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## TOURISM POTENTIALITY OF WEST BIRBHUM: A STUDY PROBLEMS & PROSPECT



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### Abstract:

Now a day, TOURISM getting importance day by day due to different socio-economic, cultural and educational factors, such as – It carries picture of our culture, hospitality and our attitude. The Indian Slogan “Athithi Devo Bhava ” means guests are like GOD. So for high hospitality of foreign and local guests, tourism is very much ideal. Besides our country is very much enigmatic thus for their comfort it is important. From educational point of view, it creates knowledge about the world. Touring India is the epitome of touring world. Both the domestic and international tourism increases the level of economic activities through the sale of products and services. Accelerate the development of the area, source of income to the residents and businessman. It is a way of tax earning and fiscal

policies through which government derives substantial income. It increases the social relation between tourists, guest and host. Social exchange takes place. His social background affects the social structure and mode of life of his destination. On the other hand, he in turn also affected by it and sometimes carries back home with some new habits and way of life. Tourism is the study of the Art and Archaeological milieu and adjusting with them by understanding them.



### Objectives:

Some basic objectives of this study are-

- To understand the need of the study of TOURISM in the view of the changing scenario.
- To explain the meaning and definition of TOURISM.
- To find out the difference between travel and tourism.
- To explain the definition of a visitor, tourist and excursionist.
- To identify those who all are included in the definition of tourist.
- To familiarize you with different perspectives on the study of tourism.
- To find out the tourism potentialities of this region to broaden the occupational base to

enhance livelihood sustainability.

- To point out the physiographic importance and interest of this region as a tourist spot.

### Methodology

The entire methodology of this fieldwork divided into three parts (1) Pre field (2) Field and (3) Post field survey.

#### Pre Field section of this paper includes-

- (i) Census records have been collected from different gram panchayets and Dubrajpur municipality.
- (ii) Online data collection and searching of papers and articles over tourism and Mama-Bhagne pahar, Bakreswar Shakti Pith and Hot Springs.
- (iii) Collection of previous literatures over Mama-Bhagne pahar and Bakreswar.

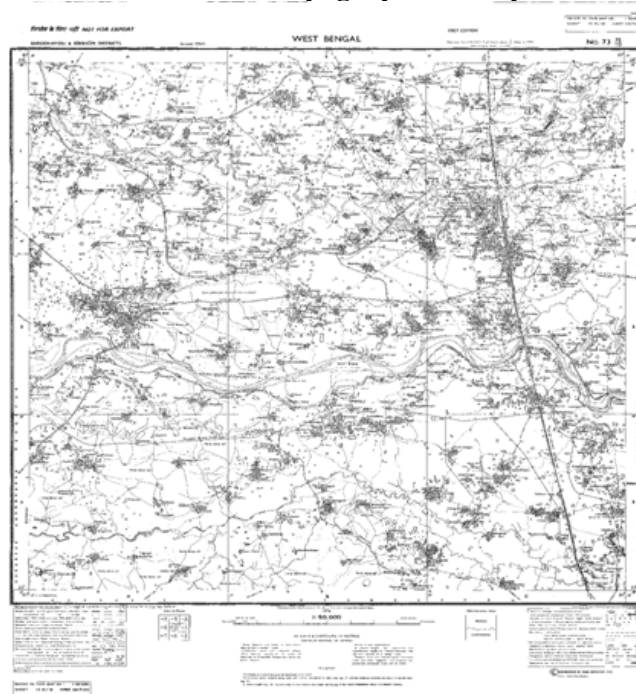
#### Field section includes direct observation of study area, in this part-

- (i) Observation of present situation of Mama-Bhagne pahar and Bakreswar Hot Springs.
- (ii) Rock identification.
- (iii) Interviewing of tourists as well as local people to know their perception about Mama-Bhagne pahar and Shakti Pith.
- (iv) Snapping photos of study area etc have been done.

#### In Post Field section is the analysis and interpretation part of the paper, in this part-

- (i) Preparation of map and topographical sheet of the study area.
- (ii) Tabulation of raw data using computer.
- (iii) Analysis and interpretation of those data through different charts and diagrams.
- (iv) Finding out of the problems that the hill facing recently.
- (iv) Giving some suggestion to its proper management and development of this beautiful tourist spot etc are included.

**Plate 1: Topographical Map**



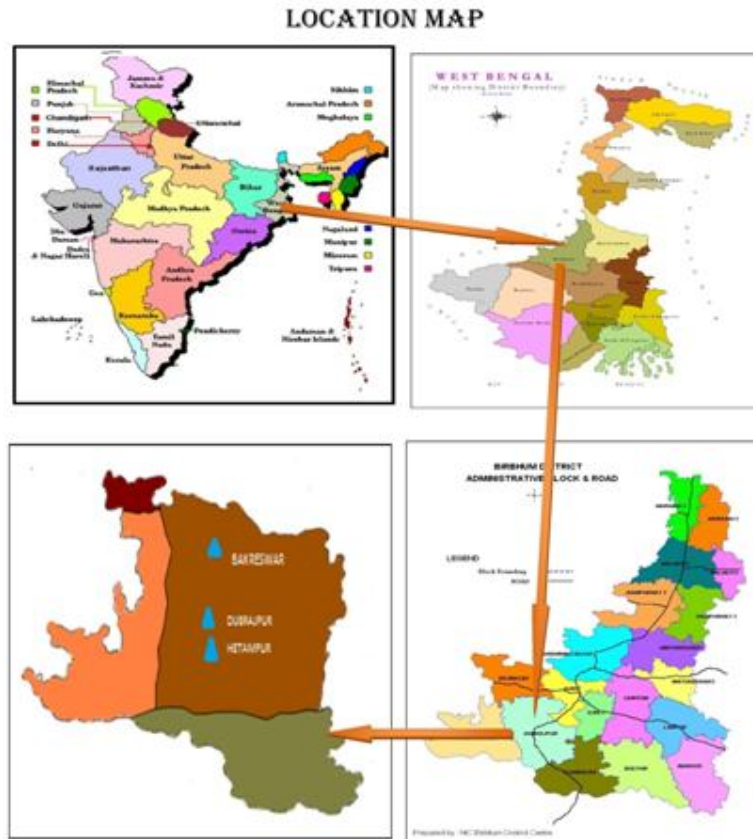


Plate 2: Location Map

Dubrajpur is one of the most emerging fast growing town of Birbhum districts. The town Dubrajpur has a very small market on which surrounding villages depend as there is no other good market in this area. People of Dubrajpur, Hetampur, Balijuri, and Jashpur do their business in this market. Though Dubrajpur has almost every facilities that a town should have but in case of medical facilities the town face a huge problem since the nearest functional hospital is at Siuri 18 km away from it. Dubrajpur is mainly famous for its Mama-Bhagne Pahar, a beautiful arrangement of igneous rocks in the southern part of the town.



