

# Heritage and Tourism :

## Conflicts and Contextualism

Shaheda Rahman  
Sheikh Ahsanullah Mojumder

### Introduction

Travelling is as old as mankind. The world has known travellers since the dawn of civilization. Novel cultural experience, quest for knowledge, and to know the unknown has inspired man to travel from one end of the earth to the other from very early days. Ibn Batuta, Huen Tsang, Marco Polo and others amply illustrate the insatiable human zest for unique cultural experience, but those were the innocent days of tourism.

To-day tourism has become the world's largest economic activity second only to oil in dollar volume.<sup>1</sup> The World Tourism, Overview, a compilation of travel figures published by American Express Company, reported that overall global travel volume of people in 1983 reached 3.6 billion in 1983, despite the fact that domestic touristic activity concentrated in the more industrially developed countries of Europe and North America. A more recent figure shows that the earnings from tourism in the 24 OECD member countries amounted to nearly US \$ 146 billion.<sup>2</sup> These are clear indicators of the phenomenal growth of tourism in the recent years.

Tourism today is partly generated by the historic monuments and sites. Unique cultural experience has a high priority in the expectation of tourists. In their travelling a growing number of people are motivated principally, or even exclusively by heritage of one's own, or of another culture in distant land. This form of tourism, known today as cultural tourism, was essentially an elitist apanage, a cultural phenomenon in the 18c (the Grand Tour). In the 19c it developed into a mass phenomenon. Today tourism is an irreversible human, social and economic experience inextricably bound with culture and heritage. This dramatic change has been induced to a great extent by better information and communication systems that exist today.

### Abstract

Today Tourism has become the world's largest economic activity second only to oil in dollar volume. Tourism is also to a great extent now being generated by cultural heritage. More and more people are traveling for unique cultural experience. Historic monuments, sites and cities thus have become touristic resources. This form of tourism, cultural tourism, was confined to elite apanage (The Grand Tour) until 18c but since the 19c it has developed into a mass phenomena with all its perils.

The cultural tourism's staggering growth has made it a double-edge sword for historic monuments, sites and even cities. The example of Side and Bodrum in Turkey and even Singapore shows the disruption unharnessed mass tourism can inflict on traditional culture. Thus while it is acknowledged that heritage and tourism have become too deeply entwined to be studied in isolation, the impact of mass tourism on historic monuments, sites and cities, and on traditional culture has made it an object of intense scrutiny and sometimes of heated debates. Several international conferences have been held in the last two decades to debate the issues and to seek possible solutions to redress the problems that exist.

This paper overviews the heritage-tourism phenomenon in the light of the past experience of the world. It also studies the state of art in Bangladesh with attempts to identify the issues and premises of this yet untapped, unexplored and little studied phenomenon in Bangladesh.

Shaheda Rahman, B. Arch., Post-grad. Dip; MAE, Associate Professor, Specialized in Health Facility Planning and Design. Interested in Architectural Conservation.

Sheikh Ahsanullah Mojumder, B. Arch, Lecturer, Awarded 3rd prize of 3rd BUFF International Architectural Design Competition in Tokyo Japan, Winner of Mimar International Architecture Design Competition VI, Interested in Graphic Arts Computer Graphics, Painting and Sculpture.



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## Impact of Tourism

The staggering and ever increasing growth of tourism has made it a double-edged sword, a healer as well as a poisoner. Cultural tourism and economic development have become working partners in many instances. United Kingdom, Switzerland are perhaps the more positive examples of such harmony. In such examples it has vitalized local economy by creating jobs bringing in hard currency, giving motivation for new infrastructure and even provided incentive for conservation and preservation of the natural and built heritage. In the recent experience of the world, however, tourism, even cultural tourism, has proven to be a mixed blessing. That while there is harmony, there is also actual or potential conflict. Tourism has known to throttle and cheapen the historic fabric of a place. It has destroyed, desecrated the very heritage, the very environment, and the social fabric which made the places once distinct and a veritable tourist attraction.

The impact of mass tourism on historical monuments and sites are usually:

1. Physical wear and tear, and over crowding.
2. Vandalism.
3. Changes induced in the fabric of the monuments and sites.
4. Changes induced in the environs of the historic monuments and sites.
5. Influence on the ambience and social fabric of the historic sites and towns.

