

CULTURAL TOURISM: BANGLADESH TRIBAL AREAS PERSPECTIVE

Ph.D. Student **Mohammad SHAMSUDDOHA**

Ph.D. Student **Mohammed ALAMGIR**

Ph.D. Student **Tasnuba NASIR**

Curtin University, Australia

Abstract

Tourism is the world's largest industry which is linked with thousands of associated business. Though Bangladesh is a small country in terms of its size it contains huge prospect in its tourism including culture. Bangladesh culture is very rich which initiated long ago with different dimensions. Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh are a place of tribal. Tribal are having their own rich culture which is very attractive and nice looking. This study focused on tribal culture and its tourists. This paper also seeks about problems of cultural tourism in Bangladesh.

Key words: *Cultural Tourism, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh.*

Jel Classification: *L83*

1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism includes tourism in urban areas, particularly historic or large cities and their cultural facilities such as museums and theatres. It can also include tourism in rural areas showcasing the traditions of indigenous cultural communities (i.e. festivals, rituals), and their values and lifestyle (OECD, 2009). Bangladesh is an affluent country of culture. Numerous ethnic groups live in Bangladesh. Each ethnic group has its own culture as well as the national culture. In this study, the author has studied on the Tribal Culture of Chittagong Hill Tracts and tourism potentiality of these cultures. These tribal peoples are known as Indigenous people.

There are different indigenous or tribal groups in Chittagong Hill Tracks such as Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tan-changa, Pangkhu, Khiang, Khumi, Lusai, Mro. Every year a big number of tourists visit Chittagong Hill Tracts area for these cultures, natural beauty, tribal festivals etc.

Tribal festivals especially marriage ceremony, biju utshob, pani utshob, etc. are the main festivals for which tourists come from different parts of the country as well as the other countries. Tourists come especially for the cultural festivals. Income of the local people increase when tourists come to these areas. Tourists are taking part in increasing the standard of living.

From the field survey, the authors have identified that tourists are very much interested about tribal cultures. Cultural tourism has a great potentiality in Bangladesh. Proper policies and financial support are required to develop this industry. The Government of Bangladesh can take proper steps for its development.

2. NATURE OF THE CULTURAL TOURISM

Cultural tourism has been defined as "the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs" (Richards, 1996). Cultural tourism is that form of tourism whose object is, among other aims, the discovery of monuments and sites. It exerts on these last a very positive effect insofar as it contributes - to satisfy its own ends - to their maintenance and protection. This form of tourism justifies in fact the efforts which said maintenance and protection demand of the human community because of the socio-cultural and economic benefits which they bestow on all the populations concerned.

Whatever, however, may be its motivations and the ensuing benefits, cultural tourism cannot be considered separately from the negative, despoiling or destructive effects which the massive and uncontrolled use of monuments and sites entails. The respect of the latter, just like the elementary wish to maintain them in a state fit to allow them to play their role as elements of touristic attraction and of cultural education, implies the definition and implementation of acceptable standards.

In any case, with the future in mind, it is the respect of the world, cultural and natural heritage which must take precedence over any other considerations however justified these may be from a social, political or economic point of view.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to carry out the study the following objectives have been considered:

- To know about the tribal and non-tribal people of Bangladesh with special focus on Rangamati;
- To determine types of visitors and reasons behind the tour in tribal areas;
- To identify the problems associated with cultural tourism in Bangladesh;
- To frame policy recommendations to promote cultural tourism in Bangladesh.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to comply with the objectives data was taken from both the secondary sources and primary sources. Secondary data was collected from various sources. For this study secondary data was taken from Internet, brochures as well as websites of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation (BPC) and different tour agencies that arrange tours in different locations of Bangladesh and other countries of the world.

On the other hand, primary data was collected through structured questionnaire in context of different aspects of tribal culture. In order to collect data 50 respondents of different location (40 from Rangamati and 10 from Jatiatta Museum), occupation and ages have been considered.