**Plate 3: Location of Dubrajpur**

### History

There are different opinion of the historians about the origin of the name Dubrajpur, according to Atulchandra Sur the name Dubrajpur has came from the time of Mahabharata, during residing in forest the Pandavas came here and in this place Yuthistir was christened as Yuvraj (crown prince), so for this reason the place was named as Yuvrajpur, Yuvrajpur gradually become Dubrajpur.

According to Dr.Amalendu Mitra there were some austic people in north-western part of Rarh Bengal, they introduced cultivation of one type of paddy named Duraj, later they constructed a settlement named Durajpur and that Durajpur is presently named as Dubrajpur.

### Geography

Dubrajpur is located in the southern part of the Birbhum District (W.B). Latitudinal and Longitudinal extension of this town is  $23^{\circ}48'N$  and  $87^{\circ}22'60''E$  respectively. It has an average elevation of 77 meters (252 feet). River Sal is flows along the southern border of Dubrajpur though its far away from the main town and has no significance on this town.

### Transport & communication

The town is connected by Andal-Sainthiya loop line and Panagarh-Morgram highway. As connectivity of this town concerned the roadway is more preferable than railway. Only a few trains stop at the railway station, since Siuri sadar, only 18 km away is an important stop. Dubrajpur is deprived of regular rail services; interval of two consecutive trains is 5-6 hours, which very genuinely proves the lack of connectivity.

On the other hand the town has very good connectivity by roadway. Number of S.B.S.T.C, N.B.S.T.C and other public buses connect Dubrajpur with every corner of West Bengal. Even in case of connection with Kolkata (202 km away) the roadway is more accepted than the railway because there are only two trains join Dubrajpur and Kolkata while the buses **are available in a** gap between half or one hour. Other big towns like Asansol (80 km), Durgapur (47 km), Siuri (18 km), Bolpur (45 km) are also connected with this town by regular bus services.

### Mama-Bhagne pahar as a tourist spot Origin

If we look at the constitutes of Mama-Bhagne pahar we will see that it is constructed by number of igneous rocks, boulders, stones and pebbles which clearly indicate that there have been a plain volcanic eruption millions of years ago that led to the formation of these oddly-blocks of lava, which got solidified into granite.

### History in myths and literature

The Mama-Bhagne pahar inspires a strange sense of gap between myth and reality. There are number of stories on the origin of Mama-Bhagne pahar in myths and literature. According to one group of people it could be the result of the efforts of the redoubtable Ram, who, having decided to wage war against Ravana, found that he could not get his troops to the other side of the waters. He took up his chariot and swiftly reached the Himalayas to pick up some stones with which a bridge could be built for his men. As he was gliding over Birbhum, his horses, quite understandably, started with fright. The chariot overturned, splattering the landscape with some of the rocks Ram was carrying.

Another group believes that Mama-Bhagne could have been the handiwork of the temperamental Shiva, who, on discovering that his consort, Sati, had immolated herself, did what he does best. Notorious for performing the Tandava at the drop of a hat, Shiva went on a rampage with Sati on his shoulders. His movement not only fragmented and scattered Sati's charred body, but also the land, breaking it up into the rocks that now constitute the Mama-Bhagne pahar.

### The Mama-Bhagne Pahar

**Mama-Bhagne** Pahar or hill is not exactly looks like a hill but if we describe it from geographical point of view we must have to appreciate it as a hill. From an aerial view it seems as some huge rock boulders scattered over, slightly lifted open field, that possesses all the features of hillock.

If we describe Mama-Bhagne hill as a tourist spot, the main attraction of this hill is the rocks present in this hill and obviously the balancing act of those intrusive hypabyssal rocks. There is a Siva temple in the entrance of Mama-Bhagne pahar locally famous as Pahareswar temple (Fig. 2.1).



**Plate 5.2 Dubrajpur Temple**



**Plate 5.3 Lord Pahareswar**

The igneous rock that is worshipped as god Siva in this temple has a height of 1.83mts and its perimeter is 9.15mts (Fig 2.2). There is a park also in the entrance of that hill constructed. Dubrajpur municipality especially for a child which's entry fee is onlyRs.3 per head (Fig 2.3).



**Plate 5.4 The park**



**Plate 5.5 Stair cases**

For convenience of tourist and to better supervision of that hill numbers of cemented staircases have been constructed here (Fig 2.4). If we step forward from the Siva temple, we will see number of igneous rocks of different shape and size.

The rocks are arranged so wonderfully that really surprise us (Fig 2.5), cave like features are also can be seen here as rocks have touched each other from different angle (Fig. 2.6). The rocks which are consider as Mama and Bhagne (uncle and nephew) have a height of 4.88mts and 5.5mts respectively (Fig 2.10). The compositions of these two rocks are still in vague, according to Sri Durgadas Mazumdar , one side of these rocks is composed of Granite rock while other is composed by gneiss. The topmost rock of this hill has a height of 20mts. The most common factor of that area that attracts a geographer is successive weathering on the rocks (Fig 2.7 & 2.8). From the geographical point of view the hillock canbe designated as a”**tor** “.



**Plate 5.6 Weathering on Rocks**



**Plate 5.7 Crack On Rock**



**Plate 5.8 The Mama & Bhagne Rocks**

**Darvesh Ashram-** Another attraction of Dubrajpur that is Darvesh Ashram famous for Darvesh Saints. This ashram has a number of sacred cemetery of saints.

## 5.2- HETAMPUR

### 5.2.1 Introduction

A village (J.L. No. 143) in Dubrajpur police station, is situated 14 miles to the south-west of Suri. It is a historical heritage and has a number of good tanks surrounded by tall palm trees. It has some rice mills also.

