

Problem and prospect of Souvenir industry of Malda district, West Bengal

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ABSTRACT

Each and every tourist wants to bring some special specimen as a token of the particular tourist destination which called souvenir products. The souvenir always represents the locally famous product of a tourist destination. Now a day souvenir industry faces rapid growth worldwide and plays a vital role in economic development. Such as France is famous for liquors and perfumes, London is famous for chocolates etc. In India, souvenir industry also extends its wings based on physical diversity, rich heritage buildings, diversified culture and famous handicrafts. Souvenir industry in some places of West Bengal is also very famous which products include handicrafts, handlooms, unique food, liquor, unique folk and customs etc. (e.g. Darjeeling for tea, Bankura for Baluchuri saree, terracotta works and Dokra crafts, Digha for shell crafts, Purulia for chau mask, Malda for mango products, Cooch Bihar for SitalPati, Murshidabad for cooking utensils of Kasha Petol etc. The souvenir product brings not only money for the local people but also it gives invaluable publicity of the place. Both tangible and intangible experience is gathered by tourist. The present paper is an attempt to focus the problems and prospects of souvenir industry of Malda district.

1. Definition of Souvenir

Souvenir is a French term which means an object a person acquires for the memories of the associated owner. According to Oxford Dictionary, the term 'souvenir' means a thing that is kept as a reminder of a person, place or an event. Wikipedia has been described the meaning of souvenir as a physiological connection with the owner, without which the meaning of the object is invisible and cannot be articulated.

- ❖ Gordon (1986) defined that souvenirs are some specific objects that reminded certain incident or journey. Tourists purchase souvenirs as a proof of the places they had visited.
- ❖ Swanson (1994) stated that souvenirs were specific objects that served as reminders of a special event or memory, and this included post cards, T-shirts, and local crafts.

2. Classification of Souvenir Products:

Souvenir products may be categorized into five categories like-

- Postcards, photographs, illustrated books about particular regions, and Poker cards with local images are **Pictorial images**.
- Rocks, shells, or pinecones etc. are **Natural objects souvenirs**.
- Miniature Eiffel Tower from Paris, France or a miniature building of New York City etc. are **Symbolic shorthand souvenirs**.

- T-shirt marked "Grand Canyon" or other famous tourists places are categorised as **Markers souvenirs**.
- Ethnic foods and crafts are called **Local product souvenirs**.

3. Influencing factors for Souvenir Purchase:

The motivating factors for the purchase of souvenir products are:

- ❖ Location of souvenir shop at the entrance of main attraction points of a tourist area
- ❖ Authenticity of the souvenir product
- ❖ Uniqueness of the souvenir products
- ❖ Friendly shopping environment
- ❖ Quality assurance of souvenir products
- ❖ Recognition of the Souvenir product

4. Souvenirs of Malda District:

Souvenir products may be generally classified into several categories such as-

- ✚ Replica of Heritage Buildings- This category of souvenirs includes- miniature, key rings, paintings, photographs etc. of famous heritage buildings of a place. For example Taj Mahal Replica at Taj Mahal of Delhi in India, Eiffel Tower of Paris, miniature building of New York City etc.
- ✚ Materials used in cultural performances- This category of souvenirs include different materials used in folk cultural performances e.g. masks of *Chhau* dance in Puruliya of West Bengal is a very popular souvenir

product. Musical instruments like *Bansuri*, *Tabla*, *Dhamsha*, *Madol*, etc. are also famous souvenirs of India.

- ✚ Locally made handicrafts products- Local made products like-food, beverages, handicrafts, liquor, cooking utensils, clothing, etc. fall under this category. This type of souvenirs mainly represents the unique culture local peoples. For example, tea of Darjeeling, Assam etc. Baluchuri saree, Terracotta and Dokra crafts of Bankura, sea shell crafts of Sea areas like Digha, Sankarpur of West Bengal are very attractive handicraft products of West Bengal. Sea shell crafts of Puri, Goa etc., stone crafts, and carved metal craft wares of Madhya Pradesh, Pashmina Shawls of Kashmir, sandalwood carvings of Mysore, blue gazed pottery of Jaipur are among the famous souvenirs of India.

