Chapter 4

Environmental Management Issues Related to Ecotourism Development

4.1 Scope of Historical Tourism in The Sunderbans

4.2 Religious Tourism in The Sunderbans

4.3 Prospects of Developing Cultural Tourism in The Sunderbans

4.4 Possibilities of Developing Health Tourism in The Sunderbans
CHAPTER 4.1

Scope of Historical Tourism in The Sunderbans

Contents

4.1.1 Significance of the Historical and Archaeological Aspects of The Sunderbans in Developing Tourism in the Region
4.1.2 Current Tourism Scenario in the Historical Places of The Sunderbans
4.1.3 Historical Diversity of The Sunderbans
4.1.4 Historical Facts of the Region
4.1.5 A Brief Account of Archeological evidences found in The Sunderbans region
4.1.6 Architectural Wonders-Temples, Mosques, Churches, Forts and Settlements
4.1.7 Problems of Developing Historical Tourism in The Sunderbans
4.1.8 Prospects of Developing Historical Tourism in The Sunderbans
4.1.9 Conclusion

Annexure 10 Translation of list of Artifacts found from Chandraketugarh
Annexure 11 Proforma Questionnaire for Identifying Tourist Awareness Regarding Developing Historical Tourism in The Sunderbans
Annexure 12 List of Museums and Private collections where Archaeological Evidences of The Sunderbans are preserved
Annexure 13 Maps of The Sunderbans (Ancient and Current)

Photographs
CHAPTER 4.1
Scope of Historical Tourism in The Sunderbans

4.1.1 Significance of the Historical and Archaeological Aspects of The Sunderbans in Developing Tourism in the Region

Existence of historical evidences to a particular place makes tourism interesting there. Natural attributes of a spot attract tourists to enjoy the scenic beauty while presence of historical elements adds value to the tourism development of the region. The History of Sunderbans is rich. The place bears a mythological history and stages of civilizations since 1st century B.C to 19th century A.D have been developed here forming multicultural and multilingual heritage within a well-defined pattern of human evolution. The historical remains hidden inside the dense forests of various islands and whatever little found through reclamation process in 18th century onwards, reflects upon the glorious past of Indian civilization reformed here. The artifacts, archaeological remains, archaeological sites, museums, temples, settlements etc have attracted the professional historians, sociologists, geologists and archaeologists long back and it is high time to usher tourists in the region to share the glimpses of historical remains found here. The avenues of tourism may accelerate the passion of exploring more archaeological sites and developing the existing historical spots amongst the government and the policy-makers in future. Today The Sunderbans is being recognized as a natural world heritage site. Who knows, one day it may claim to be the cultural world heritage site due to its rich historical attributes?

4.1.2 Current Tourism Scenario in the Historical Places of The Sunderbans

In order to understand the current tourism scenario in the historical places of Sunderbans, the researcher has conducted a survey during May 2003 to July 2004 in various historical and archeological sites of Sunderbans. Structured survey sheets bearing specific requisitions and questionnaires have been prepared [specimen given in the annexure11]. The researcher has visited almost all the private collections, archives and museums where artifacts found from Sunderbans are kept, contacted the curators of those museums, local people including students, schoolteachers, peasants, political leaders and experts and other researchers. The response is mixed. Common
people mostly expressed their ignorance about the historical aspects, when survey was made amongst the tourists—almost all of them stated that they are not aware of the historical and archaeological importance of Sunderbans. Consciousness lies amongst the educated class of few who deals with the subject.

The descriptions of the historical places of The Sunderbans, which are given, are rarely known to the outside tourists. Forget about the foreign tourists or the tourists coming outside the state, the indigenous tourists visiting mainly from Kolkata and neighbouring districts are mostly unaware of these historical places and archaeological sites of Sunderbans (exception to some extent Sagar Island).

None of the tour operators either government or non-government focuses on historical tourism in The Sunderbans. They take the tourists to the buffer zone of the forest and sometimes to the core area. Mostly the tourists enjoy the scenic beauty of nature and the wilderness of the dense forests. The West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation’s [the main tour operator in West Bengal part of Sunderbans tourism] package tours of two nights-three days or one night—two days do not cover a single spot having historical significance. The temples, mosques, church etc. situated within The Sunderbans are mostly visited by the local people for religious offerings either during occasions or festivals. Other historical places (example-Jato) and archaeological sites, are mostly visited by the historians, archaeologists, researchers, authors, government officials, traders of antique goods, smugglers etc. Stray tourists also visit the places but there is no scope of recording their visits. Nowhere tourist registers are maintained so that statistical data regarding tourist intake to these places can be obtained.

In many cases the local inhabitants residing near the archaeological sites are ignorant about the significance of the place resulting damages caused by them unknowingly. This ignorance also exists amongst the educated class [refer to survey sheet in Annexure 11]. As a result, no organized pressure has been created by the local people to the policymaking body or authorities in order to develop these places as tourist spots. Moreover, due to the negligence or unawareness, invaluable archaeological evidences are being lost or vanished regularly causing permanent loss of historical evidences, which may help to unearth past history of the region if integrated efforts are taken in future. At present and since the last fifty years, number of local people is either involved in trading of antique goods (coins, ornaments, sculptures, terracotta potteries etc) by themselves or they hand over to other traders or smugglers which
they find through digging of ponds, foundation, well or by chance. Obviously there are private collectors who collect these antiquities and preserve them in their museums but their efforts are not enough, as they are not getting institutional support as a whole. It can be said undoubtedly a large portion of historical and archaeological evidences of Sunderbans have been transferred to other places unaccounted and undocumented through illegal trading and smuggling. The government agencies are still apathetic to this problem. Only recently (10th Feb.2006) the State Archaeological department has started scientific excavation in The Sunderbans (at Dhosa and Tilpi Village of Joynagar block), which may discover the ancient history of the region and may explore the scope of historical tourism in Sunderbans more prominently.

There are number of museums and exhibition galleries runned by the government, local bodies, libraries and private collectors (list enclosed in Annexure 12). But they are scattered in different places and most of them are unorganized, in shabby conditions, some are closed due to death or illness of the main collector and some of them can not be treated as museums rather they can be considered as go downs.

As a whole, the present scenario of the tourism prospect of these places is not at all encouraging rather to be said disgraceful. The wastage of possibilities to develop tourism in historical perspective tends to loss of recognition of the place followed by loss of revenue and persistence of economic- underdevelopment of the region.

4.1.3 Historical Diversity of The Sunderbans

In order to work on the development perspectives of historical tourism in the Sunderbans, it is important to be aware of the historical aspects of the region. These aspects are diversifed into three categories. They are:

1) Historical facts of the region since prehistoric ages
2) Archeological evidences found in The Sunderbans region
3) Architectural Wonders-Temples, Mosques, Churches, Forts and Settlements

A brief account of these three categories is narrated as follows

4.1.4 Historical Facts of the Region

4.1.4.1 Ancient History

History of The Sunderbans is not well-knit, historical remains and information is not found sequentially or chronologically. Prehistoric information about Sunderbans
regions is found in *Mahabharata* and *Puranas*, which indicate that this place was ruled by *Suhmas* in Eastern Bengal and, by *Vangas* in western Bengal\(^2\). *Suhmas* and *Vangas* were two ancient dynasties having strong war forces including elephants and used to fight frequently with each other.

The earliest scientific reference of this region was given by Greek navigators, geographers and historians between first century B.C and third century A.D. Ptolemy, the famous second century Greek geographer was the first person to frame a map of Sunderbans, which was used as reference map for many centuries. According to ancient Greek historians like *Deodorus Siculus, Pliny* etc, this place was inhabited by a group of people called the *Gangaridai, Gangaritai, Gangaraeoi, Gangaridae and Gangarides*\(^3\). They mentioned the country was situated beside river Ganges that was flowing on her final phase to meet the sea. This information is supported by a travelogue written by an anonymous Greek sailor of the 1\(^{st}\) century AD. The name of the travelogue is "*Periplus Maris Erythraei*" or The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea. According to *Periplus*, there was a city on the confluence of the *Ganga* with the sea, called *Gange*. This was the city of the country of *Gangaridai*. It had a seaport and a market. The gold coin used in the country was named as *Caltis*. The *Gangarides* were involved in the trade of betel, Gangetic Spikenard, Pearl and ‘*maslins*’-specific fine cloth spanned by the Gangetic artisans.

The country of *Gangarides* roughly corresponded to the entire part of Bengal delta lying between the *Bhagirathi*-*Hugli* in the West, *Padma*- *Meghna* in the east and the *Ganga*-*Padma* in the north. Ptolemy’s map shows the south of the delta as cutup by rivers and estuaries to such an extent that it was practically a collection of islands. From the indirect archaeological evidence historians assume that during 2\(^{nd}\) to 6\(^{th}\) century AD, the present districts of 24 Parganas were ruled by the *Gupta* dynasty\(^4\).

No concrete epigraphic record of the period was found from the district in order to establish this fact but from the archeological remains found through excavation at different places and from different descriptions of historians (including the description given by the Chinese pilgrim *Hiuen. Tsiang*) it seems that *Gupta* rule made a deep cultural impact on the district. The remains of the temple excavated at *Berachampa* in *Deganga* police station area is stratigraphically dated to the 4\(^{th}\) century AD. The ground plan of this stratum of the temple is similar to the north Indian pattern of temple construction developed during the *Gupta* period. A large number of terracotta icons of *Puranic Brahminical* gods and goddesses done in
Gupta style have been found from Berachampa - Deganga - Chandraketugarh region and from Atghara. Some Buddhist icons have also been found from this region. This testifies the communicative role of the Guptas between Puranic Brahminism and Buddhism in the region. Even Hiuen Tsiang had mentioned the existence of Buddhism in the region (Samatata) represented by 30 monasteries and 2000 priests. Along with large number of temples. Samatata is also mentioned in an inscription of king Samudragupta as a tributary frontier kingdom of the Gupta empire and Yasovarmam of Kanauj.

4.1.4.2 Pala Dynasty

After the Gupta dynasty, there was rise of independent kingdoms and for some time this region became part of Sasanka’s Gaura kingdom. Finally, around the middle of the 8th century, Gopala was elected to kingship by a number of ruling chiefs, which indicated the beginning of Pala dynasty. From the Gawalior inscription of Nagabhattach a can inference can be drawn that Gopala’s or at least his son Dharnapala’s kingdom included the present district of 24 parganas, which occupies the westernmost part of the ancient Vanga country. The Pala kings ruled Bengal till 1155 AD (Gopala to Madanpala). During their time the empire was divided into ‘bhuktis’ or provinces and each bhukti was further subdivided into ‘mandalas’ or districts. According to Khalimpur copper-plate inscription the present district 24 Parganas and The Sunderbans region was included in ‘Vyaghratati-mandala’ and this mandala was included in ‘Pundravardhana bhukti’. But the Palas started losing control over the region after 850 A.D due to weak rulers. As a result, the territories of the Pala empire were invaded by kalachuris of Gorakhpur, Pratihars of north-central India, Chandellas of Khajuraho and Chandras of Samatata (present Mainamati in Comilla District). The sign of control over the region by the Chandras is clearly indicated from a copper plate inscription found from a brick ‘nagarasikhara’ Temple standing over a mound at the village of Utter Jata at Lot No. 116 within the jurisdiction of Mathurapur police station in Sunderbans, popularly known as ‘Jatar Deu’. It was learned that the temple was constructed in 975 AD by king Jayantachandra.

4.1.4.3 Sena Dynasty

After the end of Pala dynasty, Sena dynasty came into force for some time (1155-1207). Vijayasena was the founder of Sena dynasty. Vijayasena’s father was probably
a feudatory chief or a vassal of the Pala empire, somewhere in Uttar Rahar (modern Birbhum district). Taking advantage of the dissolution of the Pala empire, Vijaysena became an independent ruler. He conquered a large portion of Vanga and finally defeated king Madanpala (the last noted king of the Pala empire). Vijaysena established the dynasty over the present district of 24 Parganas. He led a number of successful expeditions against the Palas and other neighbouring kings and eventually captured the sovereign power in Bengal. In the Barakpur copper plate inscription of Vijaysena (found near Barakpur cantonment) and in the Sunderbans copper plate inscription of Lakshmansena (Vijaysen’s grandson), which was found from the village Bakultala in Diamond Harbour subdivision, we find the reference of ‘Khadi vishaya and khadi mandala’ in Pundravardhana bhukti. Which establishes the fact that the present Sunderbans region was included in the territories of Sena empire

4.1.4.4 Medieval History

Not much is known of the district till the end of the 15th century. A fragmental account of this region is found from some Bengali poems like Bipradas Piplai’s ‘Manasa Vijaya’ (1495), travel account of Chaitanyadeva written by Vrindavanadasa’s Chaitanya Managala/ChaitanyaBhagabata (1541-42) and Krishnadasa Kaviraja’s Chaitanyachoritamrita (1615). Abul Fazal’s Ain-i-akbari also mentioned the territories of this area. Conventionally, the period of Turk-Afgan invasion in Bengal draws the line between ancient age and medieval period. Turk conqueror Ikhtiyaruddin Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji drove out the last Sena king Lakhsman Sena from Nadia and capture Gaud in 1201 AD. Though northern part of Bengal was ruled by Turk-Afgan invaders but the southern part was ruled by Hindu feudatories of the former imperial power in small territories as independent local chiefs or rajas. Most probably, Domman Pala’s successors continued to rule over Kharimandalas during this time.

Legend says that in the 13th century a king named Chandraketu ruled this region. From the Ain-i-Akbari, the territorial description of the present 24 Parganas was found. The district was (part of the ‘Sarkar’ or revenue division of Satgaon, which extended from near Sagar island on the south, to a little above Palassey on the north and from the Kabadak river on the east to beyond the Hoogly on the west. It covers greater portion of Hoogly, 24 Parganas and Nadia. According to the rent roll drawn
by Todermal (king Akbar’s General) in 1582 there were number of ‘mahals’ (subdivisions or blocks) in the region and four of these were situated along the northern edge of The Sunderbans i.e. Hathiagarh, Mednimal (close to Canning), Maihati and Dhuliapur. The poem of Bipradasa, ‘Manasavijaya’ – long ballad on the snake goddess Manasa, draws an account of some villages and towns, which were mostly situated, in the modern 24 parganas district. The travel account of Shree Chaitanya (Religious leader and social reformer of 15th century) confirmed the contention of ‘Manasavijaya’ that the places listed in it were really prosperous and populous. ‘Chhatrabhog’ a village in Mathurapur police station of Diamond Harbour subdivision of present south 24 pargana District is famous as Shree Chaitanya visited this place towards his journey to Puri. This place seems to have been an important river port on the Bhagirathi, not far from the sea.

4.1.4.5 Portuguese Invasion and Pratapaditya

The Portuguese began to visit Bengal from the second quarter of the 16th century in quest of commerce and conversion. In 1538, the Portuguese had obtained from sultan Ghiyasuddin Mahmud, the king of Gaud, permission to build a settlement in Satgaon on the confluence of Saraswati and Bhagirathi-Hoogly rivers, which they called ‘Porto-Piqueno’ or small port. From this time, the Portuguese reigned over the region. They were involved in slave trading, deporting local inhabitants to Portugal and Arakan. They played an active role in politics and business by collecting title on the port of Hoogly and Chittagong and Barisal coasts. The Portuguese had a nexus with Bhuinyas (local independent rulers). The Bhuinyas allowed the Portuguese to continue piracy and in exchange supported the Bhuinyas to fight against the Mughals.

The region containing the present district of 24 Parganas were not actually controlled by the Mughals till the fall of Pratapaditya of Jessore, the one of the most powerful Bhuiyas in 1612.

Pratapaditya was a Hindu chief, one of the chiefs collectively known as ‘Barah Bhuiyas’ who were vassals of the emperor, but enjoyed independent power in the south and southeast Gangetic delta in practice. The territories of present district of 24 Parganas was within Pratapaditya’s kingdom. Forts were set in different sides of the boarder of his kingdom. The fort at the southwestern extremity of Pratapaditya’s kingdom was in Sagar Island. There was a naval station and ship building yard at
Sugar Island. In the northern side, fortification was made at Sarsuna. There were forts in Jagatdal, Buranhati on the Ichamati (near Hasnabad) and brink of Bhagirathi-Hoogli. His capital was situated at Dhumghat at Jessore. Pratapaditya extended the limits of his kingdom by conquering surrounding regions. He declared himself independent of the Mughal emperor and began to defeat imperial generals sent against him. But by 1611 the Mughals had subdued almost all the rebellious chiefs of the region and finally in 1612 Pratapaditya’s capital was captured and he was imprisoned and taken to the Mughal capital Agra, on the way he committed suicide near Banaras. After his death his kingdom was distributed as ‘Jagirs’. Pratapaditya became a legendary figure and was treated as national hero in the country.

According to Mr. Beveridge Pratapaditya is identified with the king of Chandecan or Ciandecan which is situated somewhere in modern Kaliganj in the Khulna district. Some historians argued that Chandecan was situated in Sagar Island. Pratapaditya had a naval Port there along with other shipyards and dockyards at Dudhali, Jahajghata and Chakrasi. Pratapaditya’s Portuguese connection was established when it was found that one of his naval admiral (named Rodda) “Defeated the Mughal forces in a battle fought at the confluences of the river Adiganga and Bidyadharti”. The Pragapaditya’s time is very important in the history of this region because since the middle of 17th century various traders, missionaries, venturers from different countries invaded this region. The first Jesuit mission landed in 1598 at Hooghly was invited by the king of Chandecan to pay him a visit. Two priests named Fernandez and Josa visited the court of the king of Chandecan through the Sunderbans. Afterwards a church was built at Chandecan, the first Christian church erected at Bengal. According to the descriptions of the Jesuits, Pratapaditya admitted the Jesuits in his country.

In the latter half of the sixteenth century the Portuguese started participating in the sea-borne trade of Bengal at Satgaon, Bettor etc in the Hooghly district. Sutanuti, Gobindapur and kalikata were three villages situated in the eastern bank of river Hooghly where markets were gradually grown up (initially cotton markets) where in addition to local Bengali population, new settlements of Portuguese, Dutch, Flemish, Armenian and English were developed. The Dutch had established a factory sometime in the 7th decade of the 17th century at Baranagar for salting pork and a naval yard at Phalta for servicing the ships. The English East India Company had
established their first factory at *Hooghly* in 1651. In the early part of 18\(^{th}\) century the Flemish appeared and established a factory at *Bankibazar*, which was active till 1744. But out of these, East India Company could survive long, defeating other settlers due to their aggressive policies and better military power. From the very outset of their establishment there were friction with the *Mughols* who were controlling the region but gradually, through the course of history the businessmen of East India Company became the ruler of the country. Job Charnok, the agent of the company is acknowledged as founder of today’s *Kolkata*. [Date of foundation 24th August 1690].

In the battle of *Palasi*, on 23\(^{rd}\) June 1757 the English troops led by colonel Robert Clive defeated *Siraj-Ud-Daulah*—the last independent nawab (king) of Bengal and began the British dynasty in India for the forthcoming 200 years. That is a separate history not directly related to the history of Sunderbans but obviously have a direct nexus between British invasion in Bengal and socio-economic changes in the lives of The Sunderbans.

There is very little record of social and economic history of 24 Parganas during 16\(^{th}\) century to 18\(^{th}\) century. In the sixth decade of the 17\(^{th}\) century, some time after Pratapaditya’s fall, there appeared a Muslim saint named *Pir Mobarak Gazi*, in the *Belor Jungle* near *Baruipur*. He could manage to influence large number of inhabitants belonging to the depressed sections of the local Hindu population and converted them to Islam. In *Ghutiari Sarif*, a mazar (memorial) was established in his memory. Internal state of the district at this time was almost horrible. People in this part used to live in constant terror of Portuguese, *Magh* or *Arakanese* pirates. Basically Postuguese were involved in slave trading. They used to capture able-bodied male and female members from The Sunderbans villages and carry them to the slave market in the Portuguese settlement at *Pipli* in Orissa or to sell them in the slave markets of *Calcutta* and *Chandannagar*. According to the ‘East India Chronicle’ for 1758 the *Maghs*, in February 1717 “carried off from the southern part of Bengal no less than 1800 persons—men, women and children. They were taken to *Arakan*, where the king chose the artisans, about one fourth of the number, to be his slaves; the rest were sold into slavery, at prices, varying from Rs.20 to Rs. 70 and set to work on the land”\(^9\). Apart from this human crime, the curse of nature often embarrassed the inhabitants of this region. The sudden fury of cyclones often hit the delta, which caused heavy causality and loss of crops. Such a cyclone burst on 30\(^{th}\) September 1737 destroying Calcutta’s most of the human habitation. The life of the artisans and
poor peasants living in southern part of the present district was full of uncertainties. There were little agricultural land; irrigation facilities were also not adequate. The inhabitants had to lead their livelihood mainly depending on nature’s behavior. They were mostly dependent on woodcutting, collecting wax and honey from the jungle and by hunting wild animals.