### 5.2.2 History

The earlier name of the place was Raghampur, named after Raghav Roy, who was a Zamindar of the place under the Royal Kings of Rajnagar. Murshid Quli Khan, Nawab of Bengal, came, on the request of the Rajnagar kings, to tame the rebellious Raghav Roy. The latter was defeated and he fled. Thereafter, Hatem Khan became Zamindar, of this place and it was renamed Hatempur. With the passage of time it became Hetampur. It is said that Hafeez Khan, a soldier, had an affair with a royal princess of Delhi. He fled from Delhi along with the princess and was provided refuge by Hatem Khan. He followed the latter as jaigirdar of Hetampur. It has the residence of Raja Ranjan Chakravarti Bahadur, the owner of the former Hetampur Raj. The founder of the Raj family Sri Muralidhar Chakravarti was a Srotriya Brahman. His grandson Radha Nath collected a huge fortune and purchased the Hetampur property in 1796 presumably on the sale of the estate of the Raja of Birbhum. Raja Rama Ranjan succeeded to the estate in 1862 when he was 11, and the estate continued to be managed by the court of Wards during his minority. He got the titles of Raja in 1874 and Raja Bahadur in 1877. He built a college, a High School, a Sanskrit tol and a charitable dispensary there for the benefit of the villagers and they still cater to their needs.

### 5.2.3 Geography

From geographical point of view, Hetampur is situated on the extended part of Chotonagpur Plateau. It is located in southern part of Dubrajpur and extending from about 23°46'55''N to 23.781936° and 87°24'12''E to 87.403346°E. The average elevation of it is about 55 metres. As it is the part of Chotonagpur Plateau, thus lateritic gravelly soil with the abundance of igneous rock is predominant here.

### 5.2.4 Educational Background

It has many educational institutions that show a good educational background of this village. The important are –

- i. Schools - Hetampur Raj High School, Hetampur Girls' High School
- ii. College - Krishna Chandra College
- iii. Other - Hetampur Rajbati Primary Teachers Training Institute.

### 5.2.5 Transport and Communication

As this village is located very close to the Dubrajpur town, thus its transport and communication network is strongly related and dependent on the Dubrajpur. Like the Dubrajpur town it is connected by Andal-Sainthiya loop line and Panagarh-Morgram highway. As connectivity of this town concerned the roadway is more preferable than railway. Hetampur has no railway station, but it is connected with Dubrajpur railway station via roadway. Only a few trains stop at the railway station, since Siuri sadar, only 18 km away is an important stop. It is deprived of regular rail services; interval of two consecutive trains is 5-6 hours, which very genuinely proves the lack of connectivity.

On the other hand the town has very good connectivity by roadway. Number of S.B.S.T.C, N.B.S.T.C and other public buses connect Hatempur with every corner of West Bengal. Even in case of connection with Kolkata (202 km away) the roadway is more accepted than the railway because there are only two trains join Dubrajpur and Kolkata while the buses **are available in a** gap between half or one hour. Other big towns like Asansol (76 km), Durgapur (43 km), Siuri (22 km), Bolpur (41 km) are also connected with this town by regular bus services.

### 5.2.6 Attraction of Hetampur Rajbari

The Rajbari was built in the shape of a castle with 999 doors which has given it the name *Hetampur HajarDuari*. (*hajar* is one thousand in Bengali, *duari* means doored). Hetampur Rajbari has been used by film directors such as Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, Tarun Majumdar, Raja Sen, Dilip Roy, Sandip Ray, and others in many Bengali films – Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne, Abhijan, Mrigaya, and Ganadebata.





**Plate 5.9 Hetampur Rajbari**

***Temples:***

Hetampur has many interesting terracotta temples in various styles of architecture. During late 1940s till about 1952 Indian artist Mukul Dey conducted detailed photographic survey of Birbhum-Bardhaman group of terracotta temples. He visited Hetampur and photo recorded the **Gol-Mandir**, the **Chandranath Shiva temple** and the **Dewanji temples** here. Chandranatha Siva Mandir in Hetampur of Dubrajpur, Birbhum built in 1847 is Octagonal pinnacled - Naba Ratna type with terracotta on three sides. Dewanji Mandir nearby is tightly ridged Rekha type with small terracotta facade of 19th century Birbhum-Bardhaman style having rich terracotta on two sides. Out of these three temples, the **Gol-Mandir** temple is no longer in existence at Hetampur. Its memory survives only in the photographs by Mukul Dey. A portrait of Queen Victoria, European nuns and priests form the theme of decoration on a 19th century temple in Hetampur.



**Plate 5.10 Gol Mandir**

***Fair:***

Bipracharan Chakravarty of the Hetampur Raj family started a Saraswati Puja at Hetampur. His grandson, Ramranjan, started a 3-days fair on the occasion. The fair continues on the grounds of the Hetampur Rajbari. Gurusaday Dutt had once presented raibeshe bratachari during the fair. Many renowned personalities were invited to attend the fair and some of them came. Hetampur Royal Theatre and Ranjan Opera had their inaugural shows at the fair.

**5.3 BAKESHWAR**

**5.3.1 Introduction**

A village (J.L. No. 42) or rather a city of temples of Dubrajpur police station, it is about 12 miles south-west of Suri and 6 miles north-west of Dubrajpur railway station on the Andal-Sainthia branch of the Eastern Railway. It is a famous Saivite pilgrim centre, hallowed by the memory of Aghoribaba, a tantric sage. It is a sakta pithasthan. Apart from the temple of Siva, there is a temple of Mahishamardini here, the latter being the sakti of the former. It has a number of sulphurous hot springs, besides a few cold springs. They all discharge into a rivulet which joins a small stream called the Papahara river flowing near by. A large number of pilgrims visit the place on the Sivaratri day every year when a big fair is held which continue for seven or eight days.

