

Archaeological Heritage Tourism and Environmental Degradation: A Study at Nanda Dighi Vihara at Jagajjivanpur of Malda District, West Bengal

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Received: 30 May 2017

Accepted: 15 June 2017

Published Online: 15 July 2017

Keywords

Archaeological Heritage Tourism,
Environmental, Social Security

ABSTRACT

Now a day's environmental degradation is one of the most alarming topics worldwide. There are so many causes due to which environment is being degraded. Environment (both physical and cultural aspects) is an integral component of tourism because the environment act as hindrance as well as creating opportunities for tourism development of a region or a country. At the same time unplanned and haphazard development of tourism industry may create environmental degradation. Around 40 kilometers away from Malda town, Nanda Dirge Vihara is situated at Jagjivanpur under Habibpur P.S. A copper plate (about 12 kg and measures more or less 52.2 cm by 37.1 cm) was discovered on 13th March, 1987 by a local resident (Jagdish Gayen) from a mound named Tulabhita. This copper plate first describes that the Pala ruler Mahendrapala (4th Pala king,) was the son and successor of Devpala of Pala Dynasty (9th - 10th century B.C.). After this incident Jagajjivanpur is a famous archaeological heritage tourism destination among tourists (domestic as well as international). A large number of tourists, mainly domestic tourists used to come here in the month of December and January every year. Many of them organized a picnic and left all the wasted materials here and there, which creates environmental pollution for the locale. This paper is an attempt to analyze environmental degradation due to unplanned development of archaeological heritage tourism here.

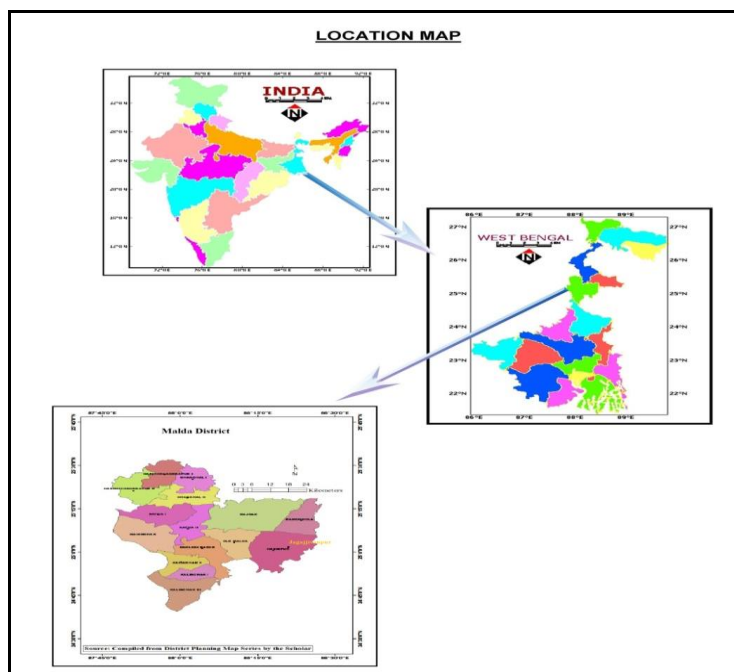
1. Introduction

Environmental degradation has become the serious threats in recent years. One of the main causes of the environmental degradation is the unplanned and unchecked development of tourist destinations. In the modern world, the tourism industry is the most flourishing industry. Tourism is a major engine of economic growth of the most part of the world also. But tourists often left over excess foods and plastics which pollutes the environment of tourist destination. Apart from these, illegal and huge numbers of construction of hotels and lodges

of a tourist destination also pollute the environment in a different way.

2. Location of the study area:

Nanda Dirghi Vihara is a famous archaeological tourist spot situated in the district of Malda under the Habibpur Police Station at Jagajjivanpur village (25002'28"N and 88024'15"E). The total area of this village is about 363.4 hectares accommodating 576 households, according to 2011 census and has 2689 total population. 1096 numbers of the population are total workers and 1503 population are non-workers.



3. Objectives of the study area:

The present study has been undertaken with the following objectives-

- 1.To highlight the present status of tourism development at the Nanda Dirge Vihara.
- 2.To focus the hindrances in the way of development of archaeological tourism here.
- 3.To study the involvement of local people's hair.
- 4.To understand the level of environmental degradation caused by tourists.
- 5.To suggest some recommendation for protecting environmental degradation here.

4. Nanda Dirghi Vihara as an archaeological tourist destination:

Around 40 kilometers away from Malda town, Nanda Dirghi Vihara is situated at Baidyapur Gram Panchayet (Mouza No. 73) under Habibpur P.S. It is famous as the Buddhist Vihara (like- Nalanda, Vikramshila, Takhashila mahavihara). A copper plate was discovered on 13th March, 1987 by a local resident (Jagdish Gayen) from a mound named Tulabhita. This copper plate first describes that the Pala ruler Mahendrapala was the son and successor of Devpala. He was the 4th Pala king (9th - 10th century). He has granted a piece of land to Mahasenapati Vajradeva to build a monastery there for worshiping leading Buddhist deities (like- Pragnaparomita, Abalokitasewar). The weight of the copper plate is about 12 kg and measures more or less 52.2 cm by 37.1 cm. The language used in this plate is Sanskrit and the text is composed in both verse and prose. Now, this famous copper plate is preserved in Malda Museum.