4.1.4.6 Modern Period

In the midst of 18th century the present Sunderbans area and 24 Pargana district were held under the direct control of East India Company. In 1757, Mir Jafar, the puppet Nawab of Bengal made a treaty with the East India Company, by which 24 Parganas’ ‘Zamindari’ or landholder’s rights vowed upon the East India Company. The treaty initially granted the company mere the right to collect rents from the cultivators and was subject to the obligation of paying to the Nawab the land revenue assessed on the land. The full proprietary right was given to Robert Clive, the representative of East India Company in 1759 by a ‘Sanad’ or deed granting him the 24 parganas as a ‘Jagir’ or military fief. The treaty says that “all land lying to the south of Calcutta as far as Culpee (Kulpi in Diamond Harbour sub-division) shall be under the zamindary of the English company; and all officers of this zamindary shall be under their jurisdiction. These 24 Parganas comprised of (1) Akbarpur (2) Amirpur (3) Azimabad (4) Balia (5) Baridhati (6) Basandhari (7) Calcutta (8) Dokhin Sagar (9) Garh (10) Hatiagarh (11) Ikhtiarpur (12) Kharijuri (13) Khaspur (14) Medinimall (15) Magra (16) Manipur (17) Madya (18) Murangacha (19) Paikan (20) Pechakuli (21) Satal (22) Shahnagar (23) Shahpur and (24) Uttarapargana. It comprised of an area of about 882 square miles.

After acquiring full control over the area, the East India Company concentrated on development and establishing administrative setup. The present 24 Pargana district started taking shape since 1793 regulations in which jurisdiction of the civil, criminal and revenue courts established in 24 parganas were defined. There were lot of administrative changes, area redistribution and shifting of authorities. Some of the important changes can be narrated.

*Under regulation XIV of 1814 the district was divided in two subdivisions; one comprising Calcutta and suburbs and other rural areas away from Calcutta.

*In 1832 the previous division was cancelled and the district was redistributed to Alipur and Barasai divisions, each of which formed a separate magisterial district.
*In 1861, the district was distributed into the following eight subdivisions. (1) Diamond Harbour (2) Bariupur (3) Alipur (4) Dumdum (5) Barrackpore (6) Barasat (7) Basirhat and (8) Satkhira.

* There were reconstructions of these subdivisions between 1861 and 1904.

* By the regulation of 1816, a commissionership was created for the non-permanently settled areas of The Sunderbans which was abolished in 1905 and integrated contiguous portions of The Sunderbans with the districts of 24 Parganas, Hula and Bakerganj (Barisal). The portion of Sunderbans area within 24 Parganas got integrated with Basirhat, Alipur Sadar and Diamond Harbour subdivisions. The 1905 arrangement continued till the partition of the country in 1947.

During these administrative changes, which have taken place till independence, some important political movements and social revolutions took place in Bengal in which the district 24 Parganas played a major role. It would not be imprudent to mention these historical moments while briefing the history of The Sunderbans.

4.1.4.7 Wahabi Movement: Rise and Fall of Titu Meer

During July 1830 to November 1831, a peasant movement occurred in the rural areas of Barasat Subdivision. This was an outcome of rising of the Wahabis, who were the followers of Abdul Wahab, an Arabian who appeared in the middle of the eighteenth century as a religious reformer and founded a new Muslim sect. His object was to restore Islam to a purer form of faith by following strictly the prescriptions of the Koran and the Hadis, which he described as Dar-Ulf-Islam”. The apostle of the Wahabi faith in India was Sayad Ahmed of Raebarellis who called a ‘Jihad’ against the Sikhs in 1826. As a result, Wahabis participated in war and captured Peshawar in 1830. Inspired by the success of the Wahabis in the north Wahabis of Bengal tend to rise. Their leaders were Titu Meer (Tetoo Miyan) a resident of 24 Parganas, who in early life had been employed as a professional wrestler. He met Saiyad Ahmed in a Pilgrimage tour at Mecca and became a disciple of him. Titu began to preach secretly the Wahabi Doctrine to the poor low caste Muslim peasants and the agricultural labourers. The low caste poor Muslim of this region was highly oppressed by the Hindu zamindars, British indigo planters and tyrant moneylenders. They were subject to various kinds of illegal extortions; levies and non-economic compulsions imposed by upper caste zamindars mostly Hindus. Even the local police influenced by rich Hindus did not support them at their distress. It appeared to them that just because
they were Muslims, they were being tortured by others. In this perspective, Titu's call to rise against oppression, resorting to orthodox Islam attracted their attention very soon and Titu become the leader of an armed force. He started capturing zamindaries and lands from others, imposed fines to the infidels and collected taxes. He established his headquarters at Narkelberia at 24 Parganas and erected a bamboo fort there. His force also started defiling Hindu temples at nearby villages and also attacked indigo planters’ bungalow. Being alerted by his rise, the district authorities intended to take steps. In November 1830, the commissioner of the presidency division asked the District magistrate and collectors of 24 parganas and Nadiya to take necessary steps to curb the rebellious behavior of the Wahabis. But the efforts of the district authorities failed as Titu’s militia outnumbered the official forces, beating back the English authorities with some slaughter. Finally army had to be called by the order of the Governor General Lord Bentick and on 19th November 1831, in the battle at Narkelberia, Titu and his men being defeated by the British soldiers. Titu died along with 50 men in the battle and around 500 people were arrested.

This revolt had all characteristics of a peasant revolt against the landowning classes. But it failed to be universal due to the confinements of the Muslim orthodoxy and ended as a sectoral revolution with minor effect to other communities.

4.1.4.8 Sepoy Mutiny of 1824 and 1857

The uprising of sepoys (Indian soldiers of the British army) took place twice, once in 1824 and another in 1857 at Barrakpur cantonment. These are well known facts in Indian history, a milestone in the struggle of independence and incidentally occurred in the district of 24 parganas. These revolts were the beginning of the end of British dynasty in India within the rent 100 years.

4.1.4.9 Indigo Cultivator’s Movement

Indigo cultivation was a profitable business during the 18th century and 19th century, as the process of manufacturing synthetic blue was not invented till 1892. It has been introduced in Bengal in 1777 by a Frenchman named Louis Bonnard. The East India Company insisted to cultivate indigo at large scale because of cheap native labour available here and emerging demand in England. As a result, the European planters, mostly company’s servants and retired servants started acquiring fertile agricultural lands in order to cultivate indigo and forced native agriculturists to plant indigo
instead by other crops. This oppression united the peasants who broke into spontaneous revolt against the indigo planters and this movement is known as ‘Blue Mutiny’ of 1859-61. Their movement got support from the urban middle classes and local landholders and newspapers like ‘Hindu Patriot’ wholeheartedly sympathized their revolts. In 24-pargana districts, there were seven plantations or factories, some of them were owned by Bengal Indigo Company. One of the revolutionaries Biswanath Sardar (alias as Bishey-dakat) operated from Jessore district of present day Bangladesh and Barasat and Bongaon subdivisions of 24 Parganas district. Subsequently the Bengal Government was alarmed of the oppression and the movement and the Indigo commission set up in March 1860 to look into the matter. The Government after investigation drafted legislation in order to stop forced cultivation, which helped the local people a lot. Gradually the demand of indigo as dying agent decreased by the replacement of synthetic blue and the cultivation was declined sharply. But this movement showed a strong indication of working class unitedness against oppression of the British, which played an emotional boosting up of the freedom fighting movement of the country.

4.1.4.10 Participation of the Freedom Fighting Movement

With the rest part of Bengal, the people of the district 24 parganas also actively participated in the freedom fighting movement. Secret revolutionary groups were formed by different people at different phases of the movement. Leader like M.N. Roy, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Pandit Sibnath Sashtri either worked here or held their ancestral home in the district. Non-cooperation movement (1921-1924) and civil disobedience movement during 1930 was organized in the district successfully. Finally, India gained independence in 1947 and Sunderbans area was divided between two countries as a result of partition.


The reclamation of the Sunderbans area was started after the East India Company received the 24 Parganas as a jagir by a sanad in 1759 from the Nawab of Bengal. The treaty vested the company with zamindari rights. During this period most of the district was inaccessible, under dense forests, tidal swamps and a maze of channels.
The survey of the district’s topography was made during this time (1764-1777) by Major James Rennells and maps of this region were prepared by him. In 1780s reclamation and the development of the Sunderbans was initiated by Tillman Henckell, Judge and magistrate of Jessore. Many tribal people from the Chhotanagpur plateau and peasants from the adjoining districts were brought and settled here. Gradually, dense forests changed into fertile rice fields and with the mixture of various ethnic and culture groups among the tenure holders this region evolved a unique cultural sect of its own. The history of administrative changes already narrated before. Besides, the history of human settlements is interesting. The East India Company, advised by J Holwel, started with a plan of farming out in 15 lots to the highest bidders, for a term of three years and thus their first settlement raised the assessment to Rs. 765,700. These bidders did not become permanent zaminders but tenured their lands to different lessees. These lessees came to be known as the ‘latdars’. Landholders from Khulna, Jessore, Murshidabad, Nadiya and Medinipur became latders of the region. They were supposed to clear forests, bring land under cultivation, set up markets and settle the cultivators. Instead they sub-leased their lands to others who were known as ‘Chakdars’. These Chakdars too found the lots too big to manage. So they also began to sub-let parts of their chaks to second varieties of sub-lessees called ‘gantidars’. They are mostly local residents. They were rather interested in extension of cultivation. They settle an arrangement with some selected cultivators for cultivation and reclamation of forests. Some of these cultivators later became ‘Jotedars’; These Jotedars basically employed tribal and low caste cultivators who were being brought from distant areas of Chotonagpur plateau and Medinipur, Bankura, Purulia belt. These people are actually the mentors of present Sunderbans, they remained non -occupancy raiyats and reclaimed the sunder ban land for the latdars, chakdars, gantidars, jotedars etc. This particular group of people is afterwards known as ‘bhagchasi’ or sharecroppers. This group is the main sufferer as the landholders or licensees were not ready to granting them any right of ownership of the land. They had been treated like bonded labourers, being tortured by the clerks and accountants (naibs and gomostas) of the absentee latdars, this oppression had been countered by The Sunderban peasants during 1946-50 which is known as ‘Tebhaga’ movement in the history. This movement spread at different parts of Bengal and had a wide impact on the government while formulating policies on land reforms.
4.1.5 Archeological Evidences Found in The Sunderbans region.

The historical evidences of The Sunderbans region are found in various ways:

1. Through archeological evidences
2. Ancient Maps and travelogue
3. Descriptions found in seal, sealing, coins, copper inscription and ancient books.

Out of these, archeological evidences are most important. Stone weapons of Prehistoric ages, potteries, stone images, sculptures, metallic ornaments, beads of semi precious stones and terracotta (brownish-red earthen ware or art objects of this material) items are found in plenty throughout northern and southern part of 24 Parganas where Sunderban region exists. “According to geologists, Sunderbans plateau is comparatively new but according to the historians this region is a mine of history”. Actually, scientific analysis of the historical remains in Bengal was started after the establishment of Asiatic society by Sir William Jones in 1784. During this time Major Rennel published Maps of India (1783-1793), Asiatic Researchers being published (1800) containing the findings of historical and archaeological research, establishment of Archeological survey of India (1903) and commencement of archeological excavations since 1920 by Sir Jon Marshall are all milestone incidents in the field of historical and archeological studies in India. The first scientific excavation in 24 Parganas was done in 1956 by University of Calcutta under direct supervision of Asutosh Museum of the university. The discovery of an ancient civilisation was made at Berachampa in present North 24 Parganas. This civilization is widely known as the civilization of Chandraketugarh. The second excavation took place at south 24 parganas in 1989 by the state Archaeological Department (West Bengal) near Baruipur Subdivision. The excavation took place in the following places:

(1) Village Aatghara
   a) Dumummar Dhibi (Dumdum’s mound)
   b) Chatar par
   c) Sitama Pukur (Pond)
   d) Gazidanga
   e) Chitrashali
   f) Halder chandni

106
Joynagar Majilpur
Village Baishshata [Ghosher chalk – Mathbari Mound]

From these places archaeological evidences like seals, coins, and glazed potteries are found which will highlight more about the history of the region. The detailed description of these places is given afterwards. It is interesting to note that no official report on both the excavations is published. But lot of antiquities is found from these excavations. At present, one more excavation is being conducted by the State Archaeological department at Joynagar –1 block (specifically in village Dhosa under Dhosa-Chandanesvar Gram panchyat and in village Tilpi).

Apart from scientific excavation, number of archaeological surveys took place time to time, which explored huge amount of ancient items and remnants of past civilization. Some of the important surveys were:

a) Exploration of the lower Ganga valley by the Directorate of Archaeology, Government of West Bengal in 1963-64. Stone-age tools and potteries found from Harinaryanpur and Deulpota village of this valley. Description of this survey published in Indian Archaeology, 1964-65.

b) Archaeological survey of Mahinagar-Malancha area of South 24 Parganas [88°25'32" East to 22°23'44" North]. An ancient fort’s remnants were found. Apart from this, potteries of 3rd \4th century and 10th \11th century were collected from a pond side and 1.22-meter diameter squattish shaped jar was also found. A detailed description of artifacts found in this region is given in Annexure 1].

c) Survey in Boral village

d) Following places of Mani basin (situated in south- west Sunderbans) of about 2 square kilometers are rich sites of archaeological remains. No scientific excavation or digging took place in an organized manner in this region but hundreds of antiquities are found through stray survey, sudden discovery by the villagers and local people and by the antique dealers. The places are:

a) Raidighi  
b) Kankandighi  
c) Dhasbhanga  

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(Map No. 9 in Annexure 13 points these areas)

[Descriptions of these places are given afterwards]
Archaeological and historical sites of Sugar Island (to be discussed in separate chapter).

There are number of ancient temples, mosques and churches found in the region which have archeological and historical significance. They are:

**Temples:**
- **a)** Jatar Deul at Jata, Kankandighi
- **b)** Vishalakshmi Temple at Shibkalinagar (Kakdwip)
- **c)** Ambulinga Temple at Barasi
- **d)** Tripurasundari Temple at Chhatrabhog
- **e)** Khari’s Narayani Temple and Astana of Barakhan Gazi
- **f)** Dakshina Kali Temple at Mayda
- **g)** Kesaveswar Siva Temple at Mandirbazar

**Mosques:**
- **a)** Ghutiari Sharif—Pir Mobarak Gazi’s Mazar
- **b)** Mullickpur— Ganimat—Ul-Khan’s Mazar
- **c)** Khari— Bara Khan Gazi’s Mazar

**Church**
St. Peter’s Church (under church of North India) 1846

**Fort**
Remnants of Chingrikhali fort (1868-69) and epitaph of Europeans are found in Diamond Harbour, south 24 Parganas. One Demolished fort at Falta can also be seen.

**Settlement**
*Hamiltonganj (Gosaba)*

Though institutional findings of historical evidence in the Sunderbans region started since 1950’s but actually it started earlier by individual efforts. Mr. Kalidas Dutta, the zamindar (landlord) of Joynagar-Majilpur is known as the pioneer archeologist of The Sunderbans region (1885-1968). Though he had no academic degree in this field, but his diligence, perseverance, inquisitiveness about historical subjects made him famous. He explored through dense forests and almost inaccessible places of Sunderbans for about four decades and discovered number of archaeological sites, historical remains, antiquities and ancient civilization. Not only discovery, but also he analysed the findings in the light of technical knowledge and contributed numerous
articles in various journals, magazines and books. The archaeological evidences, which he collected, were generously donated to different museums by him. He also prepared a map of South-Western Sunderbans in 1930\(^1\) where he identified the archaeological sites of the region. This map is still recognized as an authentic document by the experts. Moreover he had informed the University of Calcutta about the historical significance of Chandraketugarh\(^1\) after which the excavation took place there. It would not be superfluous to say that it is basically Mr. Kalidas Dutt's contribution, which enables to establish the historical importance of the region to the outer world.

After Kalidas Dutta, other people have worked and still working on Sunderbans archaeology in their individual capacity (Bibliography shows the details of others' work). But institutional planned effort to unearth the region's history more prominently is insufficient, occasional, scattered and not at all planned. One interesting point to be noted in this respect. Apart from excavations and scientific exploration most of the archeological evidences are found accidentally by the local inhabitants and villagers through digging ponds or tunnels, erecting houses, wells and through the continuous reclamation going on till date. Some of these findings are donated to museums, many are preserved by the founders themselves who often settle private museums, a large portion of these antiquities are being sold out without the knowledge of Government and appropriate authorities.\(^1\) Therefore large portion of antiquities found by the local people are undocumented and taken away.

Before discussing the tourism impact on these historical sites, a brief description of Sunderbans archaeological and historical sites is given:-

4.1.5.1 Chandraketugarh\(^2\)

**Description:**
This area is situated within \((22^0 41' - 88^0 42')\), District 24 Parganas (North), 35 km north-east of Calcutta, covering an area of 3 sq. km of rolling mounds and a *garh*, ruined fort, with rampart walls, enclosed in the villages of Berachampa, Deolia, Hadipur, Shampur, Jhikra etc. The site is enormously rich in surface finds. In 1907, A.L. Longhurst visited Berachampa and recovered early historical pottery and bricks. The explorer Kalidas Dutta realized the importance of the site and induced the Asutosh Museum to excavate it. From the surface finds and the nature of the rains it is
clear that the Chandraketugarh represents an early historical urban settlement continuing down to later times.

The Asutosh Museum of the University of Calcutta, under K.G. Goswami and later on under C.R., Roychaudhuri, with the general guidance of D.P. Ghosh, conducted excavation here from 1956-57 to 1967-68. The excavation has revealed a continuous sequence from pre-Maurya to Pala times, divided into six periods:

**Figure 4.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Civilisation</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period -I</td>
<td>Pre-Mauryan</td>
<td>A red slipped ware and ivory beads.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period -II</td>
<td>Maurya Sunga</td>
<td>Black slipped ware and polished and unpolished gray wares. Beads of semi precious stones, copper antimony rods, terracotta figurines and copper punched marked coins are also found.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Period -III</td>
<td>Late Sunga</td>
<td>Stamped red ware, some inscribed with Brahmi letters, Sunga terracotta, steatite caskets and cast copper coins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period -IV</td>
<td>Kushan</td>
<td>Typical Kushan terracotta figurines and plaques.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period -V</td>
<td>Gupta</td>
<td>Grey or black pottery sometimes bearing stamped designs terracotta plaques with human and animal figurines and mithunas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period -VI</td>
<td>Pala</td>
<td>In the mound of khana Mihirer Dhipi has been excavated a stupendous brick temple complex facing north and measuring 19:20 sq.m, with 4.26 m long projections on three sides and a vestibule 13.72Square attached to the main temple the north. A deep pit, 3.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
sq.m and 7.16m deep, lived with rubbed bricks with obliquely decreasing sides, and a paved floor, 86 cm sq. at the bottom, has been encountered in the excavation.

The excavation has also revealed the remains of two votive stupas and other structures together with the stray finds of a red sandstone Buddha image from Khana-Mihirer Dhipi and plaques with Buddha and Jataka stories which associate the site with Buddhism.

4.1.5.2 Jatar Deul

This site is situated in lot number 116. In order to visit the place, first to reach Raidighi either through Diamond Harbour or through Mathurapur. From Raidighi the river to be crossed (Raidighi Gang) in order to reach Kankandighi. From Kankandighi it takes 7.5 km in van rickshaw to reach the site. Even before 30-40 years this place was almost inaccessible. River Mani flows through northern and eastern part of Jata. Jatar deul is a monument type structure, most probably a temple made of brick. It stands on an ancient mound. The accurate date of the erection of temple is not known but it is certainly more than 500 years old. The deputy collector of Diamond Harbour reported in 1875 that a copper plate discovered in a place little to the north of Jatar deul fixes the date of the erection of this temple by Raja Jayantachandra in the year 897 of the Bengali saka era corresponding to AD 975. The inscription is in Sanskrit and the date as usual given in enigma with name of the founder. But it is not known what has become of the copper plate and it could not be traced. This site has been declared as protected monument by Archaeological survey of India. The existence of this site was mentioned in ancient books like Chaitannya Bhagabat and Ain-E-Akbari (by Abul Fazal). In 1956, the archaeological survey of India renovated the shrine and at present some deities are being worshiped inside the monument and local fair is being organized during summer surrounding the site. Some archaeological evidences are explored from the site including gold coins of Kushan period. Apart from this site, number of ancient mounds is also found in Eastern part of Jata. Local people explored some coins and stone images from these mounds. Further investigation is needed in order to unearth unknown facts.
4.1.5.3 Aatghara
This is an ancient village situated in Baruipur subdivision of south 24 Parganas. This village was mentioned in ancient books like Chaitanya Bhagabat and according to Mr. Paresh Dasgupta, Director of state Archaeological survey, this village was mentioned by Greek Geographer Ptolemy in 1st century AD. The archaeological importance of this village and its surrounding was recognized by the experts as continuous flow of antique materials like copper coins, pottery, terracotta, sealing etc. being collected since long time back. Finally, in 21st January 1989, archaeological exploratory digging was stated in the village. Three trenches were dug in Damdama mound (locally known as Damdamar Dhibi). The archaeological findings through excavation state that starting from Mauriyan period (4th-3rd century BC) to Pala-Sena period (12th-13th century AD) civilizations were being developed here. Though the excavation team identified six archaeological (Damdamar Dhibi, Chatar par, Sitama pukur, Gazidanga, Chitrasali, Haldar Chandni) spots in the village but excavation took place only in Damdama mound. The list of findings through excavations are enclosed, most of them are preserved in different museums (Sunderbans regional Museum, Ashutosh Museum, Indian Museum etc). It can be commented that this place is a rich historical site awaiting further exploration.