### 5.3.2 History :

The name Bakreshwar is a compound of two words: *bakra*, meaning “curve” or “deformity,” and *ishwar* meaning “lord.” According to local legend, it was in the vicinity of the Bakreshwar Mandir that a crippled sage, named Ashtabakra (“eight curves”) Muni, intensely meditated upon Lord Shiva for 10,000 years. Profoundly moved by this ardent display of penance, Lord Shiva not only cured his beloved devotee of physical deformity, but further declared that those who visited Bakreshwar and venerated Ashtabakra before him would be graced with a surplus of boons. Corresponding with this myth, there are two *lingams* housed within the Shiva temple. The larger *lingam* is referred to as Ashtabakra, and the smaller one is called Bakreshwar. Although specified with different names, both of these *lingams* are perceived as physical manifestations of Lord Shiva which, by extension, function as conduits of spiritual power through which the god can be communed.



Plate 5.11 Shiva Lingam

It is said that once the renowned sages Subrita and Lomas were invited to the marriage ceremony of Lakshmi. At the reception centre, however, Lomas was welcomed first. At this Subrita become angry and left the place. His anger was so much that his limbs assumed ungraceful curves in eight places and he came to be known as Astabakra. Thus disfigured, he arrived at Benares to worship Siva. He was told that his prayers could only be fulfilled if he offered them at an undefined spot named Gupta-Kasi (the hidden Benares) in the distant kingdom of Gauda. Astabakra then came to Bakreswar and worshipped Siva for ten thousand years. The god was then pleased and declared that whoever worshipped Astabakra first and Siva afterward would get an endless stores of blessings. Viswakarma was directed to erect a temple on the eastern bank of the river Bakreswar which still exists. But the one seen is of modern architecture.

### 5.3.3 Geography

From geographical point of view, Bakreswar is situated on the extended part of Chotonagpur Plateau. It is located in north-west part of Dubrajpur and extending from about 23°53'N to 23.88°N and 87°22'E to 87.37°E. The average elevation of it is about 55 metres. As it is the part of Chotonagpur Plateau, thus lateritic gravelly soil with the abundance of igneous rock is predominant here.

#### 5.3.4 Attraction of Bakreswar

Historically a focal point of religious pilgrimage, the majority of Hindus travelling to Bakreshwar come for its famous Shiva Mandir. Although the presence of a *shakti pith* and its corresponding *mandir* (Hindu temple) technically make Bakreshwar a two-temple complex, the veneration of Lord Shiva observably assumes a position of elevated prominence. The important attraction of Bakreswar are-

##### *Mahishamardini Mandir*

Located close to Bakreshwar's preeminent Shiva temple, the Mahishamardini Mandir is discernible by the bright orange *shikhara* towering above it. This *mandir* can be reached from the main entrance of Bakreshwar Road, which first brings you to the Shiva temple. From here, a short walk heading west along the *jagati* (raised platform upon which a temple rests) will take you to the goddess temple. If you wish to go straight to the Mahishamardini Mandir, there is also another entrance located on the southern side of the complex, which provides direct access. There you will ascend a flight of steps and enter the orange and yellow gate which leads to the platform directly in front of the *mandir* and *darshan* with its south-facing *murti*. The temple's wooden double doors are notable for being ornamented with six hand-carved friezes. Lakshmi, Saraswati, Ganesha, and Kartik are separately depicted in each of the upper four sections. Below these, the tripartite assemblage of coconut and palm tree in a water pot, broadly connoting "good luck," is rendered as a matching pair. This three-fold symbol is simply called *ghatam*, meaning "pot." In Bengali iconography, the goddess Durga is often accompanied by this cluster of four deities who are commonly referred to as her "children." Mahishamardini is one of many names for Durga and although the *murti* which is enshrined here depicts her unattended, the presence of her typical retinue is acknowledged with these carved images.



Plate 5.13 Mahishamardini



Plate 5.12 Shiva Mandir

A few feet away from these doors is the temple *harikhat*, a sacrificial device employed in the immolation of goats. The *harikhat* is essentially a wooden fork into which a goat's neck is placed and secured with a pin. The animal is then easily decapitated with a single chop from the *khadga* (ritual sword) in the sacrificial rite known as *boli*. This *harikhat* is painted bright red, the color of *shakti*—or feminine power. The name of the goddess revered here, Mahishamardini, is a well-known epithet of the goddess Durga. It is composed from the Sanskrit words *mahisha*, meaning “buffalo,” and *mardini*, “the slayer.” This particular appellation thus refers to the goddess' mythological role as destroyer of the buffalo demon named Mahishasura or Mahisha. Within the *garbhagriha* of this *mandir*, a small shrine, carved from marble, rests atop a rectangular pedestal and houses the sacred image of Mahishamardini. This *murti* is a cast metal sculpture in high relief depicting the goddess, accompanied by her lion *vahana* (animal vehicle), thrusting a spear through the heart of the demon Mahisha. The goddess is ten-armed, symbolically expressing the omnipresent nature of her power; but aside from the spear wielded with one hand, she is otherwise without her typical assortment of weapons. Holes in the nine remaining clenched fists allow visiting devotees to add a personal touch to their *puja* by placing a miniature tin weapon—available in the nearby shops on Bakreshwar Road—in one of her hands as an offering. The *murti* itself is not very large, perhaps standing about three feet tall altogether including the attached base and background. According to a temple Brahmin, this *murti* is *ashtadhātu*—made from an alloy of eight metals that have astrological significance. As with every *shakti pith* I have visited, I gave offerings to the local goddess as a gesture of gratitude. With the assistance of my Brahmin friend, Partha Paitandi, I gave a lengthy and thorough *puja* at Bakreshwar; beginning first with the two sacred *lingams* of the Shiva temple, then the local “protector” Botukbhairav, and finally to Mahishamardini. Partha recited Sanskrit mantras as we ritually offered the goddess an assortment of incense, flowers, *sindoor* (red pigment powder), decorative bangles, fruit, and libations of water. The evening before this *puja*, I was asked to choose a weapon to place in one of the goddess' hands as a symbolic offering. For me, this was an easy decision: I chose the *khadga* (ritual decapitation sword), preferred weapon of my *ishta devi* (patron goddess), Kali, which through various synchronicities has become a personal symbol of my spiritual path. A photograph of Mahishamardini holding the *khadga* I offered her accompanies this essay.