The endless streams of tourists and their concentration within a specified period in historic buildings and sites cause wear and tear to the physical fabric of the monuments and sites. Over crowding also leads to vandalism. Today most world heritage sites, the best known the most advertised, and the most exciting of them are increasingly confronted with problems of over-crowding and physical damage. The caves of Lascaux have been closed to tourists since 1950's. This is because the pre-historic paintings and carvings of the caves were mortally threatened by the breath of the numerous visitors.<sup>3</sup>

In the Acropolis, the major monuments have reached a verge of total collapse. Stonehenge has been now cordoned off to visitors. To save this World Heritage Site tourists are allowed to visit the monument from a distance guided through a well-controlled and very defined path.<sup>4</sup> Today controlling the number of tourists to prevent overcrowding is a much advocated measure. In Venice it is being debated whether a "numerous clausus" should be imposed on the tourists coming to the City of Doges.<sup>5</sup>

Uncontrolled number of tourists frequently gives rise to vandalism. People tend to touch, feel and experience the furniture and fixtures, thus wearing them off and often damaging them. Over crowding

also leads to accidents. Graffiti has been a particular problem in historical buildings and sites. Tourist's invasion have ruined archaeological sites, worn out monuments, and rendered parks and natural resorts unrecognizable.

The effect of touristic invasion on historic monuments and sites has been well expressed by Peter Rumble, Chief Executive of Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England, when he explained as to what has happened to the pre-historic site of Stonehenge.<sup>6</sup>

"During August 1977 as many as 7000 people were visiting Stonehenge in a single day and some 2000 people in the single hour. All sense of isolation was lost. One was conscious of the bombardment of noise from traffic coming and going, what one saw was people milling around the stones rather than the stones themselves".

Historic centres have become prey to insensitive caterers as well. The setting, the environs, the context of historical monuments and sites are as important as their physical fabric. Often to accommodate the needs, comfort, convenience and interest of tourists certain amenities like car parks, tea-shops, signs and posts, souvenir stores are added on to historical buildings and sites, their preponderant presence being in obvious conflict with the historic settings. Often when new structures are built on historic sites it can cause structural damage to the building as has been experienced in the Lahore Fort. The excavation made for the sewer to install public toilets in the fort has caused settlement of the foundation.<sup>7</sup> The implication of such structural stress hardly needs to be emphasized.

The adverse effect of uncontrolled tourism does not end with individual sites or monuments. It extends well beyond the boundaries of such properties with more disastrous impact. The ambience and fabric of the towns which contribute to the sense of place, providing the context for monuments as well as being an expression of local culture are often destroyed under the ensued onslaught of mass tourism. It is not only the physical developments that induce the damaging influence but foreign touristic culture can influence the life style and values of the local population disrupting the cultural continuum and creating pseudo sub-culture. Thus, the context for the historical monuments and sites are often permanently lost with irreversible damages.

The cities of Side and Bodrum in Turkey, Damascus in Syria, and even Singapore well demonstrate the negative impact of tourism.<sup>8</sup> In the old city of Damascus, buildings which were originally exclusively used for habitation, 75% of them now house shops, store houses, workshops, and other commercial activities.<sup>9</sup> When the nature of use changes obviously it is followed by a change in the population

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24. Gupta, N, 'A People's Movement,' Architecture + Design, A Journal For The Indian Architect, Vol. VI, No. 1, Nov.—Dec. 1989 p 109.
25. Ibid.

and social structure. Even the historic cities of the developed countries have not escaped this disastrous effect of mass tourism. The university towns of Oxford and Cambridge could serve well as examples.<sup>10</sup>

In simple words world experience shows that in many unique places there has been progression in which, the unspoiled quality of a place attracted tourists where upon the sheer number of tourists, the accommodation they need, the industry they encourage, bring about a change which all too often is prejudicial to the very quality which attracted the tourists. Meanwhile as tourist's number grow, the change accelerate. Though there is a wide variation in effects, the proposed benefits of tourism have proven illusory more often than not, in developing countries. In these instances not only social and cultural patterns have been disrupted, consumption of scarce resources by tourists has disadvantaged local population. More unfortunately profit flowing from tourist industry has been channelled out of the country to overseas companies.<sup>11</sup>

Mass tourism has also given rise to the heritage industry with all its perils. The genuine no longer seem to hold the interest of tourists on their own. As going for "cultural heritage" has become fashionable i.e. to follow a trend without really understanding it, shrewd heritage managers exploit the situation. The heritage managers invest in theme parks and heritage centres, where often harmless but mentally polluting entertainment is offered. Fake historic environment is created, yesterday and today is confused, grossly falsified past is offered to the tourists in "historic revival scenes". As most tourists do not have the necessary points of reference and are nostalgic about the past, they are uncritical about such fake heritage. In other words, mass tourism has made the past a pastiche and the historic sites and monuments a player's stage. From the cultural point of view this could be disastrous and for tourism economy it could be self-defeating in course of time.

