rural and urban population is 2450495 and 186537 respectively. On the route of Darjeeling, 349 km north of Kolkata, Malda is the base for visiting the ruined cities of Gour and Hazrat Pandua, although it's more famous for its large Fazli mangoes. Many picturesque heritage relics are still pronouncing their ancient glorious stories. With its glorified past history and heritage buildings (monuments, mosques etc) and folk songs like Gambhira and Aalkap and large Fazli mangoes, the Mango city would be a important tourist destination worldwide.

2. Gour Circuit

Gour is situated on an old channels of the Ganga in 24°53'N and 88°14'E and 10 miles south-west of Englishbazar. Gour was the capital of Bengal for several centuries. The historical monuments and places in and around Gour are described below-

The Barodwary is one of the most impressive buildings of the monument at Gour and was erected by Sultan Nasrat Shah in 1526 A.D. It is also called Barosona Masjid, because the domes and surface of this mosque was gilded under the

rays of Sun or Moon it looked like a mosque built entirely of gold. This mosque is a massive rectangular building of brick, faced with stone and was roofed by 44 small hemispherical domes.

The Bais Gazi Wall- The most remarkable of all the existing remains of Gour Palace is the Bais Gazi Wall which is still to be found in the north-east side of Palace area. The lofty brick wall is 22 Bengali gaz (yards) or 42 feet.

The Palace Area Of Ancient Gaur- It is situated adjacent to the stupendous Bais Gazi Wall. The Palace enclosure was divided into three parts like- The first part of the north was audience (Darbar), the second is private quarters of the King and the third for the Harem. This area contains of brick and stone structures belonging to Bengal Sultanate and Mughal period.

The Kotwali Darwazah- The builder of the Citadel of Gour, Sultan Mahmud Shah I built this gate to protect the city from enemies. But now, it is an important border between India and Bangladesh, named as Hili Border and Border Security Force Camp is situated here.

The Dakhil Darwazah- The principal entrance to the fortified Citadel of Gour is Dakhil Darwazah (Entrance gate) which exists about half a mile south-west of the Barosona Masjid. It is a remarkable testimony to the excellence of brick and terracotta architecture.

The Firozah Minar- This Minar was probably built by Saifuddin Firuz Shah and is situated about a mile to the south of the Barosona Masjid. The Height of the tower is about 84 feet and 62 feet in circumference. Inside the Minar there is a spiral staircase of 73 steps leading up to the top chamber.

The Qadam Rasul Building- The splendid and well preserved monument was situated within the Citadel, to the

east of the Palace and west of Lukachuri Gate. It is a small square domed building containing the holy foot-print of Prophet Muhammad.

The Mausoleum of Fath Khan- It is situated enclose of the Qadam Rasul Masque, a plain building shaped like a thatched shed. Inside this building, the grave of Fath Khan (the son of Dilir Khan) is located. **The Chika Mosque-** To the south-west of the Qadam Rasul Masque, there lies a single domed building called 'Chika Mosque' because it was filled with numerous bats. In the stones of the doors and lintels there appear Hindu idols in an obliterated condition.

The Gumti Gate- A little east of the Chika Mosque there exists a small one-domed building called Gumti Gate. It is supposed to have served as one of the east gates of the Fort. The rampart walls still exist abutting the north and south sides of the building. The translation of the inscription describes that this gate of the fort was built during the reign of Sultan Hussain Shah in the year 1512 A.D.

The Lukachuri Gate- It is a large three-storied eastern gate of the fort, which lies south-east of the Qadam Rasul. On each side of this gate there are guard rooms, and above them was a place for beating drums (Naqqar Khana). The roof of this gate is made of bricks.

The Chamkati Mosque- It stands a little to the east of the Lukachuri Gate. According to General Cunningham's report the Chamkati Mosque was erected by Sultan Yusuf Shah, son of Barbak Shah in 1475 A.D. There are variously colored enameled bricks in this old building at the cornice. The building, though much damaged by the weather, must originally have been a very graceful and elegant structure. **The Tatipara Mosque-** Mirsad Khan erected it in 1480 A.D. This mosque is an oblong brick building of two aisles, divided by four stone pillars down the middle. The whole building is of uniform rich red colour.

The Lattan Mosque- This building was once entirely covered with enameled work, but now the greater portion of the facing is gone. The whole surface of the masque, both inside and outside, was once covered with glazed tiles in various patterns of four colors - green, yellow, blue, and white.

The Gunamant Mosque- The reminiscent of the Adina Masque at Pandua, was probably built by Jalaluddin Fateh Khan in 1481-84 A.D. It is a twelve domed massive mosque consisting of a vaulted central nave, three aisles and four arched. It stands near the village of Mahadipur.

Ramkeli- Sree Sree Chaitanya, the great religious reformer of Bengal, arrived Ramkeli (also called second Brindaban) in the month of Jaistha (June) on his way to Brindaban during the reign of Sultan Hussain Shah in 16th century and halted for few days at a place in the village now famous as **Tamaltola**.

3. Pandua circuit

Pandua (a deserted town), was for sometime the capital of Bangla during the reign of Muslim Sultans. This city is situated 11 miles or 17.7 km from English Bazar on the road to

Balurghat and 20 miles from Gour in a north-eastern direction. The ancient monuments as well as places of interest at Pandua are described below:-

At Pandua, the shrines of Makhdum Shah Jalal are called **Bari Dargah**. It consists of the Jami Masjid, and other buildings dedicated to the memory of Hazrat Shah Jalal Tabrizi (saint), who came from Tabriz, in Persia. The Original Shrine at Pandua may have been erected by Sultan Alauddin Ali Shah at the instance of the saint in 1342 A.D.