### Shakti Pith

The temple dedicated to Mahishamardini is not only the home of an *ashtadhātu murti*, but the forty-seventh *shakti pith* traditionally listed in various manuscripts such as the *Mahapithanirupana*. Like every other *shakti pith* that I have visited, the presence of the locally-revered goddess at

Bakreshwar is expressed in a two-fold manner: revealed and concealed. While most of the religious pilgrims visiting this temple come to venerate the *ashtadhatu murti*, there is more to this place than what initially meets the eye. It is within the pedestal upon which the *murti* rests that the source of this locale's designation as a *shakti pith* resides. Within this *mandir*, a metal gate creates a buffer where the Brahmins can perform their rites in front of the *murti* while separated from the throngs of devotees who periodically arrive in large numbers; either on holidays, or as groups completing a temple circuit. During periods of relaxed temple activity, or upon special request (often accompanied with *baksheesh*—an encouraging monetary tip), one can enter the *garbhagriha* and approach the *murti*.

Since I stayed in Bakreshwar during an “off season” while the hot springs were undergoing renovation, temple activity was relatively lax and I was able to enter the inner sanctum on several occasions. The first time I visited this *mandir*, a Brahmin led me through a side door and directly into the *garbhagriha*. While I was offering *pranam* (salutations) to the *murti*, he directed my attention to a circular hole, a little over a foot in diameter, on top of the marble pedestal. This hole provides direct access to the *adi rup* (original form) of the local goddess: by placing a hand inside, one can touch the goddess' *bhru moddo*, or the space between her eyebrows. Reaching in, I felt a stone formation; its outer surface is smooth, round, and wet from the libations regularly poured into it. In the centre of this hollow circular space, the rock juts upward. Sliding my hand along the surface of this projection, I was able to discern that it resembles a crescent with rounded edges. In many popular images of Hindu goddesses, the place between the deity's eyebrows is ornamented with a lunar crescent. This is not merely an aesthetic embellishment emphasizing the goddess' transcendent beauty, but also symbolizes the power she wields over time itself—attributable to the moon appearing as a crescent shape throughout its repeating cycles of waxing and waning. The obvious correlation between the shape of this *adi rup* and the recurrent moon motif leads me to believe that such commonly heard claims as this temple housing Sati's “third eye,” “forehead,” or “mind” are the result of misconceptions pertaining to a relatively obscure body part. My tactile experience confirmed that the designation of “portion between the eyebrows” found in the *Mahapithanirupana* is correct. Within the Mahishamardini Mandir, a stone formation corresponding in shape to the ornamented portion of flesh between the Mahadevi's eyebrows, her *bhru moddo*, is enshrined and venerated.

### **Hot Springs**

Bakreshwar is the site of several geothermal hot springs, some of which are believed to have healing properties. Throughout its history, people suffering from a spectrum of afflictions have sought relief by coming here to bathe in these mineral-rich waters. Many of the smaller springs are bounded by concrete retaining walls, in a quasi-rectangular configuration resembling a stylized *yoni*, with descending steps on one open side permitting access to the water. The two largest stepwells are surrounded with a gated wall and function as the primary “public baths” of Bakreshwar. The unique geothermal activity not only effects the enclosed springs, but much of the water found in this area. Locals and visitors swim in the lake on the complex's southern side throughout the cool season as its water remains continuously warm. During my first night at Bakreshwar, I waded across a creek (always advisable when in an unfamiliar place!) and was surprised to find the water pleasantly heated, despite the air temperature being cold enough for me to see my breath. A painted sign on the main temple gate lists the following eight springs:

1. Paphara ganga.
2. Baitarini ganga.
3. Khar kunda : The water in this spring is of 66 degrees Celsius.
4. Bhairav kunda : The water in this spring is of 65 degrees Celsius.
5. Agni kunda : Agni means fire. The water in this spring is at 80 degrees Celsius. It is also rich in many minerals of sodium, potassium, calcium, silicates, chlorides, bicarbonates and

sulphates which are said to have medicinal properties. It might also contain traces of radioactive elements.

6. Dudh kunda : Dudh means milk. The water of this spring attains a dull white hue during early morning probably due to ozone concentration. The water in this spring is at 66 degrees Celsius.
7. Surya kunda : Surya means sun. The water in this spring is of 61 degrees Celsius.
8. Shwet ganga.
9. Brahma kunda.
10. Amrita kunda.

### Shwet Ganga

On the northern side of the complex, directly in front of the Shiva *mandir*, is the Shwet Ganga. One of Bakreshwar's larger pools, it is rectangular in shape and walled round with red brick. This is a highly-frequented *kund* as it is routinely used by pilgrims for ritual purification baths prior to entering the *mandir* for *puja*. The water of the Shwet Ganga is not only perfectly lukewarm, but remarkably clean since it is not stagnant. Grates built into the walls of this *kund* allow the water to freely flow through it.



Plate 5.14 Shwet Ganga

### Agni Kunda

Most remarkable spring is the Agni Kund, or "Fire Pond." Its water is very hot, reaching temperatures that approach 200 degrees Fahrenheit. The steps of this *kund* have been sealed off and a protective wall surrounds it. A temple priest told me that as a boy, he once witnessed the removal of a scalded, dead human body from the Agni Kund. Apparently, this *kund* has been the site of occasional suicides where people have leaped over the wall and plunged directly into its boiling depths. Adjacent to the Agni Kund is a building which houses a government-run laboratory. Upon inquiry, I learned that fluctuating concentrations of various gasses in the water are monitored by this lab, and the resultant data is used to detect seismic changes. During my daily visits to the Mahishamardini Mandir, I would walk past the Agni Kund where I regularly observed a man fetching water from it using a length of rope attached to a metal bucket. This pail was then briefly put aside, allowing the water to cool before it was poured into one of the plastic bottles he had arranged on a folding table. Calling out to passersby, he offered draughts of this water for a few rupees per drink. Naturally curious, I asked him what the purpose of drinking this water could be. Rubbing his stomach, he informed me that it was an invigorating tonic for the whole body and implored me to try a sip, free of charge. Despite his enthusiastic endorsement of this water as a

salubrious elixir, I had no way of knowing if it was indeed safe to consume, and respectfully declined his offer.

### **Dudh Kunda (Saubhagya Kunda)**

The word *dudh* means “milk” and the water of this smaller *kunda* has the unique quality of taking on a pale white color during the early morning hours before sunrise. I was not able to determine exactly why this phenomenon occurs, but suspect it has something to do with the interplay of a high ozone concentration and minerals present in the water.



