

Potentialities and Challenges of Tourism in Dhakuakhana Sub-division of Lakhimpur District of Assam

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Abstract-

Tourism is the short term movement of people to outside their usual environment which can be a city, state, country or even across borders for various purposes. The development of tourism takes place through developing tourism circuits through a hub and spoke model, providing the tourists with the spiritual tourism experience. The study area is a historical tourist place full of ethnic, business and spiritual tourism. In this study, an attempt has been made to assess the Potentialities and Challenges of tourism in the study area. It has been found that Dhakuakhana has a great potential of tourism, but some problems also there.

Keyword- Holistic, Potentialities, Tourism, Religious, Spiritual Tourism etc.

1. INTRODUCTION:

One of the fastest-growing sectors in the world, tourism has enormous potential for generating cash and jobs and is a significant contributor to a country's foreign exchange earnings. It can be viewed as a way to settle disputes between communities and states, as well as a fantastic way to promote cultural assimilation and trade. In general, tourism is the short-term movement of individuals from their place of residence to another site outside of it, where they work during their visit. Travel motivations can vary from person to person. Therefore, there are several kinds of tourism depending on their motivations, such as eco-tourism, religious tourism, cultural tourism, wild-life tourism, etc. Religious Tourism is the pioneer form of tourism which usually related to the followers of particular faiths who visits the holy sites of their own religious beliefs and some other travel places for leisure, pleasure or business purposes. Dhakuakhana, a sub-division of Lakhimpur District of Assam is a historical place which has great potentials of tourism. Some tourist destinations of Dhakuakhana are – Basudev Than Narua Satra, Harhi Devalaya, Gopalpur Satra, Garakhia Dol, Manipuri Ai Than Govindapur satra, Phat Bihu etc. This paper aims to investigate Dhakuakhana's tourism potential and obstacles, which will support the city's economic and sociocultural growth in the near future and enable visitors to fulfill their religious obligations while there. Allowing domestic people to engage with others can help them broaden their horizons and lessen their adherence to religious dogma.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The major objectives of the study are

1. To draw attention to the Dhakuakhana Sub-division's tourism potentials and challenges.
2. To suggest appropriate policy measures to address the issues based on the study's results.

Methodology:

Both primary and secondary data were used to get the information for this investigation. Books, journals, magazines, the Assamese government's tourist agency, the Economic Survey, and Assam, among others, are the primary sources of secondary data. Since the study area includes the Lakhimpur district's Dhakuakhana Sub-division, four major houses of worship have provided source data. The required data about the potential and difficulties of tourism in the examined area has been gathered using a planned schedule.

Delimitation:

Lakhimpur District includes the subdivision of Dhakuakhana Assam, India's. The location falls between the range of 27.60 to 27.35 degrees north latitude and 94.24 to 94.42 degrees east longitude. Its eastern boundary is the Brahmaputra and Dhemaji District, while its western boundary is the Subansiri River and the North-Lakhimpur subdivision. Dhemaji lies to the north of the location, while Majuli Island lies to the south. Similar to other regions of Assam, Dhakuakhana is home to numerous ethnic tribes and groups, each with its unique cultural legacy, such as the Chutia, Mishing, Ahom, Deori, Koch, and others. Although Hinduism is the main faith in the area, there are also people of other faiths, including Islam and Christianity. The ancient practice of worshiping the Sun and Moon Gods, Doni-Polo, is also practiced by the Mishings tribal community. There is a lot of potential for religious tourism in this historically significant location. Gupalpur Satra, Harhi Devalaya, and Basudev Than Narua Satra are a few of Dhakuakhana's spiritual tourism attractions. In addition, the small distance between Majuli and Dhakuakhana makes it easier for travelers to travel from Majuli to Dhakuakhana. The center of Vaishnava culture is Majuli, the world's largest river island.

3. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS:

Potentialities of Tourism in the Study Area:

A place can make a lot of money from tourism. Growing economic conditions can improve a community's industrial, health, educational, and other facets of life. One location with a lot of potential for the tourism sector is Dhakuakhana. Dhakuakhana is a culturally rich area in Assam's Lakhimpur district. Numerous tribes and ethnic groups call this location home, and they all have rich cultural traditions. While Hinduism is the predominant religion in the area, there are also Christians, Muslims, and sheikhs. The area's natural beauty, which includes the Charikoria, Brahmaputa, Subanshiri, and other rivers, can very readily draw tourists. A market on the bank of the Charikoria River, today known as Mahghuli Chapari, existed under the Ahom monarchy and served as a hub for people from different areas to conduct commerce.