4.1.5.4 Mahinagar- Malancha
This place is situated in the eastern part of Adiganga [88° 25'32" East to 22° 23'44" north] in south 24 parganas. An archaeological survey was conducted by the state Archaeology Department during 1989, which discovered remnant of a fort. Potteries of 3rd-4th century were found from a forbidden pond, which includes a squattish shaped jar (preserved in state Archaeological Museum).

4.1.5.5 Boral
This village is situated in the western side of Adiganga (88° 22'19" East to 22° 27'17" North). This village is also an important archaeological site as number of antiquities is found from here time to time (list enclosed in Annexure 1). Further scientific exploration is needed to establish its historical significance.
4.1.5.6 *Baishata* and Adjacent Archaeological Sites

This place was first located by Major Rennel in his map during 1778-79. He mentioned about a square pagoda, which is not seen now. At present, two mounds (one big another small) are visible which are known as 'Mathbari Dhibi' by the local people. This place [88°28'23" East – 22°7'39" North] is situated about 16kms away from Joynagar-Majilpur railway station. From the station, it is about 14 kms to reach a place known as Natunhat, from there two kms to walk to reach the site. During monsoon, it is difficult to reach because of the road condition. In 1989 these two mounds were [Ref: Sudhin Dey] being excavated by the State Archaeological Survey, which discovered a brick path between the two mounds. The excavators guess that these two mounds were Buddhist or Jain temple with accommodation facilities available for the monks. Though this presumption being criticized by others but the historical importance of the site is not diluted at all. Before the excavation, considerable number of archaeological evidences was found since last 40-50 years from *Baishata*, Ghoserchwalk, Krishnapur, Joutiapara, Baidyarchwalk and other villages, which strongly uphold the possibility of rich civilization developed in this region.

4.1.5.7 Archaeological Sites in Mani Basin

River *Mani* is one of the smallest rivers of The Sunderbans. It flows through Joynagar, Mathurapur, and Kultali Police stations area of south 24 Parganas and finally merged with *Thakurani* river. Surrounding this river, a basin has been formed consisting of an area of about 150 sq.km. This region has been recognized as one of the richest archaeological sites of south Bengal. Villages situated in this basin like Raidinghi, Kankandighi, Nalgora, lalpur, Boral, Jalghata, Nalua Baribhanga etc are the hunting place of the archaeologists, researchers, and antique dealers as innumerable numbers of antiquities are found from here. According to some experts the remnants of civilization explored here are comparatively more planned, integrated and extended than other parts of The Sunderbans. Unfortunately, Scientific archaeological exploration have done very little in this basin but whatever investigation done, it may be commented that civilizations of 8th to 13th century AD. were flourished in this region though antiquities of 6th-7th century AD were also found. Most of the archaeological evidences collected from this region are scattered, preserved in different museums and private galleries but the biggest
collection can be seen in Dr. Tulsicharan Bhattacharya Memorial Museum (south Gobindapur) and in Khari-Krishnachandrapur Museum (khari). Brief Descriptions of these places are given below:

4.1.5.7.1 Lalpur – Jalghata – Nalua

Lalpur and Jalghata are two adjacent habitations situated within 5 kms of Lakshmikantapur railway station. First to reach Krishnachandrapur crossing through the road towards Raidighi, then to go southwards for a kilometer. [see Map no. 9]. River Nalluah used to flow through the southern border of Lalpur-Jalghata but at present it has been reduced to a canal [Patnighata canal]. At around five six decades ago, some navigational tools were found while digging the riverbed. According to the description given by Mr. Kalidas Dutta, there situated a courthouse of king Parimohan Mukhopadhyay at Jalaghata. Near this courthouse, while reconstructing an ancient pond some stone made deities were found. These deities are kept in Uttarpara Library at Hooghly district. Mr. Kalidas Dutta indicated about an ancient road passed through these places. The name of the road is “Dwarir Jungle” or forest of Dwari. In the past (18th century) this passage was known as ‘Pilgrims Track’ and this was used to reach Gangasagar from Calcutta. It was the only road, which connected Kalighat with Gangasagar. After development of Kulpi road during the British period, this road became abandoned.

Other archaeological evidences found from this region are remnants of buildings, beeds, terracotta etc. These are of 7th century AD to 11th century AD. Nalua is a village situated at south-eastern side of Krishnachandrapur. Some remnants of ancient civilization are also found here. Maps prepared by Jao Da Barross in 1500 Ad and by Fan den Bloke (1660-Ad) showed five prominent ports in Sunderbans, Out of them, one is indicated as ‘Naldi’. Some historians feel Naldi is none but Nalua. Though Nalua is an ancient village, but till date, no archaeological exploration took place here.

4.1.5.7.2 Manir Tat – Dhasbhanga – Nalgora

Manir tat is situated in lot no 28 and Nalgora are situated in lot no. 29. Dhasbhanga is situated in between these two places. [see Map no. 9]. These places are situated in the eastern side of Mani river. In order to reach the places, first to come to Krishnachandrapur crossing from Mathurapur railway station then to go to
Aateshwartala (5 km east bound road from the crossing), Mani river is flowing beside. Manir tat is situated just opposite of Aateshwartala. One has to cross the river here. Nalgora and Dhasbhanga are situated in the southern side of Manir tat. Mr. Kalidas Dutta\textsuperscript{35} surveyed these places and predicted about an integrated urban civilization to be hidden underground. According to Nirmalendu Mukhopadhyay\textsuperscript{36} Manirtat-Dhasbhanga-Nalgora was an uninterrupted portion of an ancient civilization. A long boundary wall was found near the riverbed, which at present is converted in a sloppy mound. This mound is known as 'Fort' to the local inhabitants. Mr. Kalidas Dutta also described this mound as historical\textsuperscript{37}. During the reclamation of this region many antiquities were found. Buddhist and Jain metallic icons, stone made Sun god and Devi Durga, remains of sewage line etc are amongst them. According to Nirmalendu Mukherjee\textsuperscript{38} Nalgora was considered as the centre point of this region. The entire area was surrounded by boundary wall and like Manir tat, a mound is also visible at Nalgora along with an ancient pond. The mound was dug during 1927-28, which explored a remnants of a large establishment\textsuperscript{39}. Numerous archaeological and historical evidences were found from Nalgora, which are scattered. Proper excavation has to be done in order to prove the historical importance of the region.

4.1.5.7.3 Raidighi – Kankandighi

Raidighi Settlement is situated beside Raidighi river (ails as Raidighai Gang), which is the western fragmentation of river Mani, at present; it is an important market and considerably populace. It is situated in lot no. 24 and the nearest railway station is Mathurapur. It is about 15 km away from the station. The opposite of Raidighai is Kankandighi. There is a big lake situated near the bus stand that is about 400 years of age\textsuperscript{40}. Number of antiquities is found from this settlement, which includes Buddhist icons, gold coins and other images. This place is considered as the entrance of The Sunderbans.

4.1.5.7.4 Kankandighi

Kankandighi is situated in lot no 26 beside the river Raidighi gang. Till 18\textsuperscript{th} century AD, this place was inaccessible due to dense forest, after that, reclamation process started developing modern civilization. The famous temple of Jata is situated here.
Actually, lot No. 26 Kankandighi and lot no. 116 Jata are two parts of a single island. A lake bifurcates these two lots but the bifurcation is not very prominent. In order to visit Kankandighi, there are two ways. The easier way is to come through Raidighi and cross the river, other route is from Joynagar-Majilpur stations, from here, take a bus to a place called Dhakir-mukh then cross Mani river and reach a place called Chubrizhona which is the gateway of kankandighi. This place is considered as the most important and archaeologically rich area of historic Sunderbans. Lots of antiquities and archaeological remains are found at different pockets of Kankandighi and problems of smuggling of antiquities are prominent here. One can find number of mounds situated at Kankandighi which have local names like ‘Swetrajar dhibi, pilkhanar dhibi, Naskar Dhibi, Gajgirir Dhibi, Burimar Dhibi’ etc. While digging some of these mounds, considerable amount of sculptures, icons, beads, coins metallic items etc are found. Some old ponds have also historical significance. Many metallic and stone antiquities are smuggled to other places and others are scattered in different museums and in private collections. Scientific exploration of the region by the Archaeological department is badly needed in order to protect the historical remains and to unearth hidden civilisation unless one day the history of the region will be completely lost.

4.1.6 Architectural Wonders-Temples, Mosques, Churches, Forts and Settlements

The ancient temple of West Bengal is discovered at Chandraketugarh, which was erected in the Gupta period. The ruins of this temple after excavating Khana-Mihir’s mound are declared as a protected monument by the Archaeological Survey of India. (Already discussed).

The second oldest temple is Jatar Deul found at Kankandighi. (Already discussed). Some more ruins of such temples are found in south 24 Parganas but at present they have only archaeological values. We will discuss only those old temples, mosques etc., which have full-fledged structure and have tourism impact. These temples, mosques, churches have historical values as they are being constructed in ancient times. The relics, the structures of the roofs, icons, and inscriptions depicted in the temple walls, door styles and paintings etc. symbolize specific ages and recognize the-then socio-cultural heritage and cultural attributes. Moreover, all these have been
worshipped as religious symbols by different communities mostly locals. The villagers visit these shrines during festival and puja times and offer their tributes to their worshipped gods and goddesses. To an outsider, visiting these places as a tourist will create a dual realization in his or her mind—one with religious essence, another with historical feelings. Therefore, the appeal of these spots is multidimensional.

4.1.6.1 Vishalakshmi Temple at Shibkalinagar (Kakdwip)

Devi Vishalakshmi is widely worshiped throughout The Sunderbans. This temple of Vishalakshmi is situated at Shibkalinagar of Kakdwip police station. The temple structure is unique having curvilinear form of roof. The roof has eight parts or shades. The temple was constructed in 18th century A.D. Though exact date is not found the height of the temple is about 40 ft. The inside roof is cylindrical.

4.1.6.2 Temple at Barasi

Barasi is a village in Mathurapur police station within Diamond Harbour subdivision. It can be reached along Raidighi road from Mathurapur railway station or by direct bus from Kolkata. There is an old ‘Atchala’ temple (having roof divided in eight parts) of ‘Ambulinga’ or ‘Badrikanath Sivalinga. In front of the main temple, there are several images of Puranic gods and goddesses. A sacred tank, which is known as ‘Siva-kunda’, is situated beside the temple. The ‘sivling’ or deity is being worshipped according to a belief of the legend that Bhagirath (according to Hindu mythology who brought river Ganga from Himalaya to this region) was proceeding towards Gangasagar after releasing Ganga from the head of Mahadeva (God who held Ganga within his matted hair), the bereaved Mahadeva followed Ganga unto this point till he got mixed with her in the shape of water at Chattrapur. The choked flow of Ganga made Siva run into stone form of ‘Sivalinga’.

4.1.6.3 Tripurasundari Temple at Chhatrbhog

Chhatrbhog is an ancient village in Mathurapur police station with Diamond Harbour subdivision. It is within one kilometer from Krishnachandrapur crossing. Sri Chaittanya, the famous social reformer and religious leader of 16th century Bengal spent a night in this village while going to Puri (Neelachal). It was also an important port on the Ganges. There is a flat roofed temple of Devi Tripurasundari situated here. Deity is being worshipped daily. Reference of the goddess has been given in
holy book of ‘Chandimangal’ written by Mukundaram in the 16th century AD. Black basalt images of Puranic gods and goddesses have been discovered from this village and its neighborhood. Remnants of many old buildings are also found here.

4.1.6.4 Khari’s Narayani Temple and Astana of Barakhan Gazi
Khari is situated near to Chattrabhog. The old course of Ganga (known as Adi Ganga) flew by it. At present, there is only a small watercourse flowing which is called Khari. In this area, the ‘Astana’ of Barakhan Gazi and the temple of Narayani is situated. There are a ‘Hari’ Temple and a newly built Radhaballav-Jiu temple established beside the Narayani temple. The astana of Barakhan Gazi is single domed and has a big image of the Gazi seated on a horse. In the Narayani temple, the deity is seated on a lion. Though in most places the priestly functions of the worship of Barakhan Gazi are carried out by Muslim khadems, the rituals they perform are a mixture of Islam, folkish Hinduism of the so-called lower caste Hindus and magical practices. Barakhan Gazi is often found to share a temple not only with folkish Hindu divinities but also with Puranic divinities. Here at Khari, the image of Barakhan Gazi shares the divine pedestal with Narayani as a subsidiary divinity. A Brahmin priest performs the ritual services of Barakhan Gazi along with that he performs for Narayani. The Hari Temple having the image of Sri Chaitanya and the Radhaballav Jiu temple has the images of Krishna and Radha. There is another flat-roofed temple containing the stone image of Dakshina Kali established by king Kesava Roychowdhuri in 1748 AD. The temple is situated on a five feet high base. There are three corridors on the sides of the sanctum. The front of the corridors has conical arches on which stand squat columns to hold the roof. There are few terracotta plaques on the façade. The old structure has been damaged due to repairs.

4.1.6.5 Dakshina Kali Temple at Mayda
Mayda is a medium sized village in Joynagar police station of Diamond Harbour Subdivision. The village is situated on the old course of the Ganga and it was and a place in the Khari region of Sunderbans where Portuguese pirates and slave traders operated during the middle of sixteenth century to eighteenth century. The name Mayda may have been derived from the Portuguese word Madia, which means an inland port. Mayda is famous for its Dakshina kali temple. The deity is represented by a slab of stone believed to be self generated and not worked out. It is said that
Gangadhar Choudhuri of the Savarna Chaudhuri family of Behala-Barisha had founded the temple in 1770 A.D. The deity is housed in an atchala (roof with eight parts) temple facing south. Fairs are held on occasion of special festivals.

4.1.6.6 Kesaveswar Siva Temple at Mandirbazar

Mandirbazar is a village, which is 14 km away from Diamond Harbour via Hatuganj. It can also be reached via Baruipur-Bishnupur road. It is about 11 km from Bishnupur. It is situated within the jurisdiction of Mandirbazar police station. Here situates a very big ‘aat-chala’ [roof with eight parts] temple, which is known as Kesaveswar Siva temple. According to a terracotta plaque on the temple, it was built in 1670 Saka era or 1748 century AD.

4.1.6.7 Mazar of Pir Mubarak Gazi at Ghutiari Sarif

Ghutiari sarif is a station on the Sealdah-Canning branch of south 24 Parganas. It is a sacred place to Muslims and other religious communities also pay homage to the seat of Pir Mobarak Gazi. The darga and the mosque of the Pir are located near the railway station. Whether Pir Mobarak Gazi was a historic character or only a legendary hero is not ascertained, but popular belief makes him a legendary hero of many incredible events and supernatural happenings. In the late medieval ballad ‘Raymanga’ as well as the Muslim ballad in Bengali “Banabibir Jahunama “ Pir Mobarak Gazi was mentioned.

Pir Mobarak Gazi was believed to exercise control over the tigers of The Sunderbans while his brother Kalu Gazi had special power over the crocodile and alligator population of the area. This belief still exists as the woodcutters and honey collectors offer their prayers to Gazi before entering the forests begging him to protect themselves from wild animals. Deep inside the forest region of The Sunderbans there are raised pedestals of clay painted over bricks dedicated of Mobarak Gazi. Pir Mobarak Gazi was believed to be buried alive by his devotees who took him to be dead while he was actually under spiritual trance. His devotees then built a ‘darga’ on his grave as a memorial. Fairs are held here on the occasion of Pir’s birth anniversary and to commemorate the death of the Pir. Both Hindus and Muslims assemble to rejoice the memory of the Gazi.
4.1.6.8 Old Darga of Fakir Abdullah at Mallikpur

Mallikpur is a small village within the Baruipur subdivision situated 5 kms to the southwest of Baruipur town. The village is famous for an old darga of Fakir Abdullah. It is an ordinary brick built building. People believe that if they drink water from the well of the darga, they will get cured of the diseases they suffer from. Both Hindus and Muslims gather to pay their homage.

4.1.6.9 Church

The first Christian delegation visited Bengal was Jesuit missionaries. Two Jesuit priests named Fernandez and Josa arrived at Hoogly in 1598 and were invited by the king of Chandecan (Pratapaditya ?). Next year in 1599 the first Christian church was erected at Chandecan, which is believed to be the first church established in Bengal. At present, no remains were found of that church. After establishing Vicariate Apostolic of Bengal in 1834, the Christian missionaries started preaching their religion at different places and Calcutta was their centre. But Christianity entered in the district 24, Parganas in and around 1816. Three villagers, Ramji Pramanik, Sitaram Bag and Buddhinath Gain of Rammakhalk village of Bishnupur police station were attracted to Christian religion and were converted and were baptised by Father Trawin of London Missionary society in 18th October 1825. Catholic Mission was founded in 1840 in Kaikhal village of this district.

Out of the churches found in the district the St. Peters church of Baruipur has a historic value. This church belongs to CNI (church of North India) and was established on 1846. A 600 seats chapel was created under the supervision or Rev. Fr. Debrarej. There was also a primary school and library along with the church. But it was burnt and reconstructed in 1966. The original structure still exists.

4.1.6.10 Epitaph

In Diamond Harbour subdivision on the east bank of river Hoogli, some epitaphs of two hundred years old are seen. Diamond Harbour is 51 km away from Kolkata by road and can be said the administrative headquarters of The Sunderbans. This place was a port city two hundred years ago and a favorite anchorage for ships. The oldest epitaph found in Noongola area of Diamond Harbour supported the existence of port here. The epitaph was devoted “To the memory of Thomson who departed from this life 20th October 1795, aged 30 years- this year’s port master of this Harbour.” Some
other epitaphs of the Europeans are also found here. Hamilton’s East India Gazetteer of 1815 also mentioned the existence of port here.

4.1.6.11 Fort

The most renowned fort of Diamond Harbour is Chingreekhali fort situated about 1 km to the South on the riverbank. At present, the fort is almost destroyed only some brick and stone remains are found. From old documents, it is known that the construction of the fort was started on 1868-69 by the East India Company in order to protect the lower Gangetic region from the pirates. A number of heavy cannons are lying embedded in the ground there. At present, picnickers use the place at large.

Another Fort made by the Dutch in the 18th Century is found at Falta. The place is 53 km from Kolkata and at present, developed as ‘Free trade Zone. In 1756, the British took shelter in this fort after being defeated to Siraj-U-Daullah, the Nawab of Murshidabad. They stayed here for six months to regain strength. The fort was abandoned and blown off by the British Government after the World War-I, who found it to be obsolete. Still some underground tunnels, stables, cannons etc. are seen there.

4.1.6.12 Settlements

The history of reclamation took a concrete shape in Gosaba, an island on the Vidyadhari river where Sir Daniel Mackinnon Hamilton, a Scotsman by origin, desired to uplift the downtrodden people by establishing settlement here. Though this incidence occurred in last century only and not that old as other places, but it is a significant phenomenon in the social history of The Sunder bans.

Daniel Mackinnon Hamilton born on 6th December, 1860 in an island called Aran in Scotland and was brought up in a family dedicated to industrial business. He came to India (Bombay) in 1880 only at the age of twenty to look after the family business there. He took over as the Chief of McKinnon Mackenzie in Calcutta sometime early in the twentieth century. Being motivated to ameliorate the sufferings of the distressed poverty-trodden people of that region; he got possession of about 9000 acres of land in Gosaba in 1903 and reclaimed it by cutting the woods and by raising embankment on the riverside. The work of reclamation continued between 1903 and 1907 and the estate gradually became populous. When he started work it was dense forest, he had to import laborers from other areas and to arrange for their needs.
including setting up distilling plant for drinking water. Afterwards, he invited people to stay there. In 1910, the population of the estate was about 900. Sir Daniel also started charitable dispensaries, village schools and invited shopkeepers to open shops. A post office was also started. He tried to educate people cultivating in the region to gain maximum yield of crops. The introduction of vegetables and fruit orchards also attempted and vegetable seeds were distributed free of cost.