**Plate 5.15 Dudh Kunda**

### **Brahma Kunda**

It is said that the god Brahma looked upon his daughter with lustful eyes and sin came to the knowledge of Siva. Brahma was then asked to be penance for his sin. He then went on a pilgrimage to Bakreswar, bathed in the stream, adored Siva and was relieved of his sin.

### **Surya Kunda**

It is said that once the sage Narada in course of his travel, arrived at the foot of Mount Vindhya singing the praises of the rival hill of Sumeru. Vindhya became angry and raised his crest so high as to abstract the rays of the sun. The distressed Surya (sun) then made a pilgrimage to this place, and worshipped Siva for restoration of his light. Under pressure from Siva, Vindhya was forced to subside to his former height.

### **Jiban Kunda**

It is said that in old days there lived an aged and pious couple named Sarva Charumati. Having no kith or kin they retired to a forest worshipping god there. But one day a tiger appeared and devoured Sarva partially. The poor wife then requested Siva to restore her husband to life and was directed to collect and carry the bones of the dead husband to Bakreswar and then throw them into this spring. Mothers, whose children die young, still bathe in this spring in the hope of lengthening the lives of their children.

### **Bhairab Kunda**

It is said that Brahma one day asserted his equality with Siva on grounds that both of them have equal number (five) of heads. Siva became angry and tore off one of his matted locks from which a deity Batuka Bhairaba emerged. Siva directed him to cut off Brahma's foremost head with his finger. When this was done the severed head clung tightly to Batuka Bhairaba's fingers, and pilgrimage to different places could not separate it. The unhappy Batuka Bhairaba then arrived at

Kasi and began to pray. His prayer was partly granted as the head dropped off but an unhealing would stayed on his finger. He then came to Bakreswar and took bath in the spring which is named after him. He also put his finger in the waters of Papa Hara (sin-destroyer), i.e. in that part of the river Bakreswar which lies eastward of the spring.

### **Khar Kunda**

It is the smallest spring here. It is said that in Satya Yuga the ocean was drunk up by Maharshi Agastya. The ocean, however, got back its waters only after a long course of bathing and ablutions to Siva on the banks of this spring.

### **The Cremation Ground**

A narrow, unpaved road beginning near the main temple complex guides you along a winding path flanked on opposite sides with a motley arrangement of grave markers. As you approach the cremation ground's main entrance, a small roadside temple presents itself. The phrase "JAY MA SMASHANA KALI" (Victory to Mother Kali of the Cremation Ground) is written above its doorway in bright red Bengali script. Housed within this shrine, a *murti* of Kali depicts her standing upon her husband—Lord Siva—in characteristic pose, brandishing a sword and holding a severed head with her left hands while her right hands give the *mudras* (symbolic hand gestures) of *abhaya* (fear not) and *varada* (conferring boons). Although essentially depicting the dark mother goddess in her popular form, a few macabre embellishments have been added here to emphasize the particularly fierce nature of her *smashana* (cremation ground) aspect. Wavy red lines, flowing from the corners of her mouth around her cheeks and down her neck, have been painted to represent oozing blood. On Kali's left and right sides, two semi-nude female *shaktis* (human embodiments of transcendental feminine force) gaze upward toward her as they dance, both of them smeared with gore and feasting on human flesh. Bakreshwar's sacred burning ground is separated from the surrounding area by a border of tombstones and a brook running along the side of it. Cremation here differs from others I have observed in that a network of connected trenches is employed to contain the improvised wooden pyres. The resultant fire, burning at ground level, is thus easily managed by the Dom who use bamboo poles to manipulate the wood and break the body down as it is slowly incinerated. Pieces of wood which have not burned away are removed, put aside, then later incorporated into fresh pyres. To be cremated at Bakreshwar is considered particularly auspicious, so it follows that this burning ground is a highly active one. Dead bodies routinely arrive, not just from the local community, but also from various locations throughout West Bengal, and even as far away as the neighboring states of Bihar and Jharkhand. During my daily visits, I often witnessed up to five pyres burning at the same time. The soil here is permeated with ash, imparting it with an overall gray cast, and where the river runs directly alongside the cremation ground, its water is almost black. Much of my time at Bakreshwar was spent interacting with the local Dom who seemed just as eager to hear stories of my life in America as I was to learn about their unique occupation. The cordial hospitality of the Dom contrasted with the immediate gloomy environment. While seated amidst blazing funeral pyres crackling all about, I found myself regularly being offered tea and snacks. Together, we would also frequently indulge in the more ill-advised pleasures of smoking *bidis* (tobacco-leaf wrapped cigarettes) and *ganja* (Sanskrit word for cannabis), as well as quaffing copious amounts of *bangla*—a local ricebased moonshine. I have many fond memories of the Bakreshwar *smashana*; despite it being a place of death, I mostly recall the friends I made, along with the laughter and good times we shared. An event in particular still stands out in my mind as being one of the most distinctive experiences of my travels thus far. Early one morning, I visited the *smashana* where I encountered a small group of Dom gathered together near a single burning pyre. One of the men greeted me and was excited to find I could converse in Bengali. He brushed off a tombstone and offered me a seat beside him to talk. A *chai wallah* (tea seller), standing nearby with a kettle in his hand, was immediately called over. My new friend then pointed at the funeral pyre (with a clearly recognizable



human corpse burning on top of it), said a few words, and the tea pot was placed directly into the fire. As we chatted over that warm cup of *chai*, I thought of how bizarre this entire scenario would seem to most folks I know back home. Death is an inescapable aspect of life which people generally confront only when forced to do so. For most of us, it remains safely hidden away until it ultimately appears— seemingly out of nowhere—to rear its ugly head before once again returning to the shadows. For the Dom however, there is nothing at all unusual or shocking about the atmosphere of the cremation ground. Dealing directly with the grim reality of death is just another day on the job.