In recent times tourism has significantly influenced the practice of architectural conservation. Heritage has now become a commodity in the hard selling tourism market. Increasingly investments are being made on the viability of the monument in the tourism market. Even in India where tourism is gaining momentum this trend has become evident.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, to capture the interest of the tourists cultural properties are often being presented in falsified context which subverts the aim of architectural conservation. The "Light and sound" programme at the Delhi Fort could be cited as such an example. Tourism while has vitalized the architectural conservation activity in many instances, if left uncontrolled, can negate and destroy the aim, object and the process of architectural conservation.

#### Tourism— Conservation Link

The discussion so far did not intend to undermine the influence of

tourism in the field of conservation and preservation, or deny the present interdependency of tourism and conservation which has become an irreversible fact. In order to try to understand the nature of such dependency, Britain could be chosen as an example to illustrate the case. The reason for selecting Britain is that tourism in Britain is essentially built on its heritage and wealth of historic towns and cities.

While there is a clear indicator that in UK conservation projects act as strong selling points for tourism, however, proceeds from tourism tend to go to private hands. There is also very little direct financial contribution from tourist industry to conservation, as the money does not filter back through. This point was realized by National Linchfield and Associates in their study of conservation for Esher Report about York. In other words, though tourism may revitalize local economy and contribute to built environment, its direct link with conservation as expressed in economic terms is not readily quantifiable. Presently in Britain conservation of historic environment and heritage is pursued irrespective of tourism in the sense that financial benefit to conservation from tourism is not proportional to the revenues that is being earned. More indirect influence of tourism to uphold tourism is that conservation is now receiving greater public funds and attention than before.<sup>13</sup>

Today two schools of thought prevail over the tourism—conservation link. One group staunchly holds that the aims of conservation and tourism only appears to be complementary, when studied superficially. In reality the interest of history always crosses with interest of leisure (tourism). Tourism propagates development and change while conservation advocates controllable and minimum change. Tourism may start as a conservationist in the historical and natural environment but it rarely remains so. Tourism has to rise to the level of expectation of ever increasing number of tourists searching for novelty. Thus, when it reaches the economic climax it is already self-destructive. The other school strongly advocates tourism as a means and an end to conservation. Their view is that the present pitfalls are the consequences of not understanding the phenomenon correctly, and in their opinion therefore, correct interpretation and planning can greatly mitigate the present exigencies. It is even held that in poorer countries the importance of tourism is even greater. It is said that in the third World countries, tourism is often the principal factor, the only force which can sustains the conservation movement. The tourists not only provide hard currency but also the will to protect otherwise neglected and decaying sites. They make the authorities realize that it is the cultural heritage which provides a key to the desperately needed source of national income to feed and educate the people.<sup>14</sup>

While it is generally acknowledged that heritage and tourism have become too deeply entwined to be studied in isolation, the impact of tourism on historical sites and buildings as experienced in the past,



has made it an object of intense scrutiny and sometimes of heated debate. In the last two decades several international and national conferences have been held by UNESCO, ICOMOS, ICCROM and the World Heritage Convention to identify and debate the issues and seek possible solutions to the present problems.

One realization has been that cultural tourism will not diminish although it will fluctuate with economic movement. Equally true is the finding that unless tourism is marshalled or controlled it can be a destructive source for heritage. As a means to control tourism a comprehensive integrated approach is a sine qua non. It calls for the concerted efforts of those responsible for conservation and tourism. For instance to reduce overcrowding and thereby wear and tear of historic monuments and sites and its associated perils, it is being suggested that visit quotas or visit reservation system could be a possible solution in time. This can only be achieved by correct interpretation and accurate projection of trends in tourism and based on that, better management of heritage sites. The 1976 International Charter for Cultural Tourism Declaration of Manila (ICOMOS) is being recommended to be examined for local applicability.