Table 1 - Showing type of respondents, and their number and percentage on total

Type of Respondents	Number of Respondents		Percentage of Respondents	
	Rangamati	Jaitatta Museum	Rangamati	Jaitatta Museum
Service Holder	13	3	32.50%	30%
Students	16	3	40%	30%
Local People	4	1	10%	10%
Businessmen	2	1	5%	10%
Others	5	2	12.50%	20%
Total	40	10	100%	100%

Source: Field survey

5. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

A. Number of tribal and non-tribal people in different parts of Rangamati Hill Tracts:

Table 2 - Brief statistics of Tribal and Non-Tribal people of Rangamati

Thana	Chakma	Marma	Tripura	Tan-changa	Pangkhu	Khiang	Lusai	Mro	Tribal	Non-Tribal
Rangamati	33168	1001	906	1367	771	0	278	0	38012	38720
Baghaichari	38072	88	2282	0	608	44	137	0	41211	16149
Barkal	19260	649	0	0	528	0	0	0	20437	8442
Kawkhali	11399	13902	91	260	0	0	0	0	25698	16711
Belaichari	5088	1891	1368	4729	922	48	0	126	14738	3199
Kaptai	12811	12625	59	3709	0	241	21	38	18125	4206
Juraichari	10586	31	11	206	265	0	0	0	11094	531
Langdu	12123	2	3	9	43	0	0	0	12180	42315
Naniarchar	26404	2245	0	0	0	0	0	0	28649	5912
Rajasthali	4	8434	1145	3357	0	192	0	0	10132	4066
Total	157385	40868	5865	13718	3128	525	436	164	220276	178065

Source: Ministry of Chittagong Hill tracts Affairs, Rangamati Hill Tracts

From the above table it can be opined that in Rangamati hill tract the total number of Tribal people is 220,276 and non-tribal is 178,065. The rate of literacy is 38.43% (ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts)

B. Reasons behind the tour in Hill tracts

People visit different places for different reasons and in this study the following reasons came out behind the visit to Rangamati and Jatitatta Museum by the sample respondents.

Table 3 - Reasons behind selecting the Hill Tracts for tour

Causes of Tour	Number of Respondents		Percentage of Respondents	
	Rangamati	Jatitatta Museum	Rangamati	Jatitatta Museum
Pleasure or recreation	28	0	70%	0%
Just passing through	5	3	12.50%	30%
Business	1	0	2.50%	0%
Business & pleasure	1	0	2.50%	0%
To know Indigenous people	3	6	7.50%	60%
Others	2	1	5%	10%
Total	40	10	100%	100%

Source: Field survey

From the above table it is clear that most of the tourists (70%) go to Rangamati for getting pleasure or recreation whereas 60% visit Jatitatta Museum to know about indigenous people, though Rangamati visit is only 7.5% the notable thing from the above table is that people are interested to know about the tribal people but still they consider the tour for pleasure or recreation.

C. Occasion and areas preferred by the tourist

The following table represents the areas or locations as well as the events tourists kept in their mind before planning any tour to Rangamati hill tracts.

Table 4 - Preferred areas or locations and events

Type of area/festival	Number of Respondents		Percentage of Respondents	
	Rangamati	Jatitatta Museum	Rangamati	Jatitatta Museum
Historical area	3	2	08%	20%
Heritage location	8	4	19.50%	40%
Cultural festival	6	1	15%	10%
Tribal festival	4	2	10%	20%
Natural area (forest/hills etc.)	8	1	20%	10%
Lake	9	0	22.50%	0%
Others	2	0	5%	0%
Total	40	10	100%	100%

Source: Filed Survey

The above table depicts that a good number of visitors visit Rangamati considering festival (25%) and natural beauties like forest, hills and lake (42.5%), whereas 19.5% consider the place as heritage location. On the other hand, 40% visitors visit Jatitatta museum to get an idea about heritage location and 20% visits to have an idea about tribal festival.

6. PROBLEMS OF CULTURAL TOURISM IN BANGLADESH

i. Lacks of awareness: Most of the tourists are unaware about cultural tourism of Bangladesh and not even have clear idea about "what is cultural tourism". 72% tourists think that lack of awareness is a problem of Cultural Tourism of Bangladesh.

ii. Lacks of Promotion: Promotion plays vital role in Tourism. Without promotional activities Cultural Tourism can not be developed successfully. A significant percentage of respondents (92%) considered it as a major problem of Cultural Tourism of Bangladesh.

iii. Insufficient Laws and Policies: For the protection of cultural components appropriate laws & policies must be taken. 62% respondents articulate that there are not sufficient laws and policies in Bangladesh for the development of Cultural Tourism & protecting cultural components.

The respondents pointed out the following problems of cultural tourism in Bangladesh.

iv. Accommodation problem: 62% tourists argued that accommodation facilities are inadequate in the tourist spots, especially in the hill tracts of Bangladesh and that also hinders the development of cultural tourism.

v. Insufficient Role of BPC: Bangladesh Parjaton Corporation (BPC) can play a very vital role for promoting cultural tourism but 92% respondents pointed out that the role of BPC in this regard is insufficient.

vi. Lack of Safety & Security: Safety & security is another significant factor in cultural tourism. 74% tourists expressed that this issue also hinders the potentiality of cultural tourism in Bangladesh.

vii. Communication problem: A good transportation system is highly required to attract tourists from different corners and 60% tourists said that transportation problem is another major issue for promoting cultural tourism in Bangladesh.

viii. Insufficient number of tourists guide: Tourist guide provide the proper information about the tourist spots. 54% tourists think that the number of tourist guides is not sufficient in Bangladesh, especially in the hill tracts.