The tourism sector of Malda district is not very developed. But the district has huge potentiality. On the other hand the district is also very much potential for the development of souvenir industry here. With the help of souvenir industry, the economy of this district may be boosted up. Popular souvenir products of Malda are mango products and sericulture products (mainly silk). Apart from these popular souvenir products the potential souvenir products of this district are as follows-

- Replica of famous heritage buildings like Adina mosque, Lattan Mosque, Eklakhi Mausoleum, Firozh Minar etc.
- Sketches and paintings of the above mentioned famous architectures.
- Nakshi Kantha, Gambhira mask and CDs of famous folk songs like Gambhira.
- Famous sweets like Kansat.
- Musical instruments of tribal communities (*Dhamsha*, *Madol* etc).
- Ornaments with mediaeval period's design.

5. Major Souvenir Products of Malda district

Mango Products

Mango is a seasonal fruits. It is available from the end of April to end of August. In 1952, Malda Mango Processing Co-operatives has been established in Malda to produce *Aachar*, *Chutney*, Jam, Jelly and Squash from mango. In 1983, this was registered as Malda Mango Co-operative Society and brand name was MALCOS. From 1991, this food processing industry has been producing best quality mango products. After that in 1975, another food processing unit has been established here named as Gita Mango Processing Factory. In 1981, this industry named as Gita Fruits Products. In Malda there are many registered factories-

- Krishna Mango Processing Diamond (Sujapur)
- National Fruit Processing (Gabhachihi)
- Surekha (Bhaluka)

- Shiba Mango Processing (Sagardighi)
- G.E. Rekha Fruit Products (Old Malda)
- Ajanta Fruit Products (Old Malda)
- Royal Crown (Lakhipur)
- Shahi Fruit Products (Jot)
- Mahua Fruit Products (Bagbari, Lakhipur)
- MALCOS (Old Malda)
- Gita Fruit Products (Old Malda)

The by-products of green mangoes which are considered as good souvenirs are as follows-

- i. *Aachar*
- ii. *Chutney*
- iii. Jelly and Jam
- iv. *Aamchur*
- v. *Kasundi*

The by-products of ripe mangoes are-

- i. Mango juice
- ii. Squash
- iii. *Aamswata*

Sericulture products:

Another famous souvenir product is sericulture product. In Sujapur and Jalalpur of Kaliachak-I block of Malda district, four types of sericulture products are available i.e. raw materials of silk, *matka*, *garad*, and *tasar*. From these raw materials of silk, *matka*, *garad*, *tasar*, different types of final products are prepared in different parts of West Bengal and other states of India. For instance, Murshidabad (mainly Sahajadpur) and Bankura (mainly Bishnupur) are famous for weaving and Srerampur (Hoogli District) of West Bengal and Banaras of Uttar Pradesh for printing. The final products from silk, *garad*, *matka* and *tasar* are as follows-

- i. *Sarees*
- ii. *Dhuti*
- iii. Piece of coat
- iv. *Chadors*
- v. Bedsheets
- vi. Handkerchief

All these final products and raw materials of silk including *Garad*, *Tasar*, *Matka* are largely available at Sujapur and Jalalpur of Kaliachak-I block and English Bazar municipal area of English Bazar block. So, they are required to be marketed as souvenir to the visitors in tourism hubs.

6. Present Status of Stakeholders of Souvenir Industry:

Mango Sector: Malda was declared as Agri Export Zone for mango in 2001. Mango creates many direct and indirect employments for the local people like- mango exporters, mango merchants, mango cultivators and mango labourers. Agro-based industrial units create further employment in its various units such as processing, packing etc.