#### Tourism in Bangladesh

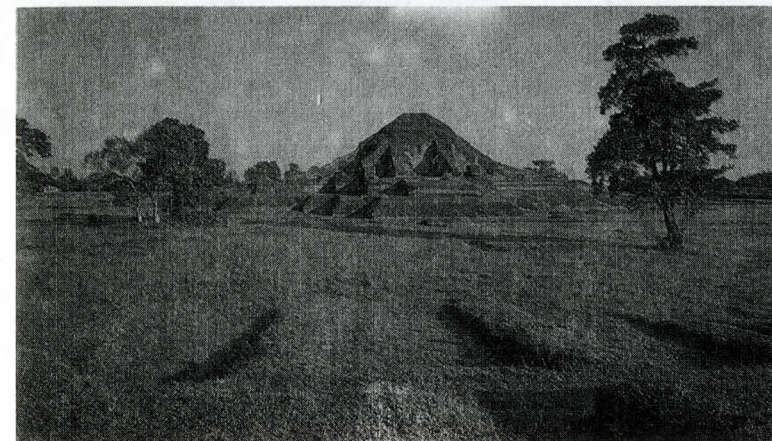
Before one attempts to analyse Bangladesh's potentials for tourism it should be remembered that tourism is essentially a product of marketing. If tourism is not a major economic activity, it is not because Bangladesh lacks the necessary assets, rather Bangladesh has not ventured into the world of tourism and its potentials remain yet untapped.

'A land of emerald and silver', in such terms for centuries chroniclers have sung praises of Bangladesh. It is indeed a befitting description of the land of the great delta with its numerous rivers and lush green valleys. It is also a land of ancient culture dating from the time of the Vedas, an assimilation of the many influences of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam which the country has experienced. The fertile cultural synthesis which resulted may be seen in particular, on the great artistic and archaeological treasures of the land. Many of these treasures which were made from brick, a fragile material, have not survived the rigors of time, climate, negligence and ravages of war. Some as the Paharpur Buddhist Monastery (Fig- 1) and the Shait Gumbad Mosque (Fig-2) in the Mosque City of Bagerhat have survived, and have earned the distinction of being declared as World Heritage Sites by the World Heritage Council.<sup>15</sup>

At present Bangladesh is in the grip of the worst economic recession. The problems of conservation now faced in Bangladesh are perhaps not uncommon in the region. It is not unexpected or unnatural that physical development receives the highest priority from economists and planners while the natural and built heritage of the country

remain neglected. But can a nation progress solely on physical development? There are enough historical evidences to prove the contrary.

Given that the current government expenditure for preservation and conservation will not rise significantly in the near future alternative source of finance has to be sought. Tourism could be an answer to this. Or is it? Would tourism be compatible with conservation in Bangladesh? Would the traditional society of Bangladesh sustain the adverse effects of tourism? Would it be possible to develop the infrastructure necessary for successful tourism in Bangladesh? These are some of the fundamental questions that need to be addressed before the country can embark on cultural tourism.



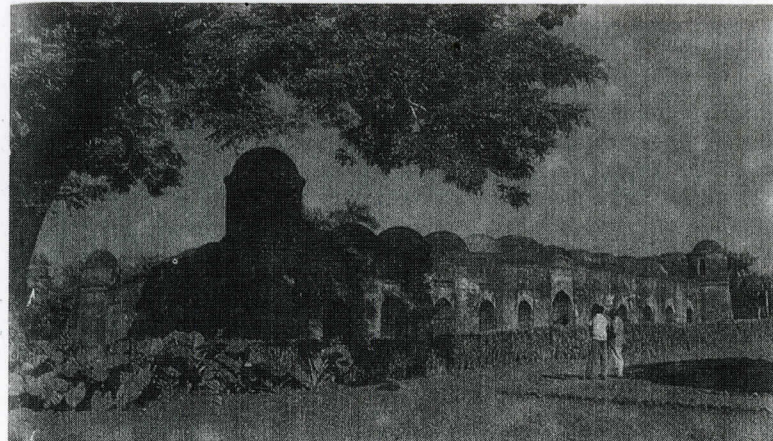
Paharpur Buddhist Monastery  
Fig- 1

The following discourse hopefully will answer some of these issues. Let us begin by examining the potentials of Bangladesh for tourism. Both natural and cultural resources are important touristic resources. Bangladesh is richly endowed on both these accounts. There are many natural sites all over the country which could be regarded as honey-pots for tourists. The Heron Point with rich wildlife, Jafflong, Sripur, Tamabil, Maday Kunda etc. in Sylhet, Kuakata in Patuakhali, Himchhari in Cox's Bazar, Khagrachhari in Rangamati, all competing with the garden of Eden in their picturesque quality, are few such sites to name.