But, Sir, Daniel will be reckoned as the pioneer in cooperative movement in India as he advocated cooperation amongst the people of Gosaba in order to combat poverty and oppression of the moneylenders. After a decade of his arrival in Gosaba he found no change in the financial position of the peasants and they fail to come out of the web of the “Mahajans” [money lenders]. Realizing there will be no salvation until the peasants are being freed from the “grip” of the moneylenders, he decided to launch a crusade against them. He settled the debts of individual to the moneylenders and paid them out of his own pocket which was treated a loan to be repaid in easy installments, and the people found themselves free of debt within years. He initiated to introduce cooperation movement and motivated the people to share responsibility. As a result, the first cooperative credit society was established in 1915 at Gosaba with 15 members. Hamilton contributed an initial capital of Rs.500 for the society, which formed the nucleus of a group of rural credit societies, which were developed later on. As the cooperative movement spread out, a credit union of the central type was formed under the name of Gosaba Central Cooperative Bank in 1924. Being enthused by the success of the movement, Hamilton started founding different types of societies and other organizations for the betterment of the people. In 1918, he started a Consumers’ Cooperative Societies to supply the members of all cooperative societies with the daily necessities of life at a cheaper rate by means of joint purchase. Cooperative paddy sale society was established in 1923 with the object of pooling the supplies of members and disposing them in the best market. Sir, Daniel established the Jamini Rice Mill in 1927 as an organ of the sale society for ensuring finished products and their marketing with maximum amount of profits to the tenants. He also established a central model farm in 1919 to experiment with vegetables, fruits and paddy and to share the findings with every village. Primary schools were started at every village with a central Middle English School. Night classes were organized for adult education and as a result, the literacy rate was shored up to 25% of the old establishment. Sir Daniel also augmented for human resource development and
established a Rural Reconstruction Institute in 1934 in order to train young workers for village development and reconstruction. This institute acted like a rural reconstruction college and offered certificate to the qualifying students.

The most important thing Sir Daniel had done was the issue of one-rupee notes (see photograph No. 24) at Gosaba in 1936. Actually, Hamilton wanted to follow the Scottish model applied in 18th Century Scotland in order to generate capital formation and conversion of barren lands into cornfields through providing cash-credit by the banks in terms of E 1 notes and coins. At Gosaba, the loan was partly given by the cooperative bank in Sir Daniel Hamilton notes (see photographs) and partly in silver coins. These notes were accepted at the stores, at the weekly hat and by the laborers. In this way, he created a form of finance whose backing was helpful to the people and was liquidated when no longer necessary. He also requested the Government to introduce paper currency and to enrich the idle labour in productive work.

Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) were closely known to Sir Daniel Hamilton. Tagore visited at Gosaba on 19th December, 1932 and stayed there for three days. Gandhi could not make it personally but sent his secretary to see the practice of cooperation in Gosaba.

Sir, Daniel Hamilton passed away on 6th December, 1939 in his native place at Scotland. He made a voluntary trust for the people’s benefit and vested his property to it.

The present Gosaba has been built up by the noble contribution of Sir Daniel Hamilton on a cooperative plan. He had transformed the jungle of 1903 into a group of village societies within three decades. This is a prominent case study for the social researchers and historians working on the history of reclamation in Sunderbans. In order to reach the place, the tourist has to come to Basanti from Kolkata by road and to take a boat at Basanti towards Gosaba. Now, the place has also been known as Hamiltongunj in respect of Sir Daniel Hamilton. One can still find Hamilton’s bungalow at Gosaba, a statue of Sri Daniel Hamilton, the administrative complex of the estate (Kacharibari), the Rural Reconstruction Institute founded by him, Becon’s Bungalow used as a Guest House at the Hamilton estate, Rabindranath Tagore had stayed here. Unfortunately, these all are lying in shabby looking unattended conditions. Tourists will apparently find no interest if they do not know the history of the settlements. It is high time to preserve these invaluable structures in a tourist-friendly manner.
4.1.7 Problems of Developing Historical Tourism in The Sunderbans

Prospects of developing historical tourism in The Sunderbans are tremendous (as already discussed). It has problems also. The greatest problem is the mental block to diversify tourism towards new dimensions from the traditional “Jungle safari”. At present, tourism at Sunderbans is confined to nature tourism only. Tourists are taken to the sanctuary or buffer area of the forest and all efforts are made for showing wild animals. It is being followed traditionally since British period when the people belonging to the European community and the ruling class used to visit The Sunderbans for hunting trip and to explore the beauty and wilderness of the forest. Today hunting is banned but the old model of tourism still persists. As any business cannot survive without diversification, modern tourism needs paradigm shift towards new diversions for its development. That is why we find, in spite a world heritage site, the arrival of foreign tourists in The Sunderbans is insignificant and negligible (see data in Chapter-3). The problems of developing historical tourism in Sunderbans can be highlighted below:

1. Lack of Government Initiatives

The policy-making bodies of the government are silent to encourage tourism in historical perspective. They are either not conscious about the possibilities of historical tourism or they are not interested due to some unknown reasons. Neither any survey made on this aspect by the government agencies nor any proposals given by them to the implementing agencies. This apathy is being reflected in the tour plan of West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation (WBTDC – which is the biggest tour operator in Sunderbans). They do not include a single historical place in their tour; neither have they mentioned the historical spots in their literature.

2. The Sites are not exhibited in a Tourist-Friendly Manner

It is already mentioned in the description of archaeological sites that the history of The Sunderbans are widely unexplored. Whatever excavation or scientific digging took place in this region is insufficient and made at elementary level. The first scientific excavation made in 1956 at Chandraketugarh, which explored a civilization, but the site is not being developed as a historical spot. The tourists will find only couple of mounds and a signboard displayed by Archaeological Survey of India that it is a place of historical importance. This will surely demoralizes a tourist.
to any extent. As per description, six periods or stages of civilization and archaeological evidences are explored at Chandraketugarh but not at all exhibited in order to attract tourist attention. Even the official report of the excavation has not been published. This negative attitude towards tourism abandoned the place from the tourists. On the other hand, the important archaeological sites of The Sunderbans, specially the Mani basin are to be excavated immediately because of rapid changing of topography of the region as to the invasion of civilization process due to population pressure. But no planning to do so is seen or heard of. Moreover, existing historical remains are not taken care of properly. The brick structure of Jata temple is endangered as trees are grown on the backside of the temple. Regarding fort at Diamond Harbour, even few years back cannons were found near the remains, now it is disappeared. There are number of examples of carelessness found with the region causing permanent damage of antiquities.

3. Unconsciousness of the Local People

Though the search for archaeological evidences of The Sunderbans started before independence, but the local people are largely not conscious about the discovery, preservation and exhibition of the antiquities found from here. Therefore, urge to protect and preserve historical and archaeological remains are confined to a small group of people consisting of historians, scholars, researchers and educated class. No fruitful pressure has been created on the government at large involving the mass in order to develop the place as historical tourist spot, secondly, the locals at gross root level who are engaged in pond-digging, fishing, agriculture etc, often sell out the antiquities found by them at nominal prices to the smugglers or art collectors without understanding the significance of the items. This results a continuous outflow of precious elements from then region. May be some important historical links will or have been lost already.

4. Unorganised Site Museums

Due to the efforts of researchers, scholars, antique collectors, government organizations, clubs etc. some museums, exhibition centers have been established(list of museums enclosed in Annexure 3). The problem is these are located in different places. Most of them, especially the private collections are unorganized, exhibited in an unplanned manner, some are closed, tourists hardly believe that these are museums in many cases. Many of them have no signboards or indications. In one or two cases
the local people fail to identify the museum. Therefore, an integrated approach is needed to develop these museums for the sake of tourism. In number of museums, the archaeological elements are kept on uncovered racks full of dust and are exposed to the danger of loss, breakage or theft. In big museums, the collected elements are not documented properly and sometimes one may find the antiquities dumped in a go down. The private collectors often complain of non-cooperation from the government and lack of funds for maintenance.

5. Inaccessible Road Conditions
The Sunderbans itself is situated in a remote place in contrary to the urban areas. Moreover, the historical and archaeological sites are situated at remote places with vulnerable road conditions. During monsoon, most of these sites are inaccessible to the tourists. Even in winter, the situation is not that better as expected. For example, to reach Jata temple from Kolkata, one has to reach Raidighi either by bus or by Auto from Mathurapur railway station, then after crossing river Mani, seven and half kilometers of trekking or riding a van rickshaw (Tricycle). One has to travel this distance on uneven mud road with a feeling of dancing and spot jumping on the Van rickshaw. According to the villagers, this road is almost impassable during rainy seasons. These infrastructural disadvantages often hinder tourism in many parts of The Sunderbans.

6. Failure of Identification of the Prospects of Developing Historical Tourism by the Entrepreneurs or the Planning Bodies
Government of West Bengal appointed number of expert groups and consultancy organizations to chalk out integrated plans for development of tourism in Sunderbans. West Bengal Consultancy Organizations (WEBCON), TCS (Tata Consultancy Services) have submitted their report where none of them have advocated for historical tourism. Even Sahara India Parivar, the private sector organization, who has taken a venture to implement a mega project of tourism development in Sunderbans, is also silent regarding this matter. As a result no initiatives are taken at governmental level to develop this dimension of tourism in this region.

7. Lack of Funds
In a developing country like India, the government is busy with the funding of basic needs of the people like fooding, shelter, agriculture, irrigation etc. The subjects like archaeology, history, culture, tourism etc. are non-priority sectors to the government. In West Bengal, the problem is more acute as it is one of the backward states in term
of economic development. That is why, the department of state archaeology is not funded properly in order to conduct scientific exploration, foreign tourists do not come and tourism industry remains stagnant. It is high time to adopt a proactive tourism policy through proper paradigm shift in order to flourish tourism in the state.

4.1.8 Prospects of Developing Historical Tourism in The Sunderbans

Historical tourism is most conventional and widely circulated. From ancient times, people travel one place to another in order to see historical monuments, shrines, sculptures, religious places of historical importance, war sites etc. India itself is a famous spot of historical tourism. Tourists from different parts of the world come here to see ‘Tajmahal’ a unique 16th century tomb erected by Shahjahan, the Mughal emperor. The tourism, which is developed in relation to Tajmahal, is nothing but historical tourism. Tourism of this type earns considerable amount of foreign exchange to India and also generates large amount of revenues for different states within India as indigenous tourists move from one place to another in order to see historical places. This type of tourism is followed by mass (can be called mass tourism also), it is revenue earning, to some extent eco-friendly as the environmental pollution is not that devastating as it is in the Himalayan belt due to continuous flow of trekkers, mountaineers destroying hill biodiversity permanently and dumping garbage. The scope of growing this type of tourism is only possible to those places having historical archaeological sites.

In this respect, we can examine the prospect of developing historical tourism in the Sunderbans region. Already mentioned in Chapter-1 that the scope of developing tourism in The Sunderbans is largely unexploited. At present, tourism is confined to jungle safari through water-ways within a limited periphery. It is highly seasonal. During monsoon and summer tourism is abandoned there. Modern facilities in order to attract affluent tourists are absent. As a result number of tourists visiting The Sunderbans is insignificant in comparison to other parts of the country. Being a world heritage site, the influx of foreign tourist visiting Sunderbans is negligible. Therefore, it is high time to diversify tourism of The Sunderbans into various dimensions for its survival and all around development. In this perspective, historical tourism may be highlighted as a new horizon. The region has a rich historical background. From the proto-historic age to the last century- various types of historical elements are found in the region. (Already discussed in the beginning of the chapter). Remains of ancient
civilization explored at Chandraketugarh and Joynagar (Dhosa and Tilpi village), Sagar Island is already a renowned historical site and treated as a holy place and many archaeological sites are unexplored. If these sites are excavated scientifically it is expected that new information about ancient civilization will be gathered. If the existing and new historical sites are developed in a tourist-friendly manner, it may be considered as international historical site. The possibilities of this happening are tremendous if proper planning and its implementation take place in the right direction. In this respect, the active participation of local people in order to protect the existing historical places is essential. If the people are conscious about the necessity of preservation and development of the places then they will create pressure on the government to allocate funds, to engage experts, to make comprehensive planning for the development of the region. For this, people should be aware of their rich heritage, culture and history. Awareness campaign regarding historical and archaeological importance of Sunderbans may be conducted by the non-government organizations (NGOs), clubs, social organizations, especially amongst the school children and youth so that they feel pride of their ancestors and the place. Seminars, slide show, occasional lectures by the historians, archaeologists and experts can be organized. The schools and colleges of The Sunderbans may organize educational tours to these historical and archaeological sites. This awareness programme will solve certain problems like:

a) If local people are aware and conscious about the historical importance of their region, it will create a sense of responsibility among them to stop smuggling of archaeological elements, which very much exists there.

b) People will be organized to demand more funds for excavation, archaeological exploration of the sites which are yet to be explored and will create pressure to the government for protecting and maintaining the existing historically important monument, structures, sculptures etc.

c) Local tourism will be developed (which already crudely exist in terms of religious visits) as local people will be more interested to see the places. It will create a platform for ushering national and international tourists.

The important point to be considered is that the historical sites of Sunderbans are situated at reclaimed areas mostly within the localities. One will not find wilderness of a forest or scenic beauty of the nature in these places as like the core area of The
Sunderbans. Therefore, the possibilities of developing historical or cultural tourism are prominent here. In order to bring these places in the tourism map of Sunderbans, the diversification from conventional forest-based tourism is needed. This will definitely expand the scope of tourism; economic development of the places will be possible through revenue earnings from tourism. It will create employment and other businesses will flourish. There will be cultural exchanges through international tourism. If other parts of this state and other states of this country earns considerable revenue exploiting their historical exclusives and antiquities, why not Sunderbans?

Already mentioned there are number of museums, galleries, and archives, private collections situated at different parts of Sunderbans. Some of them are situated near the sites, some are established in the block or sub-divisional towns, State Archaeological museum situated at Behala (Kolkata) also contains some evidences of The Sunderbans archaeology. These museums are mostly unorganized, scattered, having no coordination with each other and suffering from financial assistance. If properly planned and organized, tourism can be developed through these museums.

Each museum can be developed as a resource center. The particular cultural circuit, in which the tourist spot is situated, is generally being reflected in the museum. The museums in Sunderbans can play active role in all round development of the region in the following manner:

i) The tourist (local, national, international) is acknowledged by the cultural history of the destination through the museum. He or she gets information about exchange of culture, art and economy with other region and other regions of the world. Tourist can also gather data, pictures and first hand information about the place through museum publications.

ii) There is scope of spreading of handicraft business and cultural exchanges through proper exhibition conducted by the museum. Craft fair may be conducted at different places where museums contribute exhibits reflecting local culture. There may be a sales wing organized by the museums where local artisans sell their products to the tourists.

iii) The museums may earn additional revenues by supplying different motifs, designs, plans, maps, structural reports, statistical information etc. to local artisans, businessmen, industries, other statutory bodies etc. The experts can offer training to
educated unemployed youth and self-help groups to develop business of handicrafts depending on the sculptures, ancient fashions, designs etc. used in the region in ancient times. The ornaments and clothing's (Maslin cloth) found from Chandraketugarh are unique and there are considerable scope of research in this area. The old potteries can be reproduced following the remote style discovered by the ancient artisans.

iv) In The Sunderbans, there is a continuous flow of findings of archaeological evidences from different parts of the region. They are mostly collected by the local people and sold out to the smugglers, dealers of antique goods and to businessmen. The museums may help to stop this migration and to collect these antiquities through creating awareness to the inhabitants.

v) The museums will obviously enable to develop research and the local people will feel pride to see their rich past and glorious culture and will develop self-esteem and realization of their heritage. It will help to grow national and communal harmony.

4.1.9 Conclusion
There is a positive change taking place in formulating government policies towards tourism both by the central and the state governments. The central government has adopted ‘Look East’ policy in order to develop West Bengal as the gateway to the Southeast Asian countries. State government is also trying to develop the state in all respects. Due to the adaptation of capitalist economy, private sector participation and funding are available in tourism sector. In this favorable economic and political scenario, it is high time to frame suitable tourism policy for Sunderbans for upholding it in the tourism map of the world. Promoting historical tourism will surely add flavour to the diversified tourism spectrum of Sunderbans.
End Notes

1 World heritage site: As per the world heritage convention, UNESCO recognizes crucial and ecologically important sites as World Heritage Sites. These are cultural and natural heritage sites. Ref: A wonder that is Sunderbans-Raha and Saha, pg-13

2 Ref: Bengal District Gazatters-24 Parganas by L.S.S.O’Malley

Published by: West Bengal District Gazetteers Department of Higher Education Government of West Bengal, Calcutta-1998

3 Ref: West Bengal District Gazatters-24 Parganas. Published by K.R. Biswas, State Editor West Bengal District Gazatters, Education Department, Government of West Bengal.

4 ibid pg 59-61

5 During Sena period the kingdom used to be divided into bhukties (provinces), mandlas (districts), Vishayas (Subdivisions) chaaturakas and gramas (villages). Khari vashyas and khari mandala situated within modern khari- parganas (Kharijunri Pargana, in Mathurapur Thana area, in Diamond Harbour subdivision).

6 Ref: Were the Sunderbans inhabited in ancient times?-vol XLV 1876 by J. A.S Beveridge

7 Ref: History of Indian Shipping and Maritime Activity—Babu Radhakumud Mukherjee (1912)

8 Bengal District Gazatters-24 Parganas by L.S.S O’Mally

9 Bengal District Gazatters-24 Parganas by L.S.S O’Mally

10 Ref: West Bengal District Gazatters-24 Parganas. Published by K.R. Biswas, State Editor West Bengal District Gazatters, Education Department, Government of West Bengal, pg 101

11 Ref: Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology-Edited by Amelendu Ghosh


13 Ref: Pratnatotter Itikatha: Chobbis Pargana By Hemen Majumder, Paschimbanga, pg-15

14 Ref: Anandabaza: Patrika-17th February 2006
15 Description of this survey is given by Mr Suddin Dey, Director-State Archaeological Department, West Bengal in the book 'Nimna Gangao Anchal Pratna Utkhanan' - 1994
16 ibid
17 Map enclosed
18 Encyclopedia of Indian Archaeology volume 2 edited by Amalendu Ghosh
19 Nirmalendu Mukhopadhyay: Sunderbaner Mani Ababahika pg 13
21 At around 1822-23, Sunderbans was divided into number of lots for the sake of reclamation and agricultural development. Northern sunderban was divided into 169 lots (1 to 169) and southern part of the Sunderbans was divided into 12 plots (plot A to Plot L) - Sagar Chattopadhyay, Dakshin 24 Pargans Pratnattatya— Akte Ruprekha, Paschimbanga, Pg 23
22 Nirmalendu Mukhopadhyay—Sunderbaner Mani Ababahika, pg-78
23 ibid pg 78-79
24 The list of Ancient monuments in the Presidency Division, Govt. of Bengal, 1896
25 Ref: Sudhin Dey: Nimna Gangao Anchal O Pratna Utkhanan Pg - 14
26 ibid
27 ibid
28 Nirmalendu Mukhopadhyay—Sunderbaner Mani Ababahika pg 41
29 ibid pg 6
30 ibid pg 7
31 ibid pg 31
32 The Antiquities of North-West Sunderbans – Kalidas Dutta
33 Nirmalendu Mukhopadhyay – Pg 35
34 Jassorre Khulnar Ithas – Satis chamdra Nitra Volume 1, 3rd Edition, Kolkata 1963
35 Kharimandal-Kalidas Dutta
36 Sunderboner Mani Ababahika pg 86
37 Kharimandal – Kalidas Dutta
38 Sunderboner Mani Ababahika pg 90
39 Kharimandal – Kalidas Dutta

132
The tanks of Raidighi and Kankandighi were established before 1594. A stone inscription was found indicating the date of establishment —Sagar Chattopadhyay South 24 Pargana and Archaeology – An outline - pg 32

Barakhan Gazi

Among the imaginary pirs, Barakhan Gazi is the most important in 24 parganas. Legends, however, always try to give to Barakhan Razi a historic Existence. According to these legends, Barakhan Gazi was one of the earlier warrior saints of Islam who came to south 24 Parganas to preach Islam, convert local people and punish oppressive zamindars. He had enmity with a Hindu warrior saint named Dakshin Rai. The ballads named Raymangal are full of stories about their rivalry.

Barakhan Gazi’s ‘astanas’ [place of worship] are found in many villages of south 24 parganas. He has an anthropomorphic iconic representation. In many astanas a clay image of a warrior riding a horse (having a beard, wearing a turban on his head and wearing boots and holding flags and arms) is worshipped as Barakhan Gazi. Gazi is regarded as protector of hunters, wood cutters and honey gatherers who go to the deep forests of Sunderbans. These people offer ‘hazat’ puja to the Gaji before entering the forest.

Source: District Gazetteer 24 Parganas edited by Barun De 1994

Sagar Chattopadhyay South 24 Pargana and Archaeology -An Outline, pg 39

Ibid, pg 44

Sagar Chattopadhyay South 24 Pargana and Archaeology -An Outline.