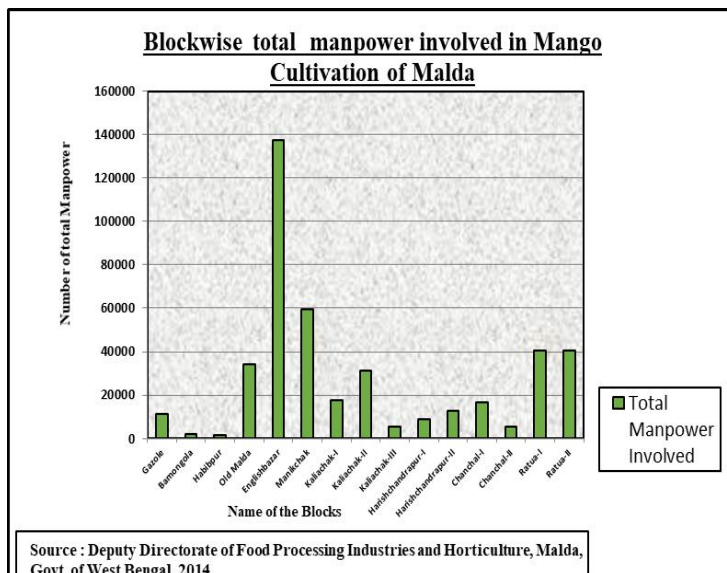


Figure : Total manpower involved in mango cultivation of Malda district

The manpower involved in processing unit is interviewed under this study. The primary survey on processing units revealed that huge number of women working here although there are also male workers. During the mango season i.e. May- August they are very busy to prepare various types of mango products like- *Aamswata*, *Aamchur*, *Aachar* etc. But the wages paid to them is however not satisfactory. So, the male workers have migrated themselves to the other states for better earnings. But still women are working in this field in spite of low wage due to lack of alternatives. When mango season ends, these workers become jobless. About 80-100 Rs

per day, a woman can earn from this processing units. Department of Horticulture has introduced Self Help Groups (SHGs) to encourage women involvement and trained them for better performance in mango based economy.

7. Sericulture Sector:

Malda district has glorious past in sericulture, mainly in silk production. Sericulture includes three parts. These are cocoon production, silk production and silk weaving.