Table 5 - Problems of Cultural Tourism in Bangladesh

Nature of the Problems	Types of Respondents					Total	%
	Service Holder	Students	Local People	Business men	Others		
Lack of awareness	14	10	5	3	4	36	72%
Lacks of promotion	15	17	5	3	6	46	92%
Insufficient laws & policies	10	13	3	2	3	31	62%
Accommodation problem	13	15	1	1	7	37	74%
Inadequate role of BPC	16	18	4	3	5	46	92%
Lack of safety & security	11	16	1	3	6	37	74%
Transportation problem	12	13	1	2	2	30	60%
Insufficient number of tourists guide	10	11	2	3	1	27	54%

Source: Field Survey

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are different ethnic groups in Hill tracts with different religions, sub-cultures, rituals and festivals. Some of their festivals and rituals are very interesting. The concept of cultural tourism in Bangladesh is new and consequently is not free from limitations. Some policy recommendations are given below to overcome those problems.

i. Proper initiatives should be taken to create awareness regarding cultural tourism through spreading the information about Bangladeshi culture, and sub-cultural variations, different rituals and festivals of tribal people reside in Hill Tracts. Government and other private entrepreneurs as well as newspaper and broadcast media can take effective steps to promote cultural and sub-cultural diversity of Bangladesh.

ii. Tour operators should focus on this issue and try to introduce attractive packages for the local as well as international tourists.

iii. Security is another problem, especially in the Hill tracts. In this regard the Government should try to introduce special security force or can create secured zone for the tourists, especially in the awkward areas, but strategically important tourist spot.

iv. To reduce accommodation problem, more hotel & motel need to be established either under BPC or other private tour operators in different strategically and culturally important locations.

v. To overcome transportation problem special bus service need to be introduced for the tourists and Government can extend the Train line, wherever possible.

vi. BPC should initiate and offer seminars and training programs with other tour operators to promote cultural tourism, train tourist guides and develop promotional plan.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Cultural tourism in Bangladesh is very prospective as we have different ethnic groups with lots of variations in sub-culture, rituals and festivals which can be the significant areas of interest for the local as well as international tourists. To introduce and promote Bengali Culture in the arena of world tourism, emphasize on cultural tourism is a must. Cultural tourism, however, in Bangladesh is not free from limitations but still it has great scope of development if proper policy and plan can be furnished and implemented.

Tribal cultures are the subject matter of this study. There are many aspects of tribal culture such as celebrations and festivals, religious beliefs and taboos, farm work, marriage, dresses, ornaments and cosmetics, food and drink, houses etc. and these can be great areas of interest for the tourists. Cultural Tourism requires a great deal of construction work and provides large numbers of entry-level jobs. Tourists may infuse additional money into the local economy through shopping. In nations where manufacturing sector is not developed, the tourism industry can be an essential method for reinvigorating local economies. Sooner or later, Bangladesh will be able to make the optimum use of its existing potential for cultural tourism and, thereby, further develop its economy

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Richards, G. (1996) *Cultural Tourism in Europe*, CABI, Wallingford.
2. *** (2009) *The Impact of Culture on Tourism*, OECD, Paris.
3. *** (2008) *The Daily New Nation*, February 18, 2008.
4. *** (2006) *The Daily Star*, June 17, 2008 and November 24, 2006.
5. *** (2008) *Tracts Affairs of Bangladesh: An agency for discrimination against indigenous Jumma peoples*, The Ministry of Chittagong Hill.
6. [http:// www.parjatan.gov.bd](http://www.parjatan.gov.bd).
7. <http://www.bangladesh.com>.
8. <http://www.bangladesh.saarctourism.org>.
9. <http://www.bangladeshtourism.org>.
10. <http://www.banglapedia.com>.
11. <http://www.banglavasha.com>.
12. <http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org>.
13. http://www.dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Cultures_and_Groups/Cultures.
14. <http://www.discovery.com>.
15. <http://www.moca.gov.bd/Organizations.htm>.
16. http://www.pbm-cht.org/indigenous_people.html.
17. http://www.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture.
18. <http://www.mochta.gov.bd>, Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs website.