The Philosopher’s stone-speeches and writings of Sir Daniel Hamilton. Edited by Alapan Bandopadhyay and Anup Motilal.
### Annexure 10
List of Artifacts found from Aatghara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Depth in Metre</th>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time Frame (Approximation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Notched beads made of glass</td>
<td>11th Century AD – Pala dynasty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Black polished lid cover bone made (Ivory made?)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terracotta idol-decayed due to reaction of salt-Proper description not possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Red coloured broken handle of a pottery-engraved by any sophisticated pointed tool.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terracotta figurine of Jaina Tirthankar – (standing in Kayotsaarga Mudra)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Part of Fish bone (?) with cut mark</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grey coloured pottery, 6 cm thick</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Grey coloured terracotta beads, two notches found on the surface</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terracotta broken Tirthankar statue in standing style (described before)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Pit 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Depth in Metre</th>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time Frame (Approximation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Broken bolt made of deer - horn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terracotta statue, head turned left side</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Long type terracotta beads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terracotta 'Mithuna' plaque</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Broken part of Terracotta female figurine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Terracotta female statue (broken)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bone made broken bolt</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8.</strong></td>
<td>Incomplete beads made of Aget Stone</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9.</strong></td>
<td>Pottery made of red and black mixed colour. Inside black outside red. Outside there are two layers of colour.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10.</strong></td>
<td>Opaque and terracotta beads. Etched stone beads</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>11.</strong></td>
<td>Grey coloured potteries with notch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>12.</strong></td>
<td>Properly shaped weight measurement tools - terracotta made</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>13.</strong></td>
<td>N.B.P. of broken potteries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>14.</strong></td>
<td>? sherd of NBP dish, terracotta beads and terracotta stopper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>15.</strong></td>
<td>N.B.P. potteries of different diameters - for example, 40 centimetres, 60 cms, 29 cms.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16.</strong></td>
<td>Black coloured jar and bowl. Bowl is notched and it's in outside surface is concave and converse shaped.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>17.</strong></td>
<td>Red coloured pottery - full of mica dust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>18.</strong></td>
<td>Oxidized iron slag and iron rod</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>19.</strong></td>
<td>Bone particle used as weapons (?) with this, grey and red coloured potteries.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>20.</strong></td>
<td>Segment of pottery with grayish thin rim. The rim is of 11 cm diameter with slightly bend from outside.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>21.</strong></td>
<td>Scorched tiles with holes similar tiles are found from Chandraketugrah at Sunga layer.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>22.</strong></td>
<td>Terracotta figurine, the description cannot be detected as it has been decayed significantly.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>23.</strong></td>
<td>Terracotta round-dish or spherical things with hole, used as net sinker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>24.</strong></td>
<td>Similar type of spherical item with hole.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Artifacts found from Mahinagar – Malancha and Boral

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Depth in Metre</th>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time Frame (Approximation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decorated terracotta lamp 10.5 cm x 8 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Red coloured lid of a jar (15.75 cm x 9.75 cm)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pottery with light reddish channel. The rim is bend like bird’s beak 10 cm x 4.4 cm.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Red coloured pottery with channel. The bed is of ash-coloured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black coloured pot with long neck. The top portion is looked like nail headed shape. 17 cm x 17 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black coloured round shaped pottery with splayed rim. It has three parts - neck, middle and bottom. Three parts have been separately made and fixed afterwards. The outerpart is decorated with graphic designs. It apparently looks like Arabic scriptures. 15 x 12 cm.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Small ash coloured jar with long neck. Rim is bend outside. 16 cm x 14 cm.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Handmade red coloured pottery with tapering. Round shaped. 10 cm x 7.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Red coloured pot. Half of the outside part is layered. Pest portion is unlayered. The rim is bend inside. From neck to the body, fire lines are drawn. It is sagger based. 11.5 cm x 7.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bright ash coloured metallic jar. Found till neck and rim</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Greyish bowl. Made by a non professional 7 cm x 5.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Spouted red colored big pottery 4 cm x 1.5 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Similar 8 cm x 4 cm</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Similar 8 cm x 4 cm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Finger pinched water pot or wine - jar</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Jar on stand with straight featureless rim. Corrugated black pottery – 11.5 cm x 9.25 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Small red colored pottery with broken rim.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Small Jar, probably used as oil container 7.5 cm x 7.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Light red colored jar with channel with broken insignificant rim. 8.75 cm x 8.5 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Light red colored pottery 8.25 cm x 7.25 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Round shaped chocolate colored pottery with wide rim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Light red colored flat pottery, rim bend inside. Black coating is found on the surface. 5.5 cm x 4.75 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Light red colored small earthen vessel. With disc shaped base 5.25 cm x 5.25 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Bowl with wide rim and coin shaped base. The shape is gradually cylindrical towards the bottom</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Light red colored pottery with a cone shaped top. Black coating is found outside the surface. 5.75 cm x 4.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Pot with channel 4.25 cm x 5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Big Pot with channel. Decoration of lotus is found on the top of the channel.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Incomplete pattern. This was used to prepare the mud of the pottery. Rectangular 6.5 cm x 4 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Terracotta shuttle probably used for spinning cloth. Two parallel holes are found. Threads are found inside the holes used as a weight in fish net.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Earthen Brick - 10 cm x 8.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Round shaped bowl, ash coloured with wide rim. The bowl is of big one. 26 cm x 5.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Coin shaped ash coloured bowl with insignificant rim. 10 cm x 10 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Red coloured vase with channel 10 cm x 4.5 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Earthen stamp, conical shaped, decoration found in the flat end</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Cream coloured jar. Rim has been diagonally shaped with curved neck. 23 cm x 4 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Hand made pottery. The lower is narrow shaped.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Terracotta female figurine with decorated hair style. Wearing Roman toga. 10 cm x 3.5 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Black coloured lid cover. It has know to hold 9.5 cm diameter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>Similar two lid cover, black and red coloured. Their diameters are respectively 16.5 cm and 18.25 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Big lid cover with knob.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>Essence container, light yellowish with 10.25 cm diameter</td>
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<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>‘Surma’ [ Sulphate of antimony, used as collyrium ] container, hommade gradually because narrow. Height 9 cm, diameter 2.25 cm, lid cover 3 cm and the rest portion 6 cm.</td>
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<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Collyrium stick. Length 11.25 cm. It has a round head over a rod.</td>
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<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Bone made round shaped article. Smooth geometric decoration in one surface, another surface is rough. 6.5 cm diameter.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Fine sand stone pestle. Length 9.5 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>48.</td>
<td>Bangle made of shell with 6 cm diameter</td>
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<tr>
<td>49.</td>
<td>Head of terracotta figurine. 4.5 cm x 3.25 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>50.</td>
<td>Bowl shaped oil container. It has three arms with holes - used for hanging in the wall.</td>
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<tr>
<td>51.</td>
<td>Terracotta elephant figurine (broken) 7 cm x 5.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>52.</td>
<td>Terracotta rattle for children with handle. It has a small hole and number of stone chips for making noise 7.5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>53.</td>
<td>Terracotta lid cover. It has a 2 cm diameter know to hold. It is black coloured with 9 cm diameter.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>54.</td>
<td>Similar black coloured lid cover Total diameter is 5.5 cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>55.</td>
<td>Two pieces of terracotta bangles with 4.5 cm and 5.5 cm diameter respectively.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>56.</td>
<td>Neck of a big red coloured pottery. Thick layer of coating outside the surface. It's rim is spreaded outside but folded inside. 9.25 cm x 5 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>57.</td>
<td>Portion of a Big red coloured Pottery. It seems to be a part of jar. It has geometric decoration outside the surface.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>58.</td>
<td>Light coloured portion of a jar. Basket marks are found in outer surface.</td>
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<tr>
<td>59.</td>
<td>Upper portion of a conical shaped pottery. It seems to be the upper portion of an amphora. Squired line was found top to bottom. 4 cm x 9 cm</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>60.</td>
<td>Ash coloured bowl situated on a stand</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
61. Light red coloured pottery with long neck. The rim is obliquely cut. Maximum portion of the pottery is of neck. 7.5 cm x 8.6 cm

62. 'Damani' shaped light red coloured pottery. Possibly votive.

Source: De S (1994) Translation from Bengali made by the researcher.
Annexure 11

PRFORMA QUESTIONNAIRE FOR IDENTIFYING TOURIST AWARENESS REGARDING DEVELOPING HISTORICAL TOURISM IN THE SUNDERBANS

RESPONDENT NAME:
ADDRESS:
CITY:
P.I.N:
PHONE NO:
PROFESSION / CATEGORY:

NOTE: Questions are set to all categories of people like local residents, tourists, historians, government officials etc, questions applicable to a particular category are answered unless the space remains blank.

Q1> Are you aware of the historical background of this site?
   (a) Yes - fully aware
   (b) I have heard of the place but not aware of the historical background.
   (c) No, not heard of the place and not aware of the historical background.

Q2> How did you come to know about this place?
   (a) From ancestors/ parents
   (b) Seen from very childhood
   (c) Books and media
   (d) Friends and others

Q3> Do you think this place can be developed into a historical tourist spot?
   (a) Yes
   (b) No
   (c) No idea

P.T.O
Q4> Do tourists come regularly? If yes then in which season tourist inflow is maximum?
[question to local people]
(a) Winter
(b) Rainy season
(c) Summer

Q5> Are you aware of the rest of the historical sites in the vicinity?
(a) Yes
(b) No
(c) Not fully aware

Q6> Do you think a tour package based on the historical places can be offered to the tourists?
(a) Yes
(b) No
(c) No idea

Q7> Which infrastructures do you feel is required to be developed over here?
(a) Transportation
(b) Hotels and Lodges
(c) Roads
(d) Information center and Museum
(e) All of them

Your suggestions: -
Annexure 12
List of Museums and Private Collections where Archaeological Evidences of The Sunderbans are Preserved

Outside the state
National Museum — New Delhi
Antiquities found in Kankandighi and Nalgora are kept here.

Inside the State
Within Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority Jurisdiction :-

i) National Museum - Calcutta
Few antiquities of Sunderbans including a Garurh sculpture found from Jalghata are kept here.

ii) State Archaeological Museum, Behala
   1, Satyen Ray Road, Kolkata - 34
   Findings of Chandraketugarh, Aatghara, harinaryanpur, Deulpota are preserved here.

iii) Bhuban Museum, Parnasree, Behala
   Coins, fossils, stone sculpture etc. is kept here.

iv) Ashutosh Museum under University of Calcutta (College Street Campus)
   Findings of Chandraketugarh preserved here.

V) Purakirti Parisac Museum – Jadavpur, Garpha, Kolkata-78
   Curator- Mr. Nirmalendu Mukhopadhyay
   Potteries, coins, sculptures found in 24 parganas are kept here.

Within the jurisdiction of North 24 Parganas

i) Chandraketugarh Museum – Village : Berachampa, P.O. Debalaya
   Keeper : Dilipkumar Maite – Same findings of Chandraketugarh kept here.

ii) Balanda Archaeological Museum: Post : Haroa, Established by Abdul Jabbar, Ornaments, Coins, Fossils, terrakota findings are kept here.

Within the jurisdiction of South 24 Parganas

i) Sundarban Regional Museum Baripur
   Established in 1979, a rich collection of archaeological evidences are preserved along with anthropological, Zoological, geological, and folklore materials.
ii) Sunderbans Folklore and Archaeological Museum – Diamond Harbour, Newtown

Established in 1976, keeper: Mr. Sunil Ranjan Bashist. Antique books, manuscripts and archaeological items are kept.

iii) Archaeologist Kalidas Dutta Memorial Museum Majilpur

Secretary: Prabhat Bhattacharya

One gold coin, 8 silver coins and 24 copper coins are kept in their custody. Terracotta and stone sculptures are also exhibited.

They have a mobile unit, which participates in different functions, exhibitions, fairs in and around Sundarbans.

iv) Tripura Sundari Museum - Boral

Inside the Tripurasundari Temple, sculptures of Pala and sena period are kept.

v) Ramakrishna mission museum – Manasadwip – Sagar Island.

Local archaeological evidences are kept here which includes remnants of mud sculptures and potteries.

vi) Bamankhali Pragati Sangha – Sagar Island

Local archaeological remains are kept. Keeper- Mr Anil Kumar Khanra.

vii) Gangaridi Research Centre and Museum - Kakdwip

Curator: Mr. Narrotum Halder

Seals and sealing, copper coins, bowls, stone sculptures etc. are exhibited. They publish a magazine regularly.

viii) Nrisingha Ashrama - Kakdwip

Stone sculptures of Pala period, earthen pots of ancient age are kept.

ix) Surendranagar High School – J. Plot, Patharpratima block

Antiquities found locally are kept.

x) Khari – Krishnachandrapur – Chattrabhog Museum

Keeper: Mr. Dinabandhu Naskar – Hundreds of antiquities found in Mani Basin are kept.

xi) Tulsicharan Bhattacharya Memorial Museum – South Bishnupur

Antiquities and archaeological remains of Mani Basin are preserved.

xii) Nimpith Ramkrishnamission Museum – Nimpith, Majilpur

xiv) **Sunderbans Museum under Kapil Open University** – Namkhana  
Keeper – Dr. Manindranath Jana.

xv) **Sunderbans Regional Museum Chakratirtha-- Khari**  
Curator: Mr. Devisankar Midya

### Private Collections

i) Dr. Bimal Kumar Dutta - Majilpur

ii) Amal Kumar Dutta - Majilpur

iii) Rabin Halder - Abdalpur, Diamond Harbour

iv) Dr. Sibprasad Bandhopadhyay, agriculturist, Boral – South 24 Parganas

v) Gopal Bhattacharya - Joynagr.

vi) Late Pmbandhu Chakraborty - Haroa – North 24 Parganas.

In the magazine published by Sunderbans Regional Museum Baruipur, dated 7th April, 1991, Dr. Atul Chandra Bhoumik stated that the total no. of museums and private collections in South and North 24 Parganas are 29. Out of these 15 are known as Museum, 9 are private collections and 5 are established by local clubs/organization.

[ Article : 24 Pargana’s Museums and Private collections – An outline]
Annexure 13
Maps of The Sunderbans(Ancient and Current)

1. Map prepared in 1597 AD. On the basis of information contained in the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea and the geography of Ptolemy and the descriptions contained in the accounts of Arrian.

2. Map showing ‘Gangaridai’ as per Ptolemy’s geography of India and Central Asia.

3. Synoptical Map showing ‘Suhma’ and ‘Vanga’ and ‘Gange’.


5. Map of Bengal land and rivers prepared by Fon Den Broke(1660).


7. Map regarding rivers of the Eighteenth century Bengal(1779).

8. Map showing the Presidency Division in Hunter’s ‘A Statistical Account of Bengal’.


10. Satellite map of Sunderbans
Map prepared in 1597 AD on the basis primarily of information contained in the Periplus of the Erythrean Sea (a seaman's guide relating to the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea), and the "geography" of Ptolemy and the descriptions contained in the accounts of Arrian. All dating to the first two centuries AD.
12. Antiquities of Sunderbans kept in Unprotected Condition in a Collector's Place

13. Jatar Deul at Kankandighi

14. Ancient Deities (Bara Murti)
15. Potteries found during Reclamation and Private Survey and Preserved by a Collector

16. Buddhist Sthupas Situated in Dhakir Mukh near Joynagar
17. Excavation going on at Dhosa village (January 2006)

18. Ambulinga Temple at Chatrabhog

20. Stone Image found by a Villager
21. Image of Devi Tripurasundari

22. Image of Barakhan Gaji in Chattrabhog
23. Image of Devi Narayani

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No. 35

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Two sides of the one rupee note introduced by Sir Daniel in 1936.

24. Two sides of the one rupee note introduced by Sir Daniel Hamilton

Hamilton's Bungalow at Gosaba: a recent photograph.

25. Hamilton's Bungalow at Gosaba

26. Photograph of Cornelian Beads found from Mandirtala, collected by Mr. Devisankar Midya
Chapter 4.2
Religious Tourism in The Sunderbans

Contents

4.2.1 Introduction
4.2.2 Geographical Description of The Place
4.2.3 Legend of the Holy Place Gangasagar
4.2.4 History of Sagar Island
4.2.5 Reclamation Process
4.2.6 Progress of Modern Sagar Island
4.2.7 Current Tourism Scenario
4.2.8 Archaeological Sites of Sagar Island
4.2.9 Fairs and Festivals of Sagar Island
4.2.10 Routes to Gangasagar
4.2.11 Tourism Infrastructure at Gangasagar
4.2.12 Tourist Inflow at Gangasagar
4.2.13 Tourist Spots Surrounding Sagar Island
4.2.14 Contribution of Tourism in Local Economy of the Island
4.2.15 Problems of Developing Tourism in Sagar Island
4.2.16 Scope of Tourism Development
4.2.17 Conclusion

Sagar Island at a Glance

Major Events in Sagar Island

End Notes and References

Annexure 14: Government Order certifying the number of Pilgrims during Gangasagar Fair

Annexure 15: Sample Survey of 100 tourists interviewed by the researcher during the calendar year 2005

Annexure 16: A sketch of constant decay of Sagar island

Photographs

154
Chapter 4.2
Religious Tourism in The Sunderbans

4.2.1 Introduction
Tourist movements were in vogue in The Sunderbans since epic ages. The modern concept of tourism can be applied in ancient India through hunting tours of the kings, through war adventures in other countries or states, through conducting marriages with new regimes and through religious tours by the sages and their disciples. The Sagar Island of today was mentioned as ‘Patal Puri’ (nether world) in Ramayana and Mahabharata. This place was treated as a holy place in ancient times as the river Ganges intermingled with sea here followed by a legend of her origin. This place was also mentioned as the kingdom of the non-Aryans, which were tried to be conquered by the Aryans. On the other hand, flow of religious people was continuous since the last 5000 years in this place being a holy land. As a result, this place holds a separate identity in history, obviously for religious significance. In this chapter we will examine the impact of religious tourism in the Sagar Island on the development of the region and also verify the scope of expansion and diversification of tourism circuits in an eco friendly and integrated manner.

4.2.2 Geographical Description of the Place
At present, Sagar Island is treated as a separate block under the Kakdwip subdivision of south 24-pargana districts. It is situated between 88° 11' longitude east and between 21°36' to 21°56' latitude north. The island is long by 30 kilometers in the north-south and spread over 13 kilometers in the east west. It is the biggest island amongst 104 islands of The Sunderbans. According to 2001 census report the total population of the island is 185,630. There are 46 villages or mouzas in the island. The population density is 845.42 per sq. kilometer. In the past the island was attached with the main island. The area of this island is at present 219.55 sq. kilometres. The climate is of mild temperature, 90.8° Fahrenheit in summer and 70.8° Fahrenheit in winter. The average rainfall is 100-125 centimeters. There are nine gram panchayats and one block development office situated at Rudranagar. There is a degree college along with five higher secondary schools. The rate of literacy is 92%. The island cannot be reached from Kolkata directly, first to reach
Kakdwip by train or bus and then to Lot no 8, the jetty. Then one has to across Muriganga or Baratala river by vessel (big motor launch) and to reach Kachuberia on the other side. Kachuberia is the starting point of the Sagar Island. From here one has to travel 30 kilometers to reach Gangasagar or the sea. Total distance from Kolkata to Gangasagar is about 130 kilometers.

4.2.3 Legend of the Holy place ‘Gangasagar’

The legend is related to the origin of the river Ganges where it is stated that Sagar, king of Ayodhya (Oudh), the 13th descendent of Rama, had performed the ‘Aswamedha’ jajna or horse-sacrifice for 99 times. This ceremony consisted in sending a horse around the world in order to establish supremacy on the other parts of the world. The returning of the horse unopposed indicated that the supremacy of the sender is established. The horse was then solemnly sacrificed to the Gods. King Sagar was preparing the 100th sacrifice but Indra, king of heaven became jealous of this new rival as he himself performed the ceremony for 100 times and acquired the title of ‘Satamanna’. In order to stop Sagar, Indra stole the horse and concealed it in a subterraneous cell, where the sage Kapil was absorbed in heavenly meditation. The 60,000 sons of Sagar traced the horse in his hideouts and believing the sage to be the author of the theft, assaulted him. The sage roused in reality, opened his eyes and cursed the assailants, who were immediately burned to ashes and sentenced to hell. A grandson of Sagar, in search of his ancestors, at last visited sage Kapil and begged him to redeem the souls of the dead. The holy man replied that this is only possible if the waters of Ganges (the aqueous form of Lord Vishnu and lady Lakshmi) could be brought to the spot to touch the ashes. During this time Ganga (Ganges) was residing in heaven, in the custody of Lord Brahma the creator and the grandson of Sagar prayed him to send the Goddess Ganga to the earth. He died without success. He had no children, but a son Bhagirath was miraculously born of his widow, and through his prayers Brahma allowed Ganga to visit the earth. Bhagirath ushered Ganga as far as Hatiagarh, in the 24 paraganas, near the sea but could not show the rest of the way. In order to make sure of reaching the spot, Ganga divided herself into 100 mouths, thus forming the delta of the Ganges. One of these mouths reached the cell and washed the ashes, completed the atonement for the offence of the sons of king Sagar whose souls were thereupon admitted into heaven. Ganga thus became the sacred stream of 100 mouths and it is being said that the sea took its name of
Sagar from this legend. The point of junction of the river and the sea at Sagar Island is regarded as a sacred place of Hindu pilgrimage. This legend has a historical significance as it indicates the ancient course of the Ganges to the sea.