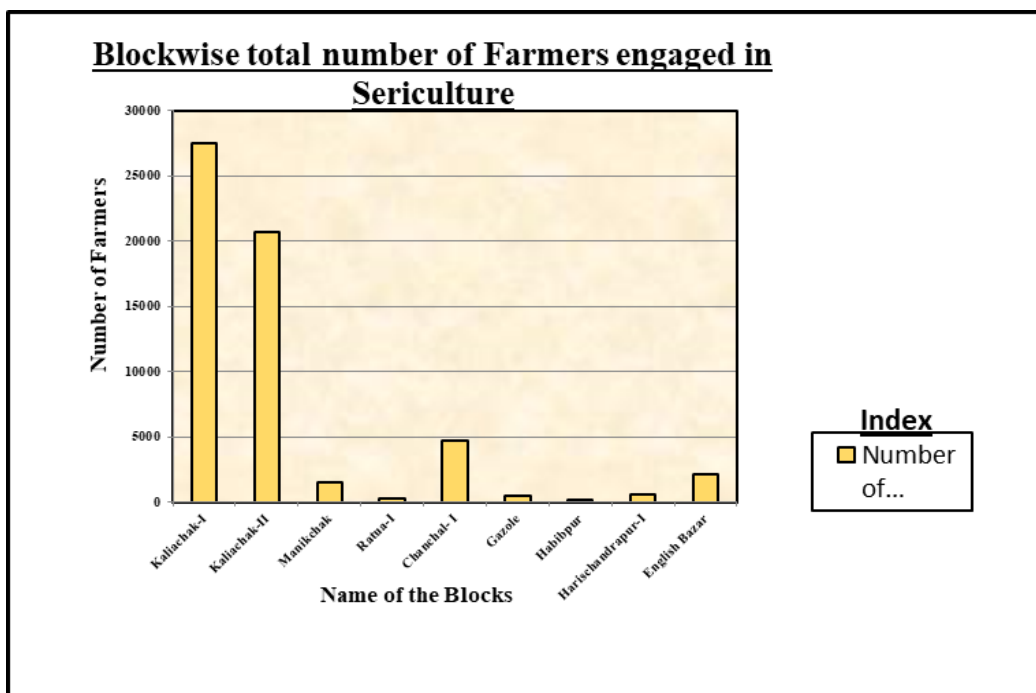


Figure : Number of farmers engaged in sericulture of Malda, 2014

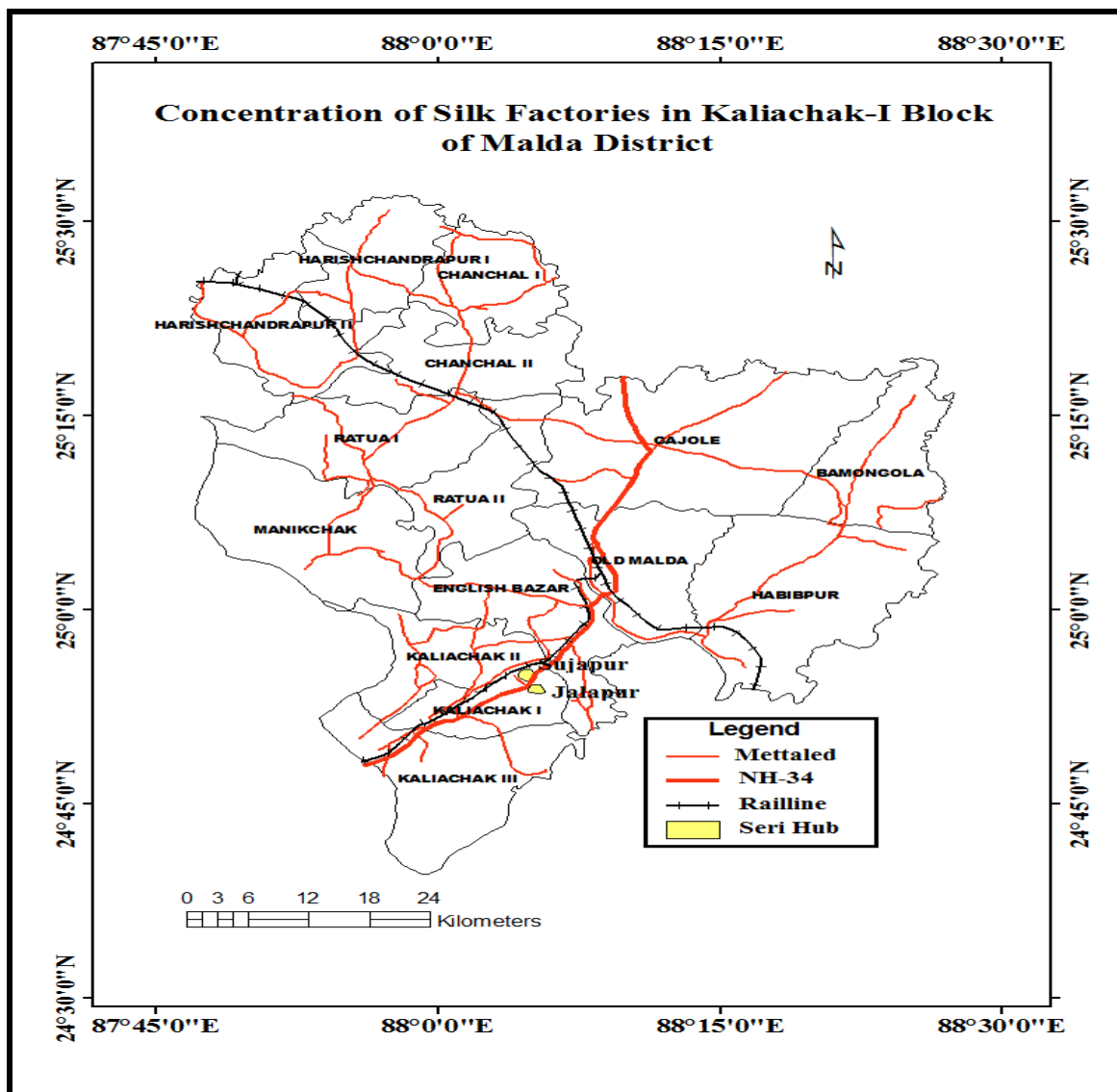
I. **Cocoon production-** Large number of women are involved in cocoon rising. Bakharpur, Chamagram, Najirpur, Bamingram, Gayesbari, Mousimpur,