Plate 5.17 Shiva Lingam

### Other Places of Interest

Now a relatively modest temple complex, Bakreshwar once received royal patronage and this prior state of affluence is evident in its surroundings. Scattered throughout the vicinity are hundreds of small concrete temples, housing in-built Shiva *lingams*, which have fallen into varying states of decrepitude. The extensive range and number of these *mandirs* suggests that a sizable priesthood was once employed here, charged with ritual veneration and maintenance of these shrines when they were still active. Close to the main *mandir* is a *panchamukhi asana* (seat of five skulls), an area specifically constructed for the performance of *tantrik sadhana* (ritual practices). Although appearing to be a nondescript red concrete platform, underneath of it the skulls of five different animals, including one human, are buried in a carefully arranged manner. According to *tantrik* belief, the power of *sadhana* is increased when performed on a *panchamukhi asana* and I was strongly cautioned against casually sitting here. Bakreshwar is also home of the Bashudeb Mission International, a philanthropic religious institution founded by the highly-esteemed Bengali Shaiva *sadhu*, Bashudeb Paramahansa. In the mission's courtyard, a magnificent "Lingam of Fire" towers at nearly eleven feet tall and weighing around 8 tons. It is carved from a single mass of imported white Carrara marble and embellished with flames containing stylized *yonis* shapes. Throughout its long history, Bakreshwar has been regarded foremost as a place of healing. People suffering from diverse ailments have journeyed here, seeking physical respite in the hot springs and divine grace through the temples. With an imminent renaissance on the horizon, Bakreshwar is now entering its own state of convalescence. Enhanced by extensive renovations and developments, the influx of religious pilgrims coupled with a blossoming health-conscious tourism industry will bring with it increased interest and funding. Difficult work lies ahead, but a feeling of excited anticipation permeates the air as Bakreshwar begins a phase which local residents hope will not only restore, but eclipse its former glory.

### Problem and Prospects of Tourism in Dubrajpur, Hetampur and Bakreswar

Although the above three places have high potentialities of Tourism but still they are facing several problems. These problems are discussed below.

#### DUBRAJPUR

The main problems that the hill is facing recently is just due to lack of proper planning and governmental as well as local people's uninteresting activities about this beautiful, unique spot. The problems are-

1. As the settlements are encroaching the hill .This is destroying the scenic beauty and uniqueness of this place.
2. The rocks are being defaced by local businessmen for advertisements and also by tourists who are imprinting their names on those rocks.
3. People who come for picnic purpose here create pollution as they use plastics and leave them in and around the hills.
4. Two huge water tank also exploiting beauty of this place.
5. Though the newly constructed park is an additional attraction of that tourist spot, but the main attraction of that geophysical unit can be over looked if people will give more importance to that park rather than the hill.
6. Small pebbles/stones are being illegally taken away by the locals.
7. Lack of hotels, lodge and other infrastructural facilities at Dubrajpur resists the development of Tourism.
8. Lack of proper nourishment and conservation of the scenic beauty of the Mama- Bhagne Pahar by the local government.

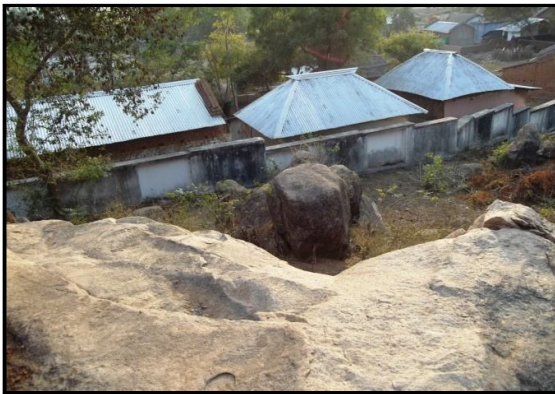


Plate 6.1 Growing Settlement Towards The Hill



Plate 6.2 Advertisement On Rock



Plate 6.3 Pollution By Tourists



Plate 6.4 Stolen Stone

### HETAMPUR

It is also facing the same problems like Dubrajpur. The basic problems are –

1. Lack of big market that can meet the need of tourists. Besides Hetampur has no hospital facility.
2. From environmental point of view, poultry farming is creating huge pollution. For that reason local people also facing the problem of Bees.
3. Lack of proper hotels, lodges and other facilities, local roads, these are creating huge problem.

### Bakreswar

The economy of Bakreswar totally depends on Tourism. Although tourists visit this place throughout year, yet, the time period between Septembers to February is the peak period for Tourism practices. Although this place is very much popular as a tourist spot but this place is facing different problems, such as-

1. Lack of electrification in different places such as bus stand etc.
2. Lack of sanitation facilities in the whole area.
3. Lack of draining facilities of the water of hot springs. Although we are paying 5 Rs per head for taking bath in these hot springs yet the authorities are not taking any step for the draining system as well as for the conservation of this area.
4. The water of hot spring passing through the cremation ground via a drain and meet with Bakreswar River but here the waste materials of this cremation ground pollute the water of this hot springs as well as the water of river.
5. The Helium Gas coming from the hot springs pollute the environment to some extent.
6. The waste materials of PUJA and TOURISTS are accumulated and deposited beside the



ponds, river and in other areas that also pollute the environment.

**Plate 6.5 Pollution Of Hot Spring Water**

**Plate 6.6 Pollution By Tourists**

7. Lack of proper transportation and communication system. Rail transportation system is totally absent here and buses are very much limited.
8. For some areas such as – Agni Kunda, Brahma Kunda, Khar Kunda ; special securite is very much essential because already four people have been died in the very hot water of this springs.
9. Lacks of proper medical facilities, hospitals are very strong here.

**Prospects**

To mitigate the problems related with environment and other aspects of the above three place, the government of Dubrajpur C.D Block should take some basic measures, such as –

1. The settlement area should be restricted away from the fringe of the Mama-Bhagne Pahar, as well as the advertisements on the rocks should be stopped to maintain the scenic beauty of the rocks.
2. Local authority should take some actions against the pollution caused by Picnickers. The picnic spot should be demarcated in a particular area rather in this Pahar. This hilly area should be always well decorated that it can attract people more than the nearby park.
3. There should be ticket system for visitors , that can brings sufficient money for the maintenance of this area as well as provide employment opportunities to the local people.
4. Illegal removal of of rocks should be restricted. The infrastructure of Dubrajpur in terms of hotels, lodges should be enhanced.
5. Availability of big market, hospital in Dubrajpur, Hetampur should be enhanced. Same problem has been also seen in case of Bakreswar also.
6. For increasing further importance of Bakreswar, the lodging, hotel and other facilities such as well transportation system should be increased.
7. Proper sanitation should be developed because people doing toilet and latrine here and there that pollute the local environment as well as decrease the attraction of people about this area as beauty and clearness always attracts people.
8. Proper drainage system should be developed for passing the water of hot springs as well as mixing of waste material of cremation ground with this water and also river water should be stopped. There should take some programme of regular disposal of waste material of cremation ground, clean the channel of Bakreswar river by cutting the bed of the river.
9. The Helium gas coming from spring should be conserved and prevent it from free mixing with environment.
10. The PUJA materials should be deposited in a particular demarcated area but not in everywhere.
11. Light posts at different parts of this area should be given, which is very much essential according to the local people.