The reason for citing the natural sites is that these obviously will be marketed if tourism develops and that even tourists who are attracted by nature are rarely contained by it. They too venture out for cultural experience during their sojourn. Sunderban and Cox's Bazar has been attracting visitors, even if in limited numbers when compared with elsewhere, for quite some time. If tourism develops obviously the number of tourists will sharply rise so will the number of tourist centres, and this will create an obvious impact on the heritage sites.



The architectural heritage of Bangladesh is of no mean stature. The archaeological and architectural treasures of the country can be said to have great potentials for tourism. The World Heritage Site of Paharpur for instance, being the worlds largest Buddhist monastery has great demand in the international market. The Japanese tourists who have avalanched the world tourism in particular promises a good source. This can be adduced from Japan Government's keen response and involvement in the preservation of the monument. Considering the great wealth of Buddhist archaeological sites of the country. Bangladesh has reasons to be optimistic. The Mahasthan Garh in Bogra, (Fig.-3) for example, dates from 3rd century AD. According to Lord Cunningham, the site of Vasu Bihar



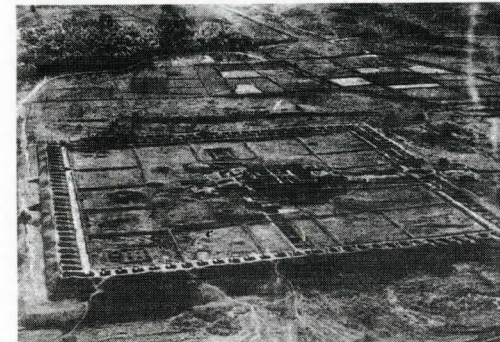
Shait Gumbad Mosque, Bagerhat  
Fig- 2

in Mahasthangarh has been mentioned by Huen Tsang in the 7c AD. It is believed to be the place where Buddha rested, meditated and thus bears his foot mark.<sup>16</sup> It is also the site of Pundranagar, the Pandua Capital.<sup>17</sup> The Sitakot Vihara (7c-8c AD) at Charkai in Dinajpur, the 50 archaeological sites of Mainamati in Comilla (Fig-4) with Buddhist archaeological remains dating from the 80-120 AD, the Kyangs and the Pagodas of the south-east, all have a lot to offer to scholars, devotees as well as general tourists from all over the world.



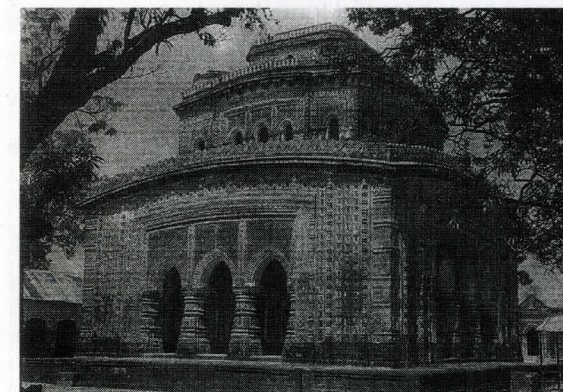
Mahasthan Garh, Bogra  
Fig- 3

The Hindu and Islamic Architecture of Bangladesh while may not size up to the grandiose Indian architecture of the same period, they offer a distinctive style, and are unique in their own regional character and thereby hold great prospect for tourism.