Sujapur, Jalalpur etc. are villages selected for survey of stakeholders related to cocoon rising. Above mentioned villages are considered for their

performance in cocoon rising. Almost 80% of the villagers were once involved in this sector. But now very few numbers of persons are involved. According to villagers, raising the silkworm is very uncertain. Due to some particular diseases, silk worms are died and the producer faces critical economic crisis. Only mid August- mid September is the best season for silk worms rising. Apart from this, November and June are suitable months in this regard. Some villagers has also stated that the selling price of cocoons is very less as because the decline of sericulture industry. Now, China silk like silk products are available in market through silk route. This China silk is very glazy and available in low price. So, the district's silk production is badly affected.

surveyed, these includes- Resham Khadi O Kutir Shilpa Samity, Diamond Silk Khadi Society, Chhetri Sree Gandhi Ashram, Chandrakanta Lalit Mohon Resham Khadi Samity, Starling Silk Khadi Society. From this survey, it is revealed that the artisans of this sector are mainly male. For this work, artisans should take proper training. Most of the silk reelers in Malda are old aged. It represents that young generation is reluctant to come in this field. The remuneration of the artisans is less from other occupations. So, the new generations is not willing to take silk reeling as occupation. Most of them are used to travel to other states for better job opportunities. This creates labour crisis in silk reeling as well as in sericulture industry of this district. All the owners of the silk industry however admitted that they get financial assistance from State and Central Government and also get Marketing Development Assistance (MDA).

II. **Silk reeling-** Silk reeling is mainly concentrated in Sujapur and Jalalpur of Kaliachak-I block. So, for this study a number of silk and *Khadi Samity* has been



Map no.- 5.2: Concentration of Silk factories at Kaliachak-I of Malda

Name of the society or samity	Present office staff	Total number of labour engaged	Source of Financial assistance	Products marketed
Resham Khadi O Kutir Shilpa Samity	1	15	Central Govt.	Raw silk, Khadi, Matka
Diamond Silk Khadi Society	15	272	Govt. of India	Raw silk, Maslin yarn, Khadi, Matka
Chhetri Sree Gandhi Ashram	10	100	State and Central Govt.	Raw silk Maslin yarn, Khadi, Matka
Chandrakanta Lalit Mohon Resham Khadi Samity	7	125	Central Govt.	Raw silk, Khadi, Matka
Starling Silk Khadi Society	25	300	Central Govt.	Raw silk, Khadi, Matka, Garad

Source- Field Survey, 2014, Table : Details of some sericulture industry, Malda

8. Other Major Folk Art and Crafts:

Masks and CDs of Gambhira:

The masks of Gambhira are mainly made of clay and also made of wood (mainly Neem and Dumur), clay and sola (sponge wood). Kali, Narashinghi and Chamunda mask is made by wood. Hanuman, Bura-Buri, Ram-Seeta, Ram-Laxman and Jahura Kali mask are made by Sola, tin and clay.

Masks are mainly made in Gajole and English Bazar block. These masks and CDs of the Gambhira song can be promoted as souvenir products to the visitors. On the other hand, promotion of these products is very much essential to rejuvenate this important folk song.