A brief description of these Tourist places are-

Basudev Than Narua Satra: In Dhakuakhana, it is a highly esteemed sacred site dedicated to worshipping Basudeva, the Assamese name for Lord Vishnu. It is the result of the Assamese "Vaishnav movement." Damodar Ata, a grand son of the Assamese saint Sankardev, founded this temple on the northern Sampora River called Laumura Satra in the middle of the 17th century, during the reign of Ahom King Jayadhwaj Shingha. The ancient temple was constructed during the 14th and 15th centuries, when the Chutia Kings Lakshminarayan and Satyanarayan gave the primary land of the temple. The satra's plot was passed from one person to another during their time, but in the end, Damodar Ata acquired the site, and he built the temple at its current position, which he called "Narua satra," which translates to "newly established." It is located 12 kilometers west of the town of Dhakuakhana. Since the establishment of the temple's Basudev Mandir on "Maghi Purnima," the locals have celebrated the day annually with "Pal Nam," a form of sangeet. In addition to Pal Nam, the annual celebrations of "Dol Yatra" and "Rash-Lila" are equally colorful. Every day, thousands of religious people from various places visit this temple, especially during the Dol Yatra festival, the New Year, and other holidays.

Gopalpur Satra: For Hindus, and particularly Vaishnavists, this is a sacred and ancient pilgrimage that honors Gopal, the Assamese name for Lord Krishna. In addition to this additional stone statue of Bonshibadan, this is also the location of Vubanmohan, Keligopal, and Lakshi-Narayan. It is situated at the meeting point of the Korha and Kumotia Rivers, around 2 kilometers from Ghilamora, a Dhakuakhana subdivision development block. In 1578, under the patronage of Ahom ruler Chakradhwaj Singha, Banamali Dev founded the satra. This is a sub-satra of Majuli's Dakshinpat Satra, which is the primary satra of Assamese Vaishnavism. Every year, the Satra community commemorates the birth and death dates of Vaishnavite gurus as well as the Rash-Lila, Dol-Yatra, Siv-Jayanti, and Bihu.

Garakhia Dol: This is another place of worship in the Dhakuakhana subdivision is Sukut Shrine. It is located in the Gaon of Chelajan Kachari. Shrine's past is obscured by mystery. According to legend, some cowherd lads used to worship here by offering grasshoppers as sacrifices. However, one of them was unable to supply the insect, so he had to step forth and offer a variety of sacrifices alongside state brass. The architecture and brickwork utilized in "Garakhia Dol" demonstrate how old the villages of Chelajan Kachari Gaon were.

Govindapur satra: This is another Vaishnavite center of worship. The distance from Dhakuakhana town to the east is roughly 6 km. The region where the satra is situated is also referred to as Govindapur. During the reign of King Siva Singha of Ahom, Niranjan Babu established the satra. Devotees from all around Assam, both inside and outside, come here as well.

Harhi Devalaya: Sakti-Pith of Durga Mata is a famous location. A mythology states that a fragment of bone shivered from the body of Gad Siva's deceased wife Sati, also known as the goddess Durga, when he visited the earth with her. Thus, the location is called Harhi, which is the Assamese word for bone, and the Devalaya is called Harhi devalaya. This Devalaya has additional stone statues of Hindu gods and goddesses. These include, among others, Siva, Kali, Manasha, Ganga, and Chamunda. This location is a great site to celebrate Assamese Durga Puja. Several buffalo, goat, ducks, and other animals are sacrificed every year during this ceremony. Devotes are believed that it might fulfil their desire.

Manipuri Ai Than: An ancient Sakta shrine called the Manipuri Ai Than is located in Barmuthoni Gaon, about two kilometers north of Ghilamara township. Tradition has it that the Goddess of Kashri Khato left the Tamreswari Mandir because her followers were careless. She then descended the Sodia Hills via the

Kundil River and made her home in a number of locations, including Deugharia Kulapather Eta. The wife of Lord Shiva, Sati Parbari, is said to have had a series moni (a type of necSati klace) fall from her neck here. As a result, the shrine is called Manipuri Ai Than. However, it is unknown who established this shrine.