Mainamati in Comilla  
Fig- 4

To prove the hypothesis some examples may be in order. The earliest Hindu temple so far discovered is the Govinda Swami Temple at Baigram in Dinajpur district, built in the 128 Gupta era (477-78) AD). An ancient edifice as this could be well expected to inspire and impress scholars and tourists alike. The various Shikhara, Bangla and Ratna Temples found in Bangladesh can also be expected to interest the tourist. The temple of Kantanagar, an exquisite navaratna temple of composite style (Fig-5) built in 1752 is a marvelous example of the terracotta art of Bengal, and can truly vie grander structures for tourist's interest.<sup>18</sup>



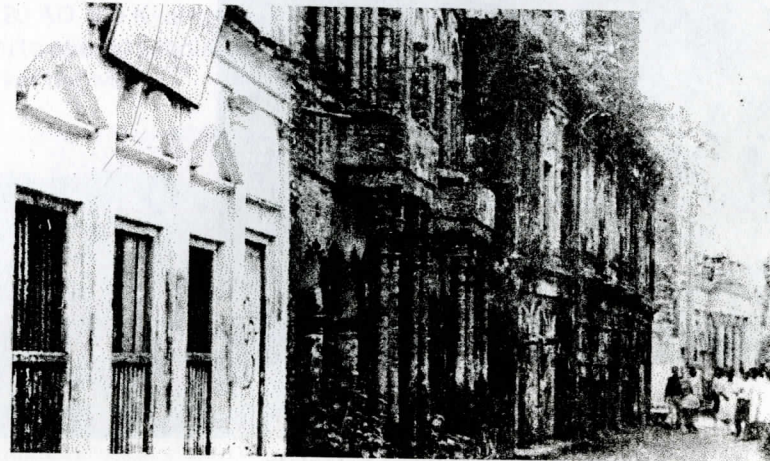
Kantanagar temple  
Fig- 5



There are numerous historic buildings and monuments of the Muslim era dating from the Sultanate period to the late Mughal strewn all over the country. Most of these, like remains of the earlier periods, are of religious order and many are live monuments still in use. The most significant building of the Sultanate period is the other World Heritage site of Bangladesh, the Shait Gumbad Mosque of Bagerhat (Fig-2). Dhaka, the capital is a rich repository of Mughal and Colonial architecture. Most Mughal structures unfortunately are vanishing fast and would be totally lost unless prompt actions are taken to protect and preserve them. The colonial buildings being more recent are perhaps best preserved through adaptive re-use. However, they too could be desecrated and destroyed through misuse and abuse, and therefore need steps to ensure their preservation. Since the colonial buildings are mostly in use it would be difficult to open them to tourists without special measures for their protection and security.

It is not only the grand and ancient structures that attract tourists. There are many less imposing structures, of great artistic and aesthetic value, which offer good market for tourism and certainly merit conservation efforts. The old residence of the Khasi Kings belonging to 7c AD in Jaintiapur in Sylhet is a good example of this group of structures. The ruins of the palace with an adjacent series of vertical monoliths would impress any visitors, local or international.

The Painam Nagar in Sonargaon is another such historic site (Fig-6). The city built by Hindu merchants is an unique expample of linear city planning of early 20c. The city planning with its buildings not only offers an insight to the lives of the wealthy merchants of the day but also boasts of exceptional brick detailing and high aesthetic value. The painam Nagar at present is an important tourist centre and could be further developed by conservation of the area. The multitude of Zamindar Bari found all over Bangladesh like wise, are impressive in intricate details and distinctive styles and therefore can easily be developed as successful tourist centres.



Painam Nagar in Sonargaon  
Fig- 5

It should be borne in mind that the architectural heritage of one country is never comparable, nor it is expected to compete, with that of another country. What Taj is to India, and Versailles is to France, Paharpur is that to Bangladesh. Moreover, when tourists visit a country or a site they are in a receptive frame of mind. They are then willing to absorb and experience whatever novelty is offered. They are thrilled by the quaint, and even the insignificant, just as much as by the grandiose, if presented in the right manner. The development and the success of the old industrial towns of UK as prosperous tourist centres amply supports the thesis.<sup>19</sup>

One can prove the same from local example. For most visitors to Dhaka, for instance, the sojourn is incomplete without a visit to old Dhaka and the Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. Two more diametrically opposite situations could hardly be better illustrated. Old Dhaka, represents the past and the pulsating lives of the Dhakaiyas. The Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, on the other hand, is a remarkable piece of contemporary architecture by a world famous architect. It would be of interest to readers to learn that in the recent past tourism organizations have been organizing tours for foreign visitors who come to Bangladesh exclusively to visit the masterpiece of Louis I Kahn. Thus the tourists are not nostalgic about the past alone but are eager to experience the present and the future. Therefore the ancient, the grand, the quaint, the novel even the bizarre can trigger and hold the imagination and interest of tourists, if correctly channelled.