The belief of this mythology brings thousands of Hindu pilgrims to this island since ancient times. The legend sanctify the place, as a result, on the day of ‘Great Bathing festival’ the pilgrims take a dip to wash away their sins in the holy water. The significance of this place was narrated in ancient books and immense gathering of pilgrims, from all parts of India resort to Sagar island on the day when the son enters Capricorn in the early part of January, which is traditionally known as ‘Makarsankranti’. A fair is held on the island at the same time and lasts for a month, during which an extensive trade is carried on. The occurrence of the fair and the festival were accounted in H. H Wilson’s Essays on the Religions of the Hindus (volume 2 pages 164-169, edition 1862) – “At the winter solstice, bathing at the confluence of the Ganges with the ocean is particularly meritorious; and accordingly a vast concourse of people is annually assembled at Gangasagar, or the mouth of the Hoogly branch of the Ganges at the period of the Makarsankranti, identified with the first Magh or the 12th February. Wherever such assemblages take place, objects of a secular nature are now, as they have ever been, blended with those of devotion; and the mela, which originates in purposes of pilgrimage, becomes equally, or in a still greater degree, a meeting of itinerant merchants or a fair. The number of persons that assemble at Gangasagar is variously estimated. Some years ago they were considered to average about one hundred thousand; but I have been informed by high authority that latterly the number has increased to double that amount. They come from all parts of India – the larger proportion, of course from the contiguous provinces of Bengal and Orissa; but there are many from the Dekhan and from Hindustan, and even from Nepal and the Punjab. They are of both sexes and of all ages; many from idleness or a propensity to a vagrant life not uncommon in India, and there is a very large proportion of religious mendicants of all sects.”

The fair lasts several days, but three days are the limit of the religious festival. The first ceremony is the propitiation of the ocean, by casting into it various offerings with short ejaculatory prayers. There was a time when the offerings included children who were cast into the sea. It has been stopped long back. As a part of religious proceedings, bathing in the sea is to be performed early in the morning and is repeated by some at noon. Some also have their head shaved after bathing and many
of those whose parents are recently deceased celebrate obsequial ceremonies (sraddha) on the seashore. After taking a dip the pilgrims offer prayers to the temple dedicated to the divine sage Kapilmuni. On the second and third days of the religious celebrations, bathing in the sea, adoration of Ganga and the worship of Kapilmuni continue. During the whole time most of the pilgrims sleep on the sand under the sky.

4.2.4 History of Sagar Island

The existence of 'Gangasagar' is very much present in legends, epics, puranas, travelogues, and descriptions given by different people at different times. From time immemorial people have been living on this island. We cannot ascertain the exact date when human habitation first begins here. It is proved that Sagardwip was a rich human settlement during the reigns of Mauryas, Shungas, Kushans, Guptas, Palas and Senas. From the descriptions given by Roman, Greek, Egyptian historians and travelers we find the existence of a strong and prosperous race known as Gangaridies. They ruled the southwest part of lower Bengal including present 24 paraganas and Sagar Island. They ruled over 400 years starting from 400 B.C. (Details of Gangaridies are given in History of The Sunderbans chapter). Greek historian Deodoras in his book 'Bibliothika Historica' mentioned that the capital of Gangaridies was the port of Gonge or Gangi, i.e. the modern Sagar Island. Greek geographer Ptolemy prepared a map in second century A.D. wherein Gange port is mentioned with its latitude and longitude. In the book "Periplus of the Erythrian Sea" written by an anonymous Greek sailor in first century A.D., it is mentioned that a big river joins the Bay of Bengal near the Sagardwip port. This river is none but the Ganges itself. Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sarkar writes in his book 'Studies in the geography of ancient and medieval India' – "the location of the city of Ganga, capital of Gangians or Vaiges, in the vicinity of the confluence of the river Ganga and the Sagore suggests that it was no other than the celebrated holy city of Gangasagar or Gangasagar sangam mentioned in the Indian literature". The kingdom of Gandaridies cannot be traced, as a large part of this kingdom went under the sea for several times and the evidences of the civilization also cannot be clearly traced.

During the Pala dynasty the areas on the Bay of Bengal were considerably developed. During the reign of Devpal, Sagardwip was under Baghratati Mondal. From the Nalanda copper plate inscription of Devpala, it is learned that maharaja Devpala
established a *tirthasthan* (place of worship) at *Sagar sangam*. Around 15th century A.D., *Danujmardan Dev*, king of *Chandradwip*, conquered an extensive land on the seashore near *Gangasagar*. Some coins of *Danujmardan Dev* have been discovered from The Sunderbans.

During *Mughal* dynasty, the region was ruled by *Pratapaditya* (already discussed in chapter 4.1) the king of *Chandikan*. According to some historians *Chandekan* or *Chand Khan* was situated in the Sagardwip itself. A seaport and a naval command were established by *Pratapaditya* at *Sagardwip*. After *Pratapaditya*, the administration of Sunderbans was very poor. At that time the *Mughs* and the Portuguese pirates came to this island by reverse and created menace among the innocent people of the villages.

The British came to India in the 17th century. Among the islands at the confluence of the sea, *Sagardwip* became their favorite one. The Christian missionary Sebastian Manrik (1629-1640 A.D.) described the island as an isolated cold plain land. He observed many ancient temples, tombs and houses. In 1683, Mr. Hejes, another Englishman saw a temple here. From Hamilton’s account in 1727 we know that the island was a sacred place to the Hindus. Historian *Satish Chandra Mitra* mentions in his book *‘Jessore Khulnar Itihas’* volume 1 that in 1688 2 lakhs of people lived in *Sagardwip*. Thus a temporary harbour grew up here. After the battle of Pallasey the British rulers started thinking of developing the island.

### 4.2.5 Reclamation Process

The reclamation of the island from jungle was started early in the 19th century. In 1811, Mr. Beaumont an Englishman took some land on agreement for 10 years and started agriculture in the island. In 1813, Mr. Jones took 100 acres of land for establishing a factory of buff leather and asked that all tiger skins brought to the collector’s office might be made over to him for this purpose. A joint stock company was formed in 1813 namely “The Sagar Island Society”. It started with the capital of Rs. 2.5 lakhs. Its aim was to clear the jungle and build up human habitation. The jungles in four square miles land were cleared by September 1820. A post office was established. The settlements of human habitation started. But a great cyclone in 1833 frustrated the attempt of the society. Again the habitation grew due to the increased attraction of the people towards the island. However, the development of the island
was hindered due to regular Tornados and cyclones. In 1864, cyclone destroyed three-fourth of the population of the island leaving only 1488 out of 4137.10

4.2.6 Progress of Modern Sagar Island
A new law was passed for Sagardwip in 1897. In 1898, seventy one square miles of land was distributed among the zaminders on a lease of 40 years. In 1808, a lighthouse was built in a village of Beguakhali. Telegraph was introduced in 1855-56. A police station was set up in 1904 at Ghoramara, which has been shifted to Muriganga in 1918. From 1928 onwards primary schools were established. After independence, the zamindari system was abolished and the rural development was effected by the Government.

4.2.7 Current Tourism Scenario
Before discussing the tourist intake and infrastructure of the spot, a brief description of the places of interest and important events are given below: -

**Temple of Kapilmuni**
The present temple of Kapilmuni is being situated at Gangasagar near the seashore in 1973. According to some authors11 it is the seventh temple built till date. Previous temples were engulfed in sea at different times. The first temple was erected in 430 A.D.12 Another temple, which was built by queen Satwabhama of Varanasi was destroyed in 1865. After those two more temples were erected, which were swallowed by sea. In 1961, the then chief minister of West Bengal Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy collected Rs. 11,000 for a stable temple. This temple was also submerged in sea. The present temple has been built by Ramananda panthi sadhus of Ayodhya who are still worshipping Kapilmuni and other images in the temple. The priests of Ayodhya enjoy the rights of the temple ownership and it was legally established by the court. In this temple there are images of Vishalakshmi, Hanumanji, Lord Indra holding a horse for yajna, and the image of Kapilmuni standing and holding his rosary. Near Kapilmuni, there is an image of king Sagar. All the images smeared with vermilion. The pilgrims offer their prayers in the temple. This temple is the main attraction to the devotees and the tourists.
Sea Beach
At the southern extreme of Gangasagar, Bay of Bengal is flowing. The fair ground is set near the sea and the Kapilmuni temple is erected within 500 meters of the sea. The seashore with a mere sand bank, about a mile in length and about a quarter mile broad of a crescent from which the wide sea opening in front and the back covered by tamarisk trees – contains a scenic beauty to the tourists. This extensive silver-white seashore, constantly being hugged by the surfy sea waves can easily compete with other famous sea beaches of the country if decorated properly.

Kapilananda Ashrama
This temple is one of the ancient temples of Sagar Island. Swami Kapilananda (a leader of a religious sect) visited Sagar Island about 110 years back and his disciples formed an Ashram near the main Kapilmuni temple. The Ashram authorities run a dharmashala (temporary accommodation for pilgrims) and arrange food for them.

Temple of Bharat Sevashram Sangha
Bharat Sevashram Sangha is a religious body, which is involved in philanthropic activities throughout the country. It has established a big temple and biggest permanent accommodation in the island for the pilgrims and tourists. They have more than 100 rooms in their ashram for the use of the pilgrims. The temple was being inaugurated by the Prime minister of India Mr. Morarji Deshai in 1980. The architecture of the temple is worth to see and the authorities run a boy’s hostel and school for the local poor families. They also provide food to the pilgrims.

Yogendra Math
Onkarnath Swami established a temple near the seashore, which is known as Yogendra Math. The temple is also known as Lakshminarayan temple. This temple is being runned by Mahamilan math.

Shankaracharya (Nagbaba) Temple
This temple is also situated within the surroundings of main Kapilmuni temple. The temple is of cylindrical shape. Statues of various deities are worshipped here. The temple was erected in 1953 by the Dashnami sect of the Juna Akhara trust.
Other temples
Apart from the temples situated near the seashore, there are many temples found throughout the island. Few of them are old, one or two of them have archaeological importance, and others are comparatively new. Some of the important temples are:

a. *Sitala temple at Kashtala*
This is an old temple situated near *Kachuberia*. During reclamation of the island, some images were found near an ancient tree, which are shifted in a temple and being worshipped.

b. *Kali temple at Dhaspara*
This temple is situated four kilometers away from the *Mandirtala* stoppage. During reclamation one round shaped stone was found near the existing temple, which was treated as deity and the villagers started worshipping it.

c. *Vishnu temple of Muriganga*
The architecture of the temple is beautiful. Lord Vishnu is being worshipped here. The temple was established by Mr. *Kumarnarayan Giri* in 1925.

d. *Shiva temple at Rudranagar*
This temple is also worth to see. It is situated at roadside near *Chowrangi* stoppage of *Rudranagar* block office. Lord *Shiva* is being worshipped here. During festival time large gathering occurs.

e. *Nag temple at Manasadwip*
This temple is situated in *Manasadwip* near the *Ramkrishna* Mission. Various statues and deities and images of snake are seen here. During festival, large gathering and weekly fair are conducted.

f. *Vishalakshmi temple*
_Devi Vishalakshmi_ is a local deity who has been worshipped by the people of The Sunderbans since ancient times. Basically the lower sect of the people like fishermen, woodcutters, and boatmen used to worship this deity for protecting them from wild animals and natural calamities. Throughout the island, temples of *vishalakshmi* found frequently. *Vishalakshmi* at *Dhablat* (6 km from *Gangasagar*) is famous and other stone sculptures are kept in that temple, which are found in *Sagar* Island.
Lighthouse
In the western side of Gangasagar, 83 feet lighthouse is being situated. It is about nine kilometers from the Kapilmuni temple. The tourists have to hire tricycles (rikshaw vans) in order to reach the place as five kilometers road from the main road is narrow and brick built. This lighthouse was first constructed at Beguakhali village in 1808 A.D. and reconstructed in its present shape in 1913 A.D. The tourists may require permission from the caretaker in order to enter inside the lighthouse area as it is declared as a protective place by the Government. A radio station, a meteorological office, a mini dock to keep the ships and resting place for the sailors are worth to see.

Ramkrishna Mission
Ramkrishna Mission—a philanthropic institution is working for spreading of education and other social activities throughout the country. This mission has played a pioneering role for establishing schools and educating the inhabitants of Island. The primary school was established by one of the devotees of the mission in 1928 at Manasadwip. His name is Rakhal Maharaj (Swami Ishtananda). The school has been developed to a high school and meanwhile as ashram with a temple, guesthouse, museum, school buildings, hostels were founded. The tourists will discover various activities of rural development controlled and initiated by the mission. The ashram temple is worth to see.

Marine Research Centre
Being situated at the confluence of sea and being the Harbour of mangrove vegetation, Sagar Island has been identified as a lucrative research platform to the botanists, zoologists and marine biologists. Renowned zoologist Dr. Amelesh Choudury established Susuma Devi Chowdhurani Marine Research Centre in 1966. The centre is situated at Bamankhali’s Patharpratima village. His intention was to study the biodiversity and environment of The Sunderbans and to collect and preserve different animal species found in Sagar Island. The centre started completely in 1969 and many young researchers joined the centre and achieved their research degrees. Volume of new findings was gathered from here and being published and circulated within the academic periphery. Long-term multidisciplinary mangrove research in Sunderbans actually started from this centre. Central Government sanctioned number
of research grants to develop this centre. At present, any interested tourist can visit this centre and find a considerable large amount of sea spices displayed and labeled in glass jars. Chemical, physical and biological laboratories are also being seen. But the building condition is quite shabby and lack of maintenance is observed. From the visitor’s book arrival of considerable number of foreign scientist and researchers may be noted.

**Solar Parks**

Temporary electrification for the first time in *Gangasagar* mela was made in 1950 but there was no electricity in the Island till 1973. The process of permanent electrification was started in 1972 by the West Bengal State Electricity Board (WBSEB) and in 1973; the electric generating power station with a capacity of 128 kilowatt was inaugurated, which enlightened the major markets and mela ground of the Island. Despite this effort, most of the Island remained in darkness, as there were technical difficulties to increase the generating capacity. Therefore alternative solution was initiated to the problem and as a result the solar power project was started. The West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Authority (WEBREDA) started the largest solar power project of the country in 1994 at *Kamalpur* of Sagar Island. The project was successfully completed and inaugurated by honorable governor of West Bengal in 1996. In 1998, the Sagar Island has been declared as ‘Solar Island’ by the Central Government. At present most of the parts enjoy solar light facilities but it is restricted for five to six hours at night (i.e. from 6 p.m. to 12 p.m.). No electricity is available after 12 p.m. or during the daytime. This problem is to overcome for the sake of tourism and industrial development of the Island. The solar parks situated at different places of the Island with its mechanical beauty attract the urbanized tourists who are not familiar with the alternative mode of electrification. Number of windmills is also established near the seashore for enabling rural electrification. These are also worth to see.

**4.2.8 Archaeological sites of Sagar Island**

The historical importance of *Gangasagar* and *Kapilmuni Ashram* has been discussed. Some archaeological discoveries have been made from here and number of archaeological sites is also located. Already mentioned, this place was strategically treated as one of the important ports (port of *Gange*) by the *Gangaridis*. Therefore
people and culture of different countries at different times were collaborated here. The artifacts explored here reflected the multicultural existence of the people at the ancient times. From Sagardwip many relics of ancient civilizations during the Mauryas, Kushanas, Sungas, Guptas, Palas and Senas have been found. The relics include potteries, coins, stone sculptures, beads etc. The potteries include toys, bids, plates, measuring units, yakshas, terracottas, pipe type vessels etc. The stone models include Lord Vishnu, Sun God, and Mahismardini having four and twelve hands, Goddess Kali and others. The seals inscribed with proto-Bengali scripts and coins inscribed with Arabic scripts attract the attention of the archaeologists. These findings prove the existence of rich civilization in the past. These artifacts were found from the different villages of Sagar Island through ponds digging, cultivation and through reclamation process. Besides, different kinds of houses and temples made of thin bricks, silver and gold ornaments and boats have also found.

Ruins of Mandirtala

Among the ancient ruins, the ruins of Mandirtala are most important. This place is situated at the west coast of river Hoogly in Sagar Island. It is about 5 kilometers away from the main road (from Mandirtala stoppage) and situated just beside the guard wall of the river. There is a remnant of an ancient temple covered by an old peepul tree. There are number of mounds found near the remnants. The debris of brick walls visible underground and hundreds of antiquities collected from the surroundings makes the place very important from the archaeological point of view. More information may be collected if proper excavation is made by the experts. According to the curator of the museum at Bamankhali Mr. Anil Kumar Khanra “the entire stretch of about 2 kilometers right from Rathtanabari to the east and to the mount of a so called temple to the West Coast of river Hoogly evidently suggests a treasure spot of antiquity of the earliest time.”

Museums

Some ancient stone images of Gods and Goddess are kept in Vishalakshmi temple at Dhablat and Prasadpur. Others are either being worshipped at different places or kept in the museums. There are two museums situated at Sagar Island. Both of them have been developed by individual efforts without receiving any government patronage. One is situated at the residence of Mr. Anil Kumar Khanra beside the
main road at Bamankhali village. Another is situated at Ramkrishna Mission Manashadwip. Rather Mr. Khanra's collection is voluminous and diversified in comparison to the Ramkrishna Mission. Mr. Anil Khanra is a social worker and engaged in collection of antiquities in Sagar Island and to their preservation. In an interview with the researcher, he expressed the need of financial and technical support in order to preserve the antiquities in proper order. Other artifacts of Sagar Island are kept at Gangaridi Sanskriti Kendra Kakdwip, Ashutosh museum Kolkata and regional museum Kashinagar.

**Historical Protective Tanks**

Sagar Island is a cyclone prone area. Number of times this Island has been affected by natural disasters like floods, cyclones, tornados, flow tides etc. In order to save the inhabitants, in 1887, the Presidency commissioner Mr. Chapman announced to create protective tanks and refugee houses at different places of the Island. The lengths, breadths and heights of these tanks are 200 feet, 150 feet and 16.5 feet respectively. The refugee houses are established on 18 feet pillars and consisting of four rooms and water tanks. These measures really helped many people in past during natural calamity. At present, these are remained in a neglected situation these may be worth to the tourists.

**4.2.9 Fairs and Festivals in Sagar Island**

**Gangasagar Mela (fair)**

Every year a big fair is held on the occasion of 'Makar snan' (holy bath during the sun entering into Capricorn). This fair is famous throughout the country and devotees come from all parts of the country and a few from abroad. The fair is very ancient; the time when it began is unknown. As to the preparation of the fair, the district magistrate of South 24 Paragana conducts a meeting by the end of September every year. The government departments and voluntary organizations taking part in the fair are brought under a unified command. This is made as per the provisions of Gangasagar mela Act 1953. A permanent committee consisting of 12 members was formed in 1969 as per resolution of the Home (political) department of the government to look after the welfare, general improvement and management of the fair. The arrangement of sheds, rest houses, drainage, drinking water supply,
electricity etc is looked after by the Public Health Engineering department. The Zilla Parisad maintains the Kakdwip jetty, runs the ferry service across the river and maintains the roads. The West Bengal police and the district super indent of police maintain peace and security during the fair. The launches anchor themselves to steel barges. These barges are owned by the Central Inland Waterways Transport Corporation. The mobile civil emergency force helps the pilgrims in different ways, which includes saving lives of drowning persons. Many voluntary organizations render various services at the fair ground.

**Nag Mela at Manasadwip**

During the winter season, one more festival is being observed in the Manasadwip which is known as snake festival (Nag Mela). A fair is organized in front of the Naga temple where local people and inhabitants from another islands gather and enjoy.

### 4.2.10 Routes to Gangasagar

In the past there was only one way to Gangasagar mela i.e. by boats and steamers. During the British time, the pilgrims from Burma used to come to Sagar by ships. Later the government made arrangements by roads. At present, the means of communication on land are buses, trains, trucks and other small vehicles. A number of trains also ply daily from Sealdah to Kakdwip. The pilgrims from Sealdah go to Diamond Harbour and Kakdwip by trains. Some organizations make arrangement for buses directly from Howrah station and Babughat (Esplanade) to lot no 8. Besides, the transport department of government of West Bengal provides buses in the same route. From there the pilgrims cross the river (Muriganga or Bartala) by vessel and reach Kachiuberia on the other side and from there they easily reach Sagar mela by buses or cars (30 kilometers). In recent times the pilgrims from different parts of the country come to the Gangasagar fair directly by reserve buses.
## Route Directions to Gangasagar Mela

Fig 4.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. From the Howrah station and Kolkata Esplanade (state buses) to Namkhana</td>
<td>113 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. From Howrah to Hardwood Point by bus.</td>
<td>96 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. From Sealdah to Diamond Harbour by train</td>
<td>53 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. From Sealdah to Kakdwip by train</td>
<td>97 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. From Diamond Harbour to Hardood point by bus</td>
<td>43 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. From Namkhana to Chemaguri by launch</td>
<td>9 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. From Chemaguri to Gangasagar mela by bus</td>
<td>9 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. From Hardwood point lot no 8 to Kachuberia by launch</td>
<td>4 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. From Kachuberia to Gangasagar mela by bus</td>
<td>30 km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.11 Tourism Infrastructure at Gangasagar

Accommodation and Living Arrangements at Gangasagar

1. **Youth hostel** (10 rooms and 50 beds dormitory)
   (Managed by Ministry of youth affairs, government of West Bengal)
2. **Larika Sagar Vihar** (18 rooms and 58 beds dormitory)
   (Previously it was the tourist lodge runned by West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation, now handled over to a private organization)
3. **Guest house of Kolkata Bastra Babasayi Samiti** (22 rooms)
   (Guesthouse runned by businessman of Kolkata)
4. **Ashrama of Bharat Sevashram Sangha** – more than hundred rooms
   (Most of the tourists stay here, as it is relatively cheap and secured)
5. **Guesthouse maintained by Ramkrishna mission ashram Manashadwip.**
6. Guest rooms provided to the pilgrims by *Yogendra Math, Kapilananda Ashrama, Sankaracharya Ashrama, Sankhyayogashram* and other ashrams. Here general tourists are not welcome except pilgrims.
7. Circuit house, irrigation bungalow, public health engineering bungalow, guesthouse of the Zila Parisad and other official accommodations are there. These are being used by government officials and general tourists are not allowed here.