Phat Bihu : Phata Bihu is the heritage of Dhakuakhana. It is the regions of cultural treasure. Currently it is became a popular tourist place for various tourist especially during the days of phata Bihu celebration. Its attraction had spared far and wide across seas and oceans. The Phata Bihu is celebrated on the Mohghuli Chapori by the riverine communities on the bank of the Charikoriya river in upper Assam's Dhakuakhana. Every year in the week of Bohag, the first month of the Assamese calendar, Phata Bihu is celebrated for three days. During three day celebrations, the riverine tribes of the area- Mishing, Deoris, Ahom, Chutia, Kalitas, Koivartas, Sonowal Kacharis and Konch show the cultural richness and communal harmony among them. Initially although it was celebrate under the trees by the river bank. Presently it is celebrated at a designated place where every participated visit only in traditional attires. Thus the Phata Bihu has been recognised as an invaluable property of Assamese folk culture is now permanently celebrated in this spot a point of tourist attraction,

Challenges of Tourism in Dhakuakhana

While there are many opportunities for promoting tourism in the study area, both tourists and those involved in these activities have encountered certain difficulties. These are as follows:

Language Barrier: According to the majority of respondents, the Dhakuakhana Sub-division's religious tourism is significantly hampered by language barriers. The individuals who participate in religious activities in various Satras and Thans of Dhakuakhana do not speak Hindi, English, or any other language than their regional or local tongue. They were unable to interact with the tourist effectively due to a language barrier.

Absence of professional Tourist Guide: Seventy-five percent of respondents said that one major issue with tourist promotion is the lack of professional guides. When it comes to drawing tourists, the guide is crucial. According to some of the respondents, the guide should be knowledgeable about the location and the religious rituals observed there; they should also be able to pique tourists' enthusiasm in going there.

Lack of Trained Manpower: According to almost 65% of respondents, one of the main issues facing the hospitality industry is a shortage of trained personnel. Those with hotel management training might not want to work in a remote location. To carry out their responsibilities, the assigned rural personnel must get training. The level of service that visitors receive determines how well religious tourism performs.

Poor Infrastructure and Communication Facilities: The main issues with Dhakuakhana's tourism promotion include the lack of adequate road connectivity, banking and ATM facilities, high-quality hotels and restaurants, inadequate network facilities, a lack of transportation and a tourism agency, etc.

Suggestion for Development of Tourism in Dhakuakhana Sub-Division:

For overcoming the challenges regarding tourism in Dhakuakhana, following Suggestion can be made-

1. To lessen the linguistic issue, Assam's rural districts and Dhakuakhana should have enough educational facilities.
2. Since tour guides are crucial in drawing tourists, both the public and commercial sectors should provide them with adequate education and training.

3. Well-trained individuals should work in the hotel, restaurant, transportation, and tourism industries.
4. Good network facilities, ATM and banking facilities, and reliable road links should be made available.
5. The expansion of the media's involvement in promoting Dhakuakhana as a travel destination on a global scale.
6. The Government of Assam's Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Forests should place a strong emphasis on making the Dhakuakhana sub-division one of India's top bird-watching destinations.

4. CONCLUSION

Planning trips to other cities, towns, or nations for religious reasons is considered tourism. By creating religious tourism circuits using a hub-and-spoke concept, tourism is developed and visitors are given a comprehensive travel experience. It is imperative to maintain a clean and well-maintained environment in the vicinity of places of worship. Since a significant portion of tourists are drawn to these locations for various reasons, such as researching ancient cultures, developing integrated infrastructure for tourism development, improving attention to minimizing environmental impact and preserving ecological balance, examining religious trusts, and creating the right institutional framework to promote tourism growth, marketing tourism destinations requires specialized training. It is clear from the current study that Dhakuakhana Sub-division has a lot of potential for tourism. Once more, there are a number of barriers to the growth and promotion of tourism in the research region. The region's socioeconomic development will benefit from an increase in both domestic and foreign tourists if these issues can be resolved with careful preparation.

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