প্রত্নতত্ত্ব জাদুঘর অধিদপ্তরে নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন বিভিন্ন জাদুঘরগুলিতে ১লা জুলাই, ১৯৮৯ ইং হতে ৩০ শে জুন, ১৯৯০ ইং পর্যন্ত দর্শক আগমন ছিল নিম্নরূপ

জাদুঘর	দর্শক সংখ্যা (জন)			
	১৯৮৯-৯০	১৯৯০-৯১	১৯৯১-৯২	১৯৯১-৯২
লালবাগ দূর্গ জাদুঘর, ঢাকা	১৩২১	১০৬৩০১	৮৯১২১	২০০০০০
মহাস্থানগড় জাদুঘর, বগুড়া	৯০৩১৮	৫২২৬১	৬৪৭৪৯	
পাহাড়পুর জাদুঘর, নওগাঁ	৬২৩৫০	২২৮৪১	১১১৪৫১	১৫০০০০
ময়নামতি জাদুঘর, কুমিল্লা	৪৯৪৫৫	৪০৮৬৪	৪৫২	
চট্টগ্রাম জাতিতাত্ত্বিক জাদুঘর	৭৫২১৪	৬৮৬৯৫	৫৩৯৬৯	১০০০০০
শেরে বাংলা স্মৃতি জাদুঘর, বরিশাল	৫১৭১	৫৭৬৮	১০১৫১৭	৫০০০০
রবীন্দ্র কুঠিবাড়ী, কুষ্টিয়া	১২৪৩৯	২১৮০১৪	১০১৫১৭	
এম, এস, দত্ত বাড়ী, যশোর	১২৬২৫	১২০৮৮	১৫০৮০০	
	৩০৮৯৩	৫২৬৯৩২	৬৭৩৫৭৬	৫০০০০০

প্রত্নতত্ত্ব জাদুঘর অধিদপ্তরে নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন জাদুঘর ও সাইট সমূহের জানুয়ারী থেকে ডিসেম্বর (১৯৯১) পর্যন্ত পরিদর্শনকারী দর্শক সংখ্যার তালিকা : (Fig- 7)



If we accept, based on the foregoing discussion, that the potentials for tourism in Bangladesh is very rich, let us now review the tourist industry. Tourists may be classified as international, regional and domestic. From available information it is not possible to state the exact nature, or predict the recent or future trend of international, regional or domestic tourism. Chart shown in Fig-7 shows that no attempts are made at present to identify the purpose or extent of visit of those coming to this country. However, it would not be incorrect to say that international tourism, as known in the other parts of the world is virtually unknown in Bangladesh. The insignificant number of such tourists that does exist represents those visiting or living in Bangladesh for business or other official purposes. In the case of regional tourists the situation is not very different. Never the less, it may be said that in the foreseeable future regional tourism is likely to gain momentum on account of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). To encourage cultural interaction and inter-travel, special discounts are offered at present for regional travel by the airline companies of the SAARC countries.

In Bangladesh domestic travel is not motivated by heritage. People travel to visit relatives and village homes for vacation rather than for cultural experience. Often people travel to sites of archaeological significance for outing as picnics. Unacceptable as it may be it is not uncommon for picnic spots to develop near the heritage sites. Sonargaon, Paharpur, Mahasthangarh, etc. are some of such sites. People visiting the heritage sites for scholarly research do not truly conform the category of tourists.

It would not be accurate to say that heritage sites do not draw visitors, only that from the existing data it is difficult to infer what priority it holds for people, or what the trend is. When a historic site, monument or building is within a city its frame of reference changes. In such cases these places act as a breathing place and a recreation centre for the city dwellers, and draws visitors in significant and ever increasing numbers. Ahsan Manzil, Lalbagh Fort and even the Savar War Memorial and Central Shahid Minar are good examples of this.

#### **Problems Associated With Tourism in Bangladesh**

If we try to analyse the possible negative impacts of tourism in Bangladesh, the most imminent danger to be expected is physical damage, or wear and tear of the monuments. Most common building material of the region is brick, a fragile and impermanent material susceptible to weathering, sulphate attack, and rank vegetal growth.<sup>20</sup>

Most of our ancient edifices are today in a state of decay. In their present state these structures are unlikely to sustain regular concentrated pressure from the expected large number of people for whom it was never designed. Before contemplating any form of

tourism it is essential to take measures to protect and preserve the historic sites and monuments.