Salami Darwazah stands on the right hand side of the main road. The gate proper is 22 ft. long, 7 ft 9 inches wide. In front of this is a platform where, it is said the saint used to sit and perform his prayer. This gateway is built by brick and stone

The Chhoti Dargah is situated about a quarter of a mile to the north-east of the Bari Dargah. The more important objects of interest in Chhoti Dargah are the tombs of the saint Nur Qutbul Alam and his father Alaul Haqq, the Chilla Khana of Nur Qutbul Alam, the Sajda Gah, and mosque of Qazi Nur, the Mitha Talao, Bahist Ka Darwazah, the Bibi Mahal, Stone Capital and the Musafir Khana. The shrine of illustrious Saint Nur Qutb Alam and his father Alaul Haqq is important at Chhoti Dargah.

The Qutb Shahi Masjid- One of the earliest known examples of Mughal architecture in Bengal is the Qutb Shahi Mosque at Hazrat Pandua. From the inscription in Tughra characters which is stuck over the doorway of the mosque that it was built in 1582 A.D. by Makhdum Shaikh. This mosque lies midway between the Chhoti Dargah and the Eklakhi Mausoleum. It was built of brick and stone and had 10 hemispherical domes.

The Eklakhi Mausoleum is the handsomest and best preserved of all the monuments now existing in Hazrat Pandua. It represents the true brick style of Bengal, with massive walls, octagonal corner towers, carved parapets, terracotta ornamentation, the wall surface variegated with offsets and recesses. The probable date of construction of this mausoleum is 1412-15 A.D. There are 3 graves inside.

The Adina Mosque- One of the largest and the only hypostyle mosque in Bengal Adina Mosque was built by Sikandar Shah (the 2nd Sultan of the Ilyas dynasty) within 1364-1374 A.D. It typifies the most developed mosque architecture of the period and the orthodox design being based on the great 8th century mosque of Damascus. Carved basalt masonry from earlier Hindu temples is used to support the 88 brick arches and 378 small domes. It extends 507 1/2 feet from north to south and 285 1/2 feet from east to west. It is a second largest masque of the world. At the time of Dibbak War, Jitu Santhal (the leader of Santali Community) took shelter at Adina Mosque and attacked the enemies. At last he caught by the enemies and died.

4. Role of tourism in rural development

Tourism is a major engine of economic growth of most parts of the world. It has also emerged as an important

segment of the Indian economy. In West Bengal, Malda (also called Valley of Mango and Mango City with its glorified past history and heritage buildings (monuments, mosques etc.) is an important tourist destination. But the district has been failed to attract huge number of tourist. Because tourism infrastructure like-regional linkages, access and connectivity, accommodation infrastructure, basic civic infrastructure, basic tourist amenities is very low from the ideal condition. The contribution of tourism on the economy of third world country as well as Malda can be integrated by its multiplier effects. There are three types of multipliers associated with tourism (Lee, 1998).

- Employment multiplier- Tourism creates employment for local people. They will work as guide, hotel owner, shop owner, driver, curator etc. In this way local people will benefited economically and will improve the economy of state level as well as national level. Tourism will help to promote the traditional silk of Sujapur. With help of tourism famous mango the different products (mango pickle, jam, jelly) of mango of this district can easily promote worldwide. But in Malda local people involvement in tourism sector is very much poor.

- Sales and output multipliers measuring the amount of sale and output stimulated by initial tourist expenditure.
- Income multiplier expressed quantitatively as:-

$$TIM = Z^{1/(1-xy)} \quad \text{where,}$$

TIM-tourism income multiplier

Z-% of tourist spending remain

x-% of income of residents spent on local goods & services

y-% of expenditure of residents accruing as local income (after Leakages)

5. Suggestions for tourism as well as rural development

1. The transport and communication services must be developed locally to connect the area regionally for better accessibility.
2. Road condition must be improved because the main transport system is roadway.
3. Many hotels must be built at Gaur and Pandua. The hotels have to stimulate good quality lodging and fooding services with other necessary services.
4. Public awareness of the benefits of tourism and how to mitigate its negative impacts should be pursued.
5. Tourism ought to be initiated at any location with the help of local community. So, the involvement of local community in study area will helps to maintain the appropriate tourism development.
6. Development of high quality tourism services.
7. The public and private entrepreneurs and government should take a proper step to develop heritage tourism.

6. Conclusion

Malda has great potential for developing heritage tourism. But the development of tourism is much below the expectation because there is a close relationship between the tourism facility of the district and the tourist inflow both domestic and foreign tourist. Local people do not aware about the importance of heritage buildings. So, they destroyed these monuments in different way like-they made houses by brick which collected from heritage sites and damaged these monuments. For searching royal Wealth, they are digging up soil in and around the relics. The rate of local people involvement in tourism sector is very low. Only two small shops are found near Qadam Rasul Mosque in whole Gour circuit. One deserted bungalow named as Piyasbari bungalow is situated in this circuit. So the importance of tourism for development of rural Malda will promote largely among the locales. Also promotion of tourism (tourism related website generation, banner and festoon, telecasting in media, brochure, tourist information kiosk at suitable location etc) is necessary in large scale.

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