**At the time of fair**

Temporary cottages are made by the government and voluntary organizations. Many pilgrims spent night below the sky as given accommodation is not sufficient. Temporary post and telegraph office, hospital, police station, court and camps are also made.

It is to be mentioned that accommodation facilities are largely unused in most of the months of the year except during Gangasagar fair.

**Infrastructure Facilities**

At present, road conditions within Sagar Island are satisfactory. A 30 km long metallic road connects Gangasagar with Kachuberia. In order to reach various tourist spots like lighthouse, Manashadwip or Mandirtala, brick built roads are to be availed and rickshaw-van (tricycle) is the common mode of transport. Tourists can visit these places by car also.
Electricity is not available after 11 p.m. at night. It is also not available during daytime. This is the main hurdle to flourish tourism in the Island. Though strong wind blows all the time from the sea, it is really difficult to stay in summer by the urbanized tourists who are accustomed by electric facilities. The sea beach remains in dark after evening. No lighting arrangements are made at the sea beach. Tourists are deprived to enjoy the nocturnal beauty of sea and the shore like other sea resorts. Even there are no sitting/resting arrangements at sea shore.

Due to the religious sanctity of the place, the permission of bar, swimming pool, nightclub and other modern amenities are not given. Telephonic communication is there but no Internet connection till date. There is no full-fledged hospital situated at Gangasagar, but a health centre is operating at Rudranagar block headquarters. Bus service in the Island is frequent and car rental facilities are available. The jetty conditions along the riverside of the Island are poor except in Kachuberia. It is difficult for the tourists to board boats or vessels through broken or temporary jetties.

### 4.2.12 Tourist Inflow at Gangasagar

It is very difficult to find out exact number of tourists visit Sagar Island as there is no registration system for tourists initiated by the district/block administration (except during Gangasagar fair, official documents regarding tourist inflow during the fair is attached in Annexure 1). A sample of tourist intake is taken from the pilgrim register of Bharat Sevashram Sangha where majority of the tourists find their shelter. The tourist information is displayed below:

**Figure 4.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period in month</th>
<th>Number of tourists stayed in</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guesthouse of Bharat Sevashram Sanga</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/04/03 – 30/04/03</td>
<td>1557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/05/03 - 31/05/03</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/06/03 – 30/06/03</td>
<td>942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/07/03 - 31/07/03</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/08/03 - 31/08/03</td>
<td>1291</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From this statistics, we find that the number of tourists who stay in Gangasagar is increasing in 2004 in comparison to 2003. Even during the lean season (May-June) the inflow of tourists show a marginal increasing trend.

A sample of tourists is taken from the pilgrim register for the month of March 2004, as the occupation and the place of origin from where the tourists come is noted in the pilgrim register:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Number of Tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/09/03 - 30/09/03</td>
<td>1294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/10/03 - 31/10/03</td>
<td>1465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/11/03 - 30/11/03</td>
<td>2596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/12/03 - 31/12/03</td>
<td>4261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/01/04 - 31/01/04</td>
<td>4306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/02/04 - 20/02/04??</td>
<td>(Pilgrim register not found)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/02/04 - 29/02/04</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/03/04 - 31/03/04</td>
<td>1804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/04/04 - 30/04/04</td>
<td>1369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/05/04 - 31/05/04</td>
<td>1285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/06/04 - 30/06/04</td>
<td>1275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/07/04 - 31/07/04</td>
<td>882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/08/04 - 31/08/04</td>
<td>1012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/09/04 - 30/09/04</td>
<td>780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/10/04 - 31/10/04</td>
<td>2891</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Pilgrim register, Bharat Sevashram Sangha.

Out of these families, the head of the family or the leader of the group wrote his/her occupation. This shows the following nature of tourists:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No of families/groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculturist</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service holder</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Businessmen</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired persons</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional persons</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>309</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information reveals that from all stages of life people come here. From a survey conducted by this researcher taking sample tourists of hundred (sample survey sheet attached in Annexure 2) following types of tourists found visiting this place throughout the year except during *Gangasagar mela*.

**Day-Tourists**

These tourists visit the island for a day and leave the island by evening. From the statistical analysis of the survey, it is found that they are the majority tourists come to this island. Most of them are residents outside the state, while coming to Kolkata for the purpose of business, profession, official job, tour or meeting their relatives, they visit *Gangasagar* for a day. Normally they come by car in the morning and keep the car at lot No. 8, cross the river through vessel, again hire a car at *kachuberia* for couple of hours, visit *Kapilmuni* temple and pay offerings, spend some time at the seashore and finally deport during evening. There are about thirty cars wait for the tourists at *Kachuberia* (*Maruti-van*, ambassador, sumo etc). No concrete numbers can be ascertained about these day-tourists visiting the island every day but in an interview it is revealed that during seasons (winter and spring) almost every car get a trip and during lean season (summer and monsoon) at about 7-8 cars get a trip. When these day-tourists are being interviewed, they expressed that they have heard about the place from their parents and friends and visit here as a holy place. They have no information about the related tourist spots of the island within and outside. When questioned, many of them expressed their desire to visit the place again and if proper information and tour packages were provided, they would have extended their stay in
the island for couple of days. Almost all of them felt the necessity of a good restaurant near the seashore or temple where they can have their lunch or refreshments.

**Normal Tourists**

These tourists stay in the island for at least one night. Majority of them come within the state and others come from outside. People of all professions (see survey report) visit as normal tourists. They generally come in a group with their friends and families and book rooms from Kolkata either in Bharat Sevashram or Youth Hostel or in Larika Resorts. While interviewing them many of them feel the place is too small to stay for more than one night. They are satisfied with the scenic beauty of the sea but after sometimes feel bored of the place. They have expressed their desire to extend their tour if they are being informed about the nearby tourist spots within or surrounding the island. They mentioned that they have not received any information from the tourist department about other tourist spots situated nearby. Almost all of them feel the necessity of improving electrification facilities in the island. Some of them suggested introducing modern entertainment facilities like water sports, aqua parks, trips to nearby islands etc.

**Regular Visitors**

There is a small group of people who fall in love of this place and visit frequently. They do not care about the infrastructure inadequacies or distance. They enjoy the calmness and solitude of the seashore. They expressed that other sea resorts are becoming populated and congested which disturb their minds. The simplicity of the local people and the secret beauty of the place haunt them. Some of them come to the respective ashrams and involve in social or religions activities, others are pure tourists.

**Researchers /Students on Excursion**

Sometimes researchers visit the place in order to collect samples from the seashore. Geologists, archaeologists, botanists, environmentalists often visit the island for specific purposes. Students from other parts of The Sunderbans visit as excursion tour. They are not conventional tourists but they circulate the message of interest about the island through their friend’s circle or media.
Government Officials
People from the forest departments, state administrative departments, census departments, police departments etc frequently visit the island for their official job. They stay at government guesthouses. They are not tourists but outsiders visit the island.

4.2.13 Tourist Spots Surrounding Sagar Island

There are certain places outside Sagar Island, which are worth to see. Some of them are traditionally renowned tourist spots some are newly grown picnic spots where tourists have started visiting recently and some places are not recognized as traditional or new tourist spots but their strategic situations and scenic beauty may convert them into attractive tourist spots in future. A brief account of these places is given:

1. Fregerganj
2. Bakkhalı
3. Jambudwip
4. Ghoramara Island
5. Mousuni Island
6. Kankramarir char (Island)

Fraserganj and Bakkhalı

Bakkhalı and Fraserganj are situated in an island in the extreme south of the Diamond Harbour Subdivision. These are two adjacent places with a distance of two kilometers only. These places are situated from 136 and 138 Kilometers away from Kolkata (specifically from the beginning of the Kona expressway) and from 46 and 48 kilometers from Diamond Harbour. This island is bounded on the north and west by the Pattibunia Khal and on the south by the Bay of Bengal. These places are basically fishing villages now converted into tourist spots. Both the places can be reached from Namkhana by crossing the Hatania Doania creek by ferry and then traveling another 22-24 Kilometers by road. Fraserganj has a sandy beach facing the bay, north of which are sand domes, where a line of tress separates from the land to the north. The island is also locally called as Naryantala. It was called Fraserganj after Sir Andrew Fraser, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal from 1903-1908, during
whose time a scheme of reclamation and colonization was undertaken and efforts were made to develop the place as a health resort. With this object, about two-third of the island was cleared and colonisation process started. But the work of reclamation proved unexpectedly costly and government finally gave up the initiative. After independence, during 1950’s, attempts were made by the government to decorate Fraserganj into a sea resort. But due to constant erosion of the sea beach there, the attempt was finally given up and a plan to develop Bakkhali, 2 kilometers further southeast was taken up in sixties. Bakkhali has a two kilometers long beach, which is stretched till Fraserganj. The beach is wide enough, as the beach situates near the confluence of the Ganga, it gets enough muddy silt to turn its sand somewhat clayey. At present, Fraserganj has been developed as a leading fishing Harbour. Fisheries department, Government of West Bengal opened a control office here. The Ben fish (A subsidiary organization to the Fisheries department) has established an attractive tourist lodge which is named as ‘Sagar kanya’. The beach of Fraserganj is famous for sunset point and the remnants of the official bungalow of the British administrators are still lying near the seashore. The WEBREDA (West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Authority) has posted number of windmills from which 2 mega-watt of electricity is being generated. There are number of good hotels at Fraserganj out of which Hotel Deepak is the biggest with 57 rooms, swimming pool and bar facilities. During festivals, holidays and weekends the hotels become almost occupied.

At Bakkhali the WBTDC (West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation) of the Government of West Bengal runs a tourist lodge. The beach is covered by casuarinas and tropical trees in the West. At present, lighting (Fluorescent vapour lamp) arrangements are made in the beach so that the tourist can enjoy the beauty of the sea at night. One NRI Bengali Mr. Amrit Das has donated Rs. 20 Lakhs for the beautification of the beach. The money has been spent to construct roads and sitting arrangements for tourists. Here a temple of Banabibi and Dakshin Roy is situated on the beach, which throws light on the folk deities of Sunderbans. The forest department has developed a deer park, crocodile sanctuary, and representative mangrove forest-display near the tourist lodge. The tourists visiting first time in Sunderbans may get glimpses of distinct features of this Biosphere from this display. A new tourist spot has been introduced by the department of Fisheries, Government of West Bengal in the Henry’s Island, which is only 5 kilometers from the Bakkhali-
Fraser ganj main road. 200 hectares of land has been acquired by the Fisheries department here in order to practice aquaculture and a 14 room’s tourist lodge has been established. Brackish water aquaculture, silvofish culture, scientific fish seed collection centers are developed here.

Tourists can enjoy the taste of varieties of fresh fishes and prawns caught by the fishermen. Scope of angling is also provided to the tourists on request. Number of picnic spots is also prepared for the day tourists and picnic parties. This is a new kind of tourist hut where the tourists may have a break from bay watching at Bakkhal i.

Figure 4.4

Tourism infrastructure in Bakkhal i and Fraserganj

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. Of Hotels in Bakkhal i</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Of Hotels in Fraserganj</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Break up

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. Of Government Lodges</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Bakkhal i Tourist Lodge</td>
<td>12 rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Sagar Kanya</td>
<td>20 rooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.of Holiday Homes occupied by banks</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other private hotels</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data Collection made by the Researcher.

Jambudwip

Jambu Island Reserve Forest, which is a notified reserve forest under the Control of south24 Parganas forest division, is situated in the estuary of Hooghly River, along the coast of Bay of Bengal. The total area of the reserve forest, as recorded in the 1st working plan of 24 Parganas forest Division in 1948 is 1950 hectares. This is an unmanned island with mangrove vegetation and came to limelight before 4-5 years due to a conflict between the forest department and fishermen organization of The
Sunderbans. The reserve forest was endangered by the fish drying operation conducted by handful of fish drying merchants from Kakdwip area. During the months of October to February every year these merchants used to bring few thousand labourers to the island to organize fish drying operation. For this, they destroyed a large portion of forest areas and erected temporary constructions and human settlement. The encroachment over a period of 20 years (started after 1981) cleared about 130 hectares of forest area is 2001\textsuperscript{17} Finally the Supreme Court had to intervene and gave an eviction order to the Government of West Bengal. The encroachers were finally being evacuated on 2002 end and re-plantation process started immediately. Now forest department personnel patrol the island occasionally and tourists from Bakkhali and Mousuni Island pay occasional visits to the island. The serenity of the island attracts the tourist. It takes about 45 minutes in machine-operated boat to reach the island from Fraserganj Jetty. The journey is difficult during monsoon and summer as the river tides roll heavily. The island is about 3 kilometers long and the tourists have to travel a considerable portion on Bamboo Bridge. There is a temple where clay images of various duties are kept. At present, no one is there to worship. On the other part of the island, the Bay of Bengal is seen. This island is safe for tourists as no wild animal stays here. The tourists will have a feeling of adventure while trekking through this unmanned island.

**Ghoramara Island**

Ghoramara Island was a part of Sagar Island till 1903. In this year this area has been separated and treated as a separate island. In Bengali nomenclature, ‘Ghoramara’ means horse killing. The name of this island is given due to an incident of hunting where Mr. Ferringston, brother of Mr. Manningston-the Zaminder of Sagar Island went for a hunting trip on horse ride. But a tiger killed Mr. Ferringston along with the horse. After that, island is named as Ghoramara. At present, the island is situated on the northern side of Sagar Island at the confluence of Baratala or Muriganga River. There are about 5200 people living in 5 villages. There is one secondary school and 4 primary schools and no electricity. The island is about 4 kilometers long and 2.5 kilometers broad and the inhabitants are engaged in agricultures, fishing and handicraft business. The island is surviving with the threat of extinction of submerging into the river due to constant thrust of tidal forces; soil erosion is
prominent and devastating. But the scenic beauty of this small island and the simplicity of the people will satisfy the tourist.

**Mousuni Island (Mahisani Island)**

This island is situated on the eastern side of Sagar Island. On the western side of this island, Baratala River flows and on the eastern side it is being segregated by Pitt’s Creek with Namkhana and Fraserganj. This island is divided into three parts i.e. Mousuni in the north, Bagdanga in the middle and Baliara in the south. This is a populated island with high schools, post office, health centre, gram Panchayats and solar power station. This place is situated between Sagar Island and Namkhana-Fraserganj and acts as a connecting point between the two through reverine connections. Sagar Island can be reached form Mousuni Island from 1st Gherry ferry point to Chemmagari by crossing Bartala River. On the other hand, Fraserganj can be reached from Chemmagari through Bagdanga Ferry point to Shasmulghat ferry point near Namkhana by crossing Pitt’s Creek. At present, there is no place to stay at Mousuni island except one government rest house of WEBREDA, but a day centre may be established here due to the easy connectivity with two important tourist spots i.e. Sagar island and Fraserganj- Bakkhal. The scenic beauty of the island is also worth to see.

**Kankramarir Char**

This place is situated on the northern side of the Mousuni Island and it is adjacent to the island. A considerable portion of this land is protected as reserve forest and a forest office is situated here. During winter, birds from other countries take shelter here and tourists visit the place as a picnic spot and for bird watching.

**4.2.14 Contribution of Tourism in Local Economy of the Island**

During the Gangasagar mela, when lakhs of pilgrims visit the island, local people are largely benefited economically by providing local transports, establishing stalls in the mela ground, by getting temporary jobs from the district administration and by providing different services to the tourists /pilgrims. Whatever infrastructural development took place in the island is due to the famous Gangasagar fair. The electrification, road conditions, health provisions, drinking water provision, communication facilities etc. are the contribution of the countrywide recognition of
the place and the fair. Apart from the mela time, the inflow of tourists is not significant. As a result local economy is not that benefited what is expected from a renowned crowded tourist spots. The villages near the Gangasagar mela ground and Kapilmuni ashram are being benefited marginally than other parts as whatever tourist concentration generates here throughout the year. The roadside hotels and van-rickshaw pullers get some money from the tourists. This is not sufficient for the year-long development of local economy through tourism. There is need of constant tourist flow throughout the year.

4.2.15 Problems of Developing Tourism in Sagar Island

Though Sagar Island is being recognized as an ancient religious tourist spot but the tourism infrastructure is weak here and there are certain environmental problems as well some infrastructural problems which create hindrance of tourism development in the region. These problems are discussed below:

1. **Steady encroachment of sea**

   It has already mentioned that since ancient times, number of Kapilmuni temples had been submerged in the sea as the Bay of Bengal engulfs the seashore continuously and steadily. In 1973, the last temple was erected which is now about 500 meters from sea. In future, a considerable portion, of Sagar Island may be swallowed by the seawater.18 A sketch of constant decay of Sagar island is given in Annexure 3.

2. **Siltation of the river Muriganga or Bartala**

   In recent years (since last 2-3 years) the broad river connecting Sagar Island with the main land has been covered by heavy siltation. During low tides, that motor launches or vessels are not finding enough depth of water level to float through the river. As a result, frequent movement of passengers is being disrupted. Immediate dredging of alluvial mud is required for smooth movement in the Muriganga River. Otherwise the problem will increase gradually.

3. **Inadequate electrification in the island**

   This is the main hurdle to flourish tourism in the island. Modern urbanized tourists will require minimum comfort of electric appliances like light, fans, air conditions etc. Though strong wind blows from the sea but it creates a psychological barrier in the
minds of the tourists that electricity is not available of night and during daytime. For improvement of tourism, other amenities cannot be provided due to lack of electricity.

4. Massive deforestation, landslide, population pressure and natural calamities
Reclamation process started in the Sagar Island in 1811, which resulted continuous deforestation and destruction of the mangrove vegetation. At present, only 1.5 percent of the total island is covered with forest. This is an alarming situation and for this the existence of the island is at stake. Due to the gross loss of forestland, decay of total land area is prominent and the island has lost three villages and some other villages are at their brink of extinction. The dense mangrove forest used to prevent landslide and soil erosion by absorbing the thrusts of the tidal waves towards the coastal border of the island which is now almost destroyed and the increasing population pressure (see note) accelerates the pace of deforestation and the level of land and water pollution in the island. In the same way the Ghoramara Island’s existence is being questioned and the rehabilitation of the inhabitants is being thought of. Within 1922-23 to 1992, the decrease of this island is about $58^{19}$ square kilometers. It is high time to take planned steps to stop soil erosion and deforestation. One more threat to develop tourism is the frequency of different types of natural calamities (see note) attached towards the island. This island is a cyclone prone zone and it will be treated as a risky project for the private operators to invest a considerable amount for long term if they go through the history of cyclones and deaths in the island.

5. Other infrastructural inadequacies
The communication system in the island is not adequate. The last vessel leaves the island to the mainland at 7 PM in the evening. After that there are no public arrangements to reach the mainland in emergency. The jetty conditions in most of the boat sidings are not up to the mark. Either there is no jetty at all or people commute through temporary jetties with considerable risk of damage. It is practically impossible to motivate tourists through these entry points with the existing ferry-ghat infrastructure.

6. Poor tourism advertisement and propaganda
There is lack of aggressive propaganda for promoting tourism in the island either by the government or by the private tour operators. Seldom advertisements are found in prominent places in the Kolkata city in order to motivate tourists for visiting Sagar
Island. The circulation of the tourist information about the island outside the state or country is limited. Almost no initiative is taken to develop the place as a tourist friendly manner and no comprehensive development plan has been chalked out till date. Therefore, no craze has been developed within the tourists to destine this place for weekends or during vacation.

4.2.16 Scope of Tourism Development
There is enormous scope of tourism development in the Sagar Island and its surrounding places. It requires proper long-term planning and proactive initiatives in order to implement the plan. At present, the tourism potentiality is largely unexploited, but the tourists are gradually being motivated to visit the island. It is high time to chalk out an eco-friendly tourism plan and to materialize it for the overall development of the inhabitants. It is equally important to divert the tourist forces to this relatively new and undiscovered tourist place from the conventional tourist spots in order to ensure even distribution of tourists throughout the state. If will surely help to prevent congestion on one or two sea resorts during tourist season and the tourists will also visit new destinations. The tourism map of West Bengal will be diversified and expanded.