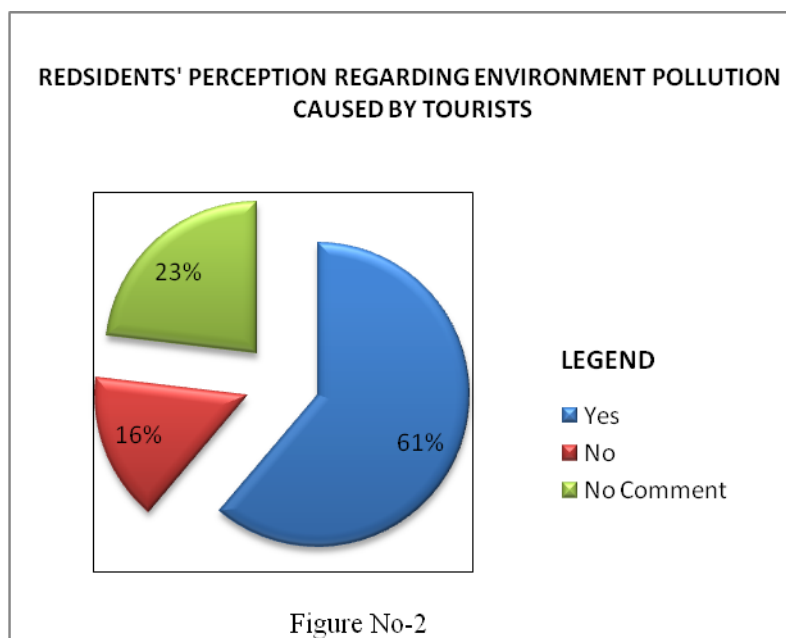
After the discovery of pre described copper plate, the Archaeological Survey of India declared the Tulabhita mound as protected area and an excavation program was started from the year 1992. During the excavation a brick built monastery with its varandah, staircase, well, courtyard entrance have been exposed. Besides these, a bronze image of seats Lord Buddha in Bhumisparsha Mudra along with other mental image of Buddhist Goddess Marichi, a large number of terracotta seals, lamps, bells, potteries, plaques etc. were found during the excavation process.

According to local tradition and archaeologists total 5 major mounds are found in this region viz. Tulabhita, Mai Bhita, Akhridanga, Nimdanga, Rajar- Mayer Bhita. Among these mounds Tulabhita is the largest one. So, the Nanda Dirge Vihara at Jagajjibanpur is an important tourist spot of Malda. At present there is a showcase of glass, where some articles are displayed. A ticket counter has been constructed, but booking system is still not in operation. Although this tourist spot having important historical value, but due to lack of proper promotion and maintenance, this tourist spot has no appeal to attract tourist worldwide. But a huge number of

domestic tourists used to come here at peak tourist season (December and January) and organized picnic here.

5. Analysis of environmental degradation in study area, according to resident's perception:

Perception means the reaction and opinions of a person delivered on visiting or residing a spot. The perception of local people and visitors both are very much essential to develop tourism sector of a place or region. The development of a tourist spot depends on the perception of visitors because if they acquires a good idea over any tourist spot, then that particular tourist will encourage other tourists to visit that spot which ultimately help to increase the number of the tourist developing tourism sector. On the other hand, if any visitor experiences negative thing while visiting any spot, in that case tourism development will face an adverse effect from the feedback of the guest in the area of his origin. The development of a tourist spot also depends on perception of local peoples because if they are not aware or interested about tourist spots of their locality tourism cannot be properly flourished. The response of the local peoples has been collected through questionnaires, personal interviews related to environmental degradation occur from tourists or visitors.



A study has been undertaken using Pie diagram regarding the perception of the resident population on environmental pollution by tourists. The figure no.-2 represents the scenario regarding environmental degradation. As revealed from consecutive field surveys, about 61 percent of the total residents are reported that environmental degradation occurs at the peak time of tourist season i.e. December and January every year. A huge number of tourists, mainly domestic tourists used to come here in the peak season mainly for picnic purposes. They organized picnic in the adjacent field of the Nanda Dirge Vihara and left excess foods, plastics, thermocol plates etc. here and there. After the tourist season the resident peoples clean the tourist spot.

6. Recommendations and conclusion:

Finally, it may be concluded that tourism can act as the best alternative option for economic development in the new millennium where tourism resources are available. For such a backward village Jagajjivanpur of Malda district, promotion of

archaeological heritage resources (Nanda Dirghi Vihara) is very much essential in order to capitalize the opportunities of tourism industry in the globalized world. So planning is very much necessary to develop tourism sector here as well as reduce environmental degradation. The following planning measures are necessary-

- To mark the area for the picnic this should be far from Nanda Dirge Bihara.
- At the peak time of tourist season administration should take proper action to clean the spot every day.
- Ticketing system should be introduced there. Because from this system total number of tourists can be calculated at the peak season as well as throughout the year.
- Local residents' involvement is very much needed to protect this famous tourist spot.

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