Another danger, which though hard to define, is the clandestine trade. It is not to say that clandestine trade of heritage materials do not exist at present only that it is likely to accelerate tremendously with tourism. It would not be an exaggeration to say that at present in Bangladesh the concern for heritage, or its preservation and conservation is almost nonexistent. In the present unprotected state the historic monuments would be stripped bare of valuable artifacts, and thereof their historic significance. The only measure against this is to develop the concern for heritage in Bangladesh. If the people of Bangladesh cannot respect and protect their heritage then the tourists coming from other countries cannot be expected to have any respect for it either.

#### **Conclusion**

Despite the present interdependency between heritage and tourism, the aim of conservation has to be defined outside tourism. It has been said that in most developing countries the economic condition does not facilitate conservation for historical value alone. It would be also wise to remember that culture forms the life tenure of all countries and no country is in a position to squander what it may have. It is not only prudent but also mutually beneficial that heritage remains an indirect source of encouragement for tourism. For tourism can be a culture imposing and culture destroying force, and can reduce conservation to preservation of a disrupted mutilated image.<sup>21</sup>

It should further be stated that the Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, the National Tourism Organization, is not properly educated and informed about the heritage of Bangladesh—its history and significance. The reason for this remark is Parjatan's brochure on archaeological sites and monuments printed in 1989 reads "The architecture of the pyramidal temple (Paharpur Buddhist Monastery)..... profoundly influenced by those in South-East Asia, especially Burma and Java". The fact is the architecture of Paharpur has influenced the Buddhist architecture of S.E. Asia particularly that of Borobodoor<sup>22</sup> and not the other way round as deemed by the Parjatan Corporation.

Bangladesh on account of its natural scenic beauty, rich cultural heritage and archaeological treasures has indeed great tourist potentials. However it should be remembered that tourism is as much a product of marketing as it is of environment.<sup>23</sup> Therefore if Bangladesh is to embark on cultural tourism there has to be a comprehensive development on a sound pragmatic basis.

At this point in time it would be prudent to promote domestic and regional tourism in Bangladesh rather than international tourism in



the truest sense. Even a country like Sri Lanka, which already has a strong international market, is reticent to rely on international tourists. Sri Lanka, though recognizes the importance of the tourist industry for country's economy believes that the mainstay of the industry should be domestic tourists. It is held that international tourists may be variable and unreliable, even if lucrative and supportive for economy and conservation. This philosophy is obviously sustained by the fact that in Sri Lanka most historic sites i.e. the tourist resources, are religious sites, and pilgrims are the most numerous and regular visitors to these places.<sup>24</sup>

The importance of domestic tourism lies in the fact that it is a good catalyst for conservation. In India most major cities have their own conservation societies, viz. the Conservation Society of Delhi (CSD). One of the main activities of these societies is to promote local tourism. The objective being to make people aware of their own heritage and instill a sense of pride in them and thus developing the concern for conservation.<sup>25</sup> For Bangladesh it can be considered even more important to promote local tourism to achieve this end.

To envisage even domestic and regional tourism at present is quite ambitious for Bangladesh as the necessary bases for the industry are non-existent. The unprotected state of the heritage sites further aggravates the situation. A systematic development plan both for tourism and conservation can be said to be a necessary prerequisite. The urgency today is first to preserve and protect the historical sites and monuments. This can only be possible if there is a responsive and comprehensive conservation policy, a step Bangladesh is yet to take. The necessary expertise and infrastructure obviously need to be developed. Since without the political will and community support no policy can ever become a reality, efforts must be given to motivate both the public and the people in office for the conservation of our heritage.

It is being acknowledged that tourism can be a powerful tool and supportive to conservation and national economy. However, the process must be deliberate and controlled. The process would also have to be supported by strict and well observed regulations, and permanent dialogue between the responsible people namely, the Directorate of Archaeology and the Parjatan Corporation. Each must be aware of the tremendous responsibility that they would be holding. Any lapse by either party would bring disaster for Bangladesh.

No matter what course of action is chosen the issues of conservation should never be made secondary to the profits from tourism. The aims of conservation must be defined outside the phenomenon of tourism.