Source: - After M.Chakraborty, 2013

Photo : Masks used in Gambhira

Nakshi Kantha:

Nakshi Kantha, a type of embroidered quilt, is a centuries-old Bengali art tradition in Bangladesh and West Bengal, India (Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia). Nakshi Kantha is very famous handicrafts of Bangladesh and West Bengal, India. In Malda district, Nakshi Kantha is produced in

very low scale and limited in local territory. Khanpur of Chanchal-II is famous for Nakshi Kantha. Apart from this, in Harishchandrapur-I and II, Chanchal-I of Malda district Nakshi Kantha has been made by women.

9. Marketing of Souvenir Products:

Malda occupies an important place in the map of West Bengal for its production of raw silk and mango products. So, souvenir industry of this district may initially be mainly based on these two products. Their present marketing is concentrated in English Bazar municipal area although in other blocks, there are a few numbers of shops where these products are available. In English Bazar municipality, both mango and sericulture products are adequately available. In Kaliachak-I, sericulture products are largely available because all the manufacture industries are located there. On the other hand in Manikchak, English Bazar, Old Malda and Kaliachak-I, mango products are available in large quantity in mango season. In Old Malda, the manufacturing factories of mango products are mainly concentrated. Now, all these mango and sericulture products are marketed in different district of West Bengal and state of India particularly after the introduction of “*Biswa Bangla Biponi*” marketing chain by the Government of West Bengal. As outside world has already experienced the flavour of these products, the launching pad for tourism with souvenir product is ready today.

Malda is well connected with various parts of India through railways. In railway platform, there are only two shops where mango products are available. These shops are however helping to spread mango products all over India to a very small extent. But in government or public bus stand, such marketing is totally absent. There is no shop where these souvenir products are available in two most popular tourist circuits i.e. Gour and Pandua.

Actually the success of souvenir industry directly depends on attitude of tourists. If tourism of a region is developed, this place is able to pull a large number of vendors of souvenirs. As tourists are bringing some specimen as a token which is special of this region or place, the souvenir industry of the region is flourished. Less visit in tourist destinations of Malda are responsible for the absence of souvenir shops in tourist destinations.

10. Suggestions for Development:

The economy of Malda is mainly based on agriculture due to lack of industrial backwardness. But there is ample scope for economic diversification with the help of souvenir industry as associate of tourism industry.

1. In the beginning, the district should take proper marketing and promotional programme to develop heritage tourism pockets which automatically brings

the development of souvenir industry by virtue of its snowballing effect.

2. The souvenir products of the district are mainly marketed by government effort through its marketing chain. But the development of tourism sector will create market of high return within the district.
3. When tourist flow will be increased here these products would get better acceptance which generates more demand of these souvenir products. As the consequence, it is expected that the number of industries related to these products will increase resulting many direct and indirect employments.
4. It is to be highlighted that in the year 2005, at the side of NH 34 a food park was inaugurated covering 38 acres of land with the cost of around 16 crore. But till date this food park is not functioning properly due to lack of investors.
5. Development of mango based souvenir industry may create interest among businessman to establish their industry at food park of this district.
6. Famous Ramkeli fair is held here in and around 16th June i.e. mango season. Huge numbers of visitors are coming here from different district as well as different states. If local administration takes initiatives for exhibiting these products at fair ground for sale, this can positively bring the economies benefit for the producers.

11. Conclusion:

So, there is ample scope to sale all these souvenir products to visitors. Planned and proper marketing can boost up the souvenir industry as well as district's economy. The venture may begin with encouraging the local youths to come forward with souvenir stalls in tourist points of already established Gour and Pandua circuit. Finally, it may be concluded that there remains further scope of extension of souvenir industry with the growth of tourism. Replicas of famous architectures, their sketches, ornaments of medieval periods design, terracotta works as found in the walls of architecture etc. can be displayed for sale at the entry points of heritage sites.

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