➤ **Remedial measures-**

**(a) Regulation And Accreditation**

Because the regulation of tourism is poorly implemented or nonexistent, ecologically destructive green washed operations like underwater hotels, helicopter tours, and wildlife theme parks are categorized as tourism along with canoeing, camping, photography, and wildlife observation. The failure to acknowledge responsible, low impact tourism puts these companies at a competitive disadvantage.

Many environmentalists have argued for a global standard of accreditation, differentiating tourism companies based on their level of environmental commitment. A national or international regulatory board would enforce accreditation procedures, with representation from various groups including governments, hotels, tour operators, travel agents, guides, airlines, local authorities, conservation organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The decisions of the board would be sanctioned by governments, so that non-compliant companies would be legally required to disassociate themselves from the use of the tourism brand.

Crinion suggests a Green Stars System, based on criteria including a management plan, benefit for the local community, small group interaction, education value and staff training. Tourists who consider their choices would be confident of a genuine tourism experience when they see the higher star rating.

In addition, environmental impact assessments could be used as a form of accreditation. Feasibility is evaluated from a scientific basis, and recommendations could be made to optimally plan infrastructure, set tourist capacity, and manage the ecology. This form of accreditation is more sensitive to cite specific conditions.

### **(B) Guidelines and Education**

An environmental protection strategy must address the issue of tourists removed from the cause-and-effect of their actions on the environment. More initiatives should be carried out to improve their awareness, sensitize them to environmental issues, and care about the places they visit. Tour guides are an obvious and direct medium to communicate awareness. With the confidence of tourists and intimate knowledge of the environment, they can actively discuss conservation issues. A tour guide training program in Costa Rica's Tortuguero National Park has helped mitigate negative environmental impacts by providing information and regulating tourists on the parks' beaches used by nesting endangered sea turtles.

### **(C) Small Scale, Slow Growth And Local Control**

The underdevelopment theory of tourism describes a new form of imperialism by multinational corporations that control ecotourism resources. These corporations finance and profit from the development of large scale tourism that causes excessive environmental degradation, loss of traditional culture and way of life, and exploitation of local labour. In Zimbabwe and Nepal's Annapurna region, where underdevelopment is taking place, more than 90 percent of ecotourism revenues are expatriated to the parent countries, and less than 5 percent go into local communities. The lack of sustainability highlights the need for small scale, slow growth, and locally based tourism. Local peoples have a vested interest in the well being of their community, and are therefore more accountable to environmental protection than multinational corporations. The lack of control, westernization, adverse impacts to the environment, loss of culture and traditions outweigh the benefits of establishing large scale tourism. The increased contributions of communities to locally managed ecotourism create viable economic opportunities, including high level management positions, and reduce environmental issues associated with poverty and unemployment. Because the tourism experience is marketed to a different lifestyle from large scale tourism, the development of facilities and infrastructure does not need to conform to corporate Western tourism standards, and can be much simpler and less expensive. There is a greater multiplier effect on the economy, because local products, materials, and labor are used. Profits accrue locally and import leakages are reduced. However, even this form of tourism may require foreign investment for promotion or start up. When

such investments are required, it is crucial for communities to find a company or non-governmental organization that reflects the philosophy of tourism; sensitive to their concerns and willing to cooperate at the expense of profit. The basic assumption of the multiplier effect is that the economy starts off with unused resources, for example, that many workers are cyclically unemployed and much of industrial capacity is sitting idle or incompletely utilized. By increasing demand in the economy it is then possible to boost production. If the economy was already at full employment, with only structural, frictional, or other supply-side types of unemployment, any attempt to boost demand would only lead to inflation. For various laissez-faire schools of economics which embrace Say's Law and deny the possibility of Keynesian inefficiency and under-employment of resources, therefore, the multiplier concept is irrelevant or wrong-headed. As an example, consider the government increasing its expenditure on roads by \$1 million, without a corresponding increase in taxation. This sum would go to the road builders, who would hire more workers and distribute the money as wages and profits. The households receiving these incomes will save part of the money and spend the rest on consumer goods. These expenditures in turn will generate more jobs, wages, and profits, and so on with the income and spending circulating around the economy. The multiplier effect arises because of the induced increases in consumer spending which occur due to the increased incomes — and because of the feedback into increasing business revenues, jobs, and income again. This process does not lead to an economic explosion not only because of the supply-side barriers at potential output (full employment) but because at each "round", the increase in consumer spending is less than the increase in consumer incomes. That is, the marginal propensity to consume (mpc) is less than one, so that each round some extra income goes into saving, leaking out of the cumulative process. Each increase in spending is thus smaller than that of the previous round, preventing an explosion. Tourism has to be implemented with care.

#### **(D) Natural Resource Management**

Natural resource management can be utilized as a specialized tool for the development of tourism. There are several places throughout the world where the amount of natural resources are abundant. But, with human encroachment and habitats these resources are depleting. Without knowing the proper utilization of certain resources they are destroyed and floral and faunal species are becoming extinct. Tourism programmes can be introduced for the conservation of these resources. Several plans and proper management programmes can be introduced so that these resources remain untouched. Several organizations, NGO's, scientists are working on this field.

Natural resources of hill areas like Kurseong in West Bengal are plenty in number with various flora and fauna, but tourism for business purpose poised the situation.

In South-East Asia government and Non-Government Organizations' are working together with academics and industry operators to spread the economic benefits of tourism into the kampungs and villages of the region. A recently formed alliance, the South-East Asian Tourism Organization - SEATO is bringing together these diverse players to allay resource management concerns.

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