Development Proposals
In this respect, following proposals are given for the eco-tourism development of the region.

1. Restoration of ecological balance and prevention of natural calamities
At present, the island is standing under the fear of extinction due to massive deforestation, soil erosion, encroachment by sea and threats of natural calamities like cyclones etc. The destruction of nature, mainly by human activities should be stopped immediately. For this, a comprehensive master plan has to be prepared and to be implemented on a time bound basis. If mankind does not survive, there is no question of tourism. Moreover, pollution free green environment is a prerequisite for health tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to create eco-park in those places where soil erosion is prominent. The plantation of trees, which are common, in The Sunderbans like Sunderi, Hental, Passur, and Garan etc are to make. Mangrove plantations are to
make through the coastal zones of the island. The total forest area should be increased to at least one third of the island. This forestation will serve multipurpose objectives:

i) It will prevent soil erosion and Tsunami type natural disaster.

ii) It will enhance beautification and decrease pollution of the island.

iii) The eco-parks and the forest areas will be treated as bird sanctuaries and places of tourist interest in future.

iv) Based on these eco-parks—Eco-clubs, eco-museums, eco-magazines may be developed which will enable the people of Sunderbans to be trained and be enlightened in ecological preservation and conservation of the region and will surely usher eco-tourists from all over the world.

v) If this can be successfully done, one day the Sagar Island will be honoured as 'Eco-Island' as it is now acknowledged as 'Solar Island'.

Proper research should be conducted by eminent researchers and provisions of funds to be made by the government in order to stop encroachment by the sea specially the fair ground area.

Preventive measures should be taken in order to fight cyclones or floods by creating flood centers in coastal villages and old protective tanks to be reconstructed. Satellite based warning system and cyclone research centre may be based here.

2. Infrastructure development

The Problem of electrification in the island is already highlighted. This problem has to be solved in order to flourish tourism here. Some private electricity companies have shown interest to develop electrification process in the island. The government can take their help. It is urgent to improve the jetty conditions at different embarkation points of the island. This can be easily done. In this context, the marine research institute should be well built and be ready to show tourists the species found in the island.

The dredging of Muriganga River is to be made immediately and the mouth of the river at Chemmagari should be deepened by dredger so that the launches can easily ply between Namkhana and Chemmagari. Communication system should be upgraded. In future, a short-stripped airport may be established in Sagar Island for carrying foreign tourists and affluent class to the island. In short course, number of helipads may be erected and weekly helicopter service may be introduced.
3. Improving historical and archaeological spots in the Island

Historical evidences discovered within the island should be preserved and arrangements of displaying them should be made. The Mandirtala and Rathtanabari region should be excavated by the experts in order to unearth the ancient history of this island. The artifacts and other antiquities found here should be protected from smuggling and a central museum should be established with guide facilities and light and sound system so that the tourists have an insight into the past glory of the region. The state archaeology department may join hands with the tourism department in order to implement a plan relating to historical tourism in the island. The ancient temples, shrines and sculptures are also to be preserved properly.

4. Expansion of the tourist spots

Sagar Island itself is a small area with limited places of tourist interest. The tourists, who come for the first time and spend a night here often, ask, after this, what other places to see? There is a mindset amongst the tourist that a full day is enough to see the island. The idea is partially true, there are many beautiful places within and outside the island, which are worth to see, but tourists have no information and the places have no tourism infrastructure at present. For example, Ghoramara Island and Mousuni Island are to adjacent islands of Sagar Island. The river cruise conducted for the tourists to these islands will surely be enjoyed by them, as the panoramic beauty of the islands is superb. It is important to expand the number of tourist spots for the sake of tourism as well as economic development of the people of these islands. It will convert the day-tourists into permanent tourists or normal tourists, who will spend nights in this island. As a result, revenue earned by the hotels, lodges and related bodies will increase. Therefore, Ghoramara Island, Mousuni Island, Jambudwip, and Kankramarir Char etc should be developed as a permanent tourist spots. In this respect, specific proposals for these spots are as follows:

Ghoramara Island

As this island is facing the threat of extinction, permanent tourist lodge or day-centre is not to be suggested here. But an information as well as Geographic Interpretation Centre may be established here for the tourists, from where they will get a clear idea about the locations of islands in The Sunderbans, its uniqueness, opportunities and threats. The role of mangrove vegetation in preservation of ecology may be explained to tourists. The possibilities of submerging of the island may be explained so that the
tourists will feel concern about the need of ecological balance and preservation of nature. It is suggested to bring the tourists in this island before taking them to Sagar Island. At the beginning of their tour, when the tourists find a lively island facing the challenge of existence, it may create an impact in their mind to protect the island. Some of them may be involved for finding out technological solution to the problem, fund raising programmes and social movements for rehabilitation of the inhabitants and the development of the people of Sunderbans. In a way through this process (participative tourism), tourism may help to solve environmental problem. The protective tanks and the flood centers situated near the block office which were created during British period will enlighten them about the preventive mechanism followed in the past for combating natural calamities.

**Mousuni Island**

A day centre and gradually a tourist lodge may be established possibly at the Batiara side of the island. The intrinsic beauty of this small island along with an exiting river cruise will enable the tourists coming from Sagar Island to spend couple of hours or a night here. The island is situated between two renowned tourist places i.e. Bakkhal-Fraserganj and Sagar Island. Therefore, this island may be used as connecting point between the two. Tourists coming from both sides can halt here and enjoy the scenic beauty of the riverside. They can go to Kankramarir char easily from here. At present, due to the religions sentiments of the people at Sagar Island, no bar, nightclub or other modern entertaining facilities are available there. Modern tourism deserves these amusements (though there are possibilities of mixing of culture and spoiling the simplicity of the local people), which can be developed in this island. River rafting health club, Aqua Park, amusement park sunbathing facilities for the foreign tourists and other amenities may be provided .The day tourists, who visit Sagar Island for religious purposes will be encouraged to extend their tour if they have the access of a modern tourist spots with multidimensional facilities. Moreover, during rainy season when the river becomes turbulent and it becomes difficult to run ferry, this route is comparatively safer as the local inhabitants travel through this route through out the year. The tourists can easily go to Fraserganj/Bakkhati or Jambudwip through Bagdanga jetty of this island. It is possible to reach Kakdwip on rood from this island after crossing a small creek. Therefore, the communication facilities are sufficiently enough for tourist movement. The local economy will be
benefited and in due course of development of tourism infrastructure, the rural infrastructure development will be possible which has already done in Sagar Island. In Kankramarir Char, permanent bird sanctuary may be created. More survey and research is required to evaluate the possibilities of stability of this piece of land.

5. Creating an integrated tourist circuit

While interviewing the tourists visiting Sagar Island and Bakkhali, it is found that the tourists are mostly unaware of the nearby tourist spots of the region. Moreover, the same tourists visit Sagar Island and Bakkhali separately or in separate tour programmes due to lack of information that these spots are situated very close to each other. It causes unnecessary wastage of tourists’ money and time. Therefore, an integrated tourist circuit covering Sagar Island-Fraserganj-Bakkhali-Jambudwip is to be introduced and appropriate tour packages to be offered to the tourists. At Present, no tour operators whether government or non-government offers such tour package. If this is done, the tourist inflow of both the places will increase, tourists will spend more days in these places resulting increase in revenue earnings and recognition. Bakkhali has already been developed as a renowned tourist spot and beach resort with star hotels and other amenities. This place can be converted into an international tourist spot as it has a well-sized long beach. Health tourism, medical tourism, sunbathing centres may be formed especially for tourists coming from the Scandinavian countries. The place is blessed with abundant sunlight throughout the year. Sand, sea and surrounding forest beauty are the added feathers. The place is situated only about 138 kilometers from Kolkata and a smooth national highway has been developed so that tourists can reach here within 2-1/2 hours while crossing a small river. There is a golden opportunity to introduce this beach resort to the foreign tourists who visit Kolkata. This will enable the state to earn considerable amount foreign exchange from tourism. Other sea resorts of West Bengal are already congested and it is difficult to build international tourism infrastructure in the conventional tourist spots. This place is not been highlighted as yet, may be adopted specially by the government in order to create opportunities to attract foreign tourists.

6. Highlighting the tourist spots at national and International level

The present age is the age of advertisement. It is very important to make propaganda about a place in an organized manner in order to attract tourists nationally and
internationally. Therefore, it is high time to highlight Sagar Island and its surrounding tourist spots through print and visual media, through tourism fairs and international tourism festivals, through websites and through displaying tourist information brochure in Indian embassies in different countries. The government should plan for employing professional tour campaigners for attracting, attending and motivating foreign tourists to visit these places. Tourist-friendly tour packages for different categories of tourists are to be offered and well planned guided tours to be conducted by renowned tour operators especially for foreign tourists. Information cum guidance centre is suggested to be established at Kachuberia in order to help tourists. Local guiding facilities are also to be provided. The West Bengal tourism development corporation should take a leading role for promoting tourism in the region.

4.2.17 Conclusion

As per the order No. 30R/2005/Fish/C-V dated 31-05-2005 issued by the Government of West Bengal it is stated by the Deputy Secretary-Fisheries department that “In view of conservation and effective management of fishery resources and sea safety reasons, I am directed by order of the Governor to say the Governor has been pleased to impose a blanket ban on trawling for fishing during the period 1st April to 31st May every year in the territorial water of the Bay of Bengal of the coasts of West Bengal”. In view of this order, fishing is banned throughout the coastal zone of West Bengal for two months every year, which will unemploy a large portion of population in Sunderbans. Tourism may be segmental solution to this problem. Therefore, it is essential to maintain the flow of tourists to this circuit (Sagar island–Bakhali-Fresarganj–Jambudwip) especially during summer and lean season. An aggressive tourism policy to divert foreign tourists towards West Bengal is the demand of time. At present, West Bengal is an attractive destination to the industry world. Foreign direct investments have begun to pour in different sectors. People of all corners of the world are coming here through the IT (information Technology) and other industrial sectors. Why a considerable portion of these people is not converted into regular tourists to these places? If the Middle East counties (especially Dubai) are able to market a mere desert with sand and sea in order to attract foreign tourists, why West Bengal will lag behind with her multifarious natural diversity?
In the past experience it is found that the private investors are willing to interest in tourism sector of The Sunderbans (example *Sahara India Parivar* selected *Sagar* island as one of its target area). The government can exploit this opportunity of growing a private–public partnership for developing tourism. In the present scenario it is not possible for the state government to provide considerable amount of funds alone in this sector. Private sector should be allowed while the government plays monitoring role. In this respect, two areas are to be monitored. Firstly, the development of tourism infrastructure and over flow of tourists should not degrade the environmental quality of the place (which has already seen in most of the crowded tourist spots of this country) second; the involvement of private sector should create employment opportunities and income generation avenues to the local people in true sense. In a survey conducted by this researcher on hotels and lodges of Bakkhali and Fraserganj, out of 27 hotels situated in this area, only 9 local people are being employed directly mainly as lower level workers. Other employees are hired from outside the region. This type of private sector investment as well as inactivates are not expected.
1. Land area: 219.55 sq. kilometer
2. Total Gram pinhead: 09
3. Villages: Existing - 43
   Washed away - 03
   Total 46
4. Population (as per 2001 census report)
   Male – 95,572
   Female – 90,058
   Total 1,85,630
5. College: 01
   High schools: 05
   Secondary schools 13
   Primary schools 123
6. Main agricultural products: paddy, vegetables, green chilly, watermelon, pan etc.
7. Percentage of literacy – 92%
8. Health Centres:
   Village Hospital 01
   Primary Health Centre 02
   Sub Centres 35
9. Solar electricity production centre 09
Source: Sagar Block Office Rudranagar
MAJOR EVENTS IN SAGAR ISLAND

1. First Zamindar: Mr. Jones (1812)

2. A joint stock company named Sagar Island Society was formed for reclaiming the Island in 1819.

3. For the first time pilgrimage tax was imposed @ 2 anna per head in 1896.

4. Sagar Island Act passed in 1897

5. Ghoramara Island segregated from Sagar Island in 1903.

6. Devastating cyclone attack in the Island in 1942

7. Gangasagar Mela Act was passed in 1953

8. Kapilmuni mandir went under seawater and a new one was built by the Mahanta of Ayodhya, Hanumangari.

9. The state government took up the responsibility of the fair. A tax of Rs 5 was imposed on each devotee. Youth hostel, Zila Parisad Bhavan was inaugurated in 1984.

10. Solar electricity production centre was inaugurated in 1999.
End Notes and References

1 Modern researchers like Mr. Krishnakali Mondal interpret the legend on Gangasagar in a scientific manner. According to him, in ancient times (Vedic period) when the northern part of India was dominated by the Aryans, the eastern part of India including this place was ruled by the non-Aryans. Sage Kapil, being an Aryan sage was isolated from his counterparts for his atheist philosophy (famous as Sankhya philosophy) and took refuge to this place. Most probably he was the adviser of the non-Aryan king of this kingdom [Patal kingdom]. (Reference: Sagardwiper Atit – Krishnakali Mondal page 75).

Aryan king Sagar was a powerful ruler and tried to conquer eastern part of India for dominating influence in the region and attached this place with 60,000 soldiers. In the battle his army was defeated and the soldiers were killed and their bodies were submerged in the sea. The probable reasons of defeat are the Aryans were not efficient enough in the naval war and they did not know the use of elephants in the war. After the defeat, the descendents of king Sagar tried to enter into an alliance with the non-Aryans where sage Kapil played a vital role. The condition given to the Aryans was to flow the river Ganges to this place. Kapil visualised that this was necessary to bring Ganges for the development of eastern part of India. Finally after four generations, Bhagirath ushered (most probably an engineer) the river Ganges from the north to the east, which intermingled with sea here. It can be anticipated that Kapil was not only a religious leader but also had political, military, and social wisdom.

2 In his book (Sagardwiper Atit) Mr. Krishnakali Mondal also tried to point out the time frame of the happenings of this incidence (page 20-21). According to him, river Ganges changed its path towards east around 5000 years ago.

3 Population Census Report 2001

4 Out of 46 villages, three have been submerged in sea (reference: Sagardweep by Jagannath Maity, page 25).

5 The area has been measured by IRS – 1B satellite on 14th February 1992 (scale – 1:10,000) [reference: Sagardweep by Jagannath Maity page 10].

6 Information collected from the block office unto 2005 October.
7 Ancient books where the place is mentioned:
Padma Purana, Ramayana, Mahabharata. Brahma Vaivarta Purana.
8 Mr. Ashoke Mitra (I.C.S.) in the District Handbook 24 paraganas (1951) wrote "formerly suicides and destruction of children were features of the festival, many of the pilgrims making voluntary sacrifices of them or throwing their children to the sharks and alligators. It is said that, in 1801, 23 persons were exposed or drowned in one month, but next year this horrible practice was suppressed by Marquess Wellesley. It was not like the oblation of fruits or jewels, intended to obtain instance, a childless woman would make a vow to offer her first born at Gangasagar, in the hope that such an offering would secure for her additional progeny.
9 This view was supported by Radhamukunda Mukhopadhyay in his book "History of Indian Shipping".
11 Sagardweep by Jagannath Maity
12 Antiquities of Mandirtala in Sagar Island – a report by Anil Kumar Khanra.
13 : Antiquities of Mandirtala in Sagar Island – a report by Anil Kumar Khanra.
14 Gangasagar by J Maity page 53.
15 ibid
16 Antiquities of Mandirtala in Sagar Island – a report by Anil Kumar Khanra
17 Environ- Vol VIII No.4, 2003, Pg. 49
18 Sagardwip -J Maity Pg – 80
19 ibid
20 Amrit group of Kolkata have showed their interest to establish power plants at Sagar island in collaboration with WBREDA as per news published in Ananda Bazar Patrika dated 24.12.2005.
Memo No. 537/NZ
From: Sri Santanu Basu, IAS
Addl. District Magistrate (Genl)
South 24 Parganas
& Mela Officer, Ganga Sagar
To: The Deputy Director of Tourism (Caretaking)
Directorate of Tourism
2, Brabourne Road (4th flr)
Kolkata – 700 001

Date: 18/05/2005

Reference: No. 560-DT dated, Kolkata, the 10.03.2005.

Furnishing herewith the information in the table below as asked in your letter under reference for computation of statistical data on tourist arrival at Ganga Sagar Mela during 2001 to 2004 for your information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Year of GS Mela</th>
<th>Actual nos. of tourist arrival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>158230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>189498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>177051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>194683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional District Magistrate (G)
South 24 Parganas
Sample survey of 100 tourists interviewed by the researcher throughout the calendar year 2005 except the month of January-February (During the period of Gangasagar Mela)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Particulars</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Monsoon</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Number of Tourists interviewed at seashore &amp; Kapilmuni temple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov-Dec</td>
<td>March-April</td>
<td>May-June</td>
<td>July-October</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Day Tourists</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Normal Tourists</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Regular visitors as tourists</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Research/Students on excursion tour</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Government officials coming from outside in official duty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Tourists' Reflection about the following queries

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Queries</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
<th>Monsoon</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Liking of the place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>08</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Development of Tourism Infrastructure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Required</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Areas of be developed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation Facilities</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment Facilities</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>07</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Reason of Visiting the Place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a tourist</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a Pilgrim</td>
<td>04</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just to runaway from the madness of routine work</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official work</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season of Interview</td>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Monsoon</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nov-Dec</td>
<td>March-April</td>
<td>May-June</td>
<td>July-October</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) Knowledge about the archaeological and historical sites of the island (except Kapilmuni Temple and legend of Gangesagar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>00</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f) Awareness about the nearby tourist spots of The Sunderbans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>05</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g) If you would have been acknowledged about other tourist spots Surrounding this place, would you have extended your tour?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>08</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>06</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h) Would you accept an integrated tour package offered by a travel agency or would you visit of your own?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour Package</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>07</td>
<td>09</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit of my own</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
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PROFORMA QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COLLECTING TOURISTS' RESPONSE IN REGARD TO DEVELOPING RELIGIOUS TOURISM IN GANagasagar

FIELD WORK CENTRE:

NAME
ADDRESS
CITY
PIN
OCCUPATION

1 Where from you have heard about this place?
   a) From ancestors   b) From other   c) From
       people/friends   books/Travelogue
   d) From media

2 How do you like this place?
   Excellent   Poor
   Very Good   Don't know
   Good        Refused to comment
   Fair

3 Do you think that tourism infrastructure in this place requires some development?
   Yes   No

4 Which areas according to you required to be developed?
   Electricity   Transportation   Entertainment   Accommodation
   facilities   facilities

5 Reason of visiting this place:
   As a tourist   As a pilgrim
   Just to run away from the madness of routine work

6 Are you aware about the archaeological and historical sites of the place?
   Yes   No
7 Are you aware about the nearby tourist spots of Sunderbans?
   Yes          No

8 If you would have been acknowledged about the other tourist spots surrounding this place, would you have extended your tour?
   Yes          No

   If yes, then how long would you stay over here?
   1-2 days      5-7 days
   3-4 days      More than 7 days

9 Would you accept an integrated tour package offered by travel agency or would visit of your own?
   Accept of a tour package   Visit of my own

10 Your suggestions / recommendations regarding tourism development of this place.
Annexure 16

Source: Mally J (2005), PP. 7
27. Kapilmuni Temple at Sagar Island

28. Abandoned Bangalow of Sir Andrew Frazer in Frazerganj
29. Marine Biological Research Institute at Sagar Island

30. Archaeological Remains in Mandirtala
31. Mangrove Tourist Complex, Henry Island

32. Windmills near Bakkhal Sea Shore
33. Solar Power Plant at Sagar Island

34. Scenic View of the Solar Plates at Sagar Island
35. Soil Erosion found in Ghoramara Island
Chapter 4.3
Prospects of Developing Cultural Tourism in The Sunderbans

Contents

4.3.1 Introduction

4.3.2 Need to Develop Cultural Tourism in The Sunderbans

4.3.3 Description of the Cultural Events and Cultural Attributes of The Sunderbans

4.3.4 Limitation of the Study

4.3.5 Proposed Operational Strategies to Develop a Cultural Tourism Circuit in The Sunderbans Involving Different Cultural Aspects and Events for Sustainable Development of the Region

End Notes and References

Annexure 17  List of Fairs and Festivals held in The Sunderbans
Chapter 4.3

Prospects of Developing Cultural Tourism in The Sunderbans

4.3.1 Introduction

The historical phenomena of The Sunderbans (already discussed in chapter 4.1) reveals the rise and fall of various dynasties since the pre-historic ages but the flow of human civilization is not uninterrupted here. In the southern part of 24 Parganas, archaeological evidences explore the existence of rich and populated civilizations since 5th - 6th century AD to 12th - 13th century AD. But, at the end of 16th century, after Pratapaditya's regime the region was abandoned and covered with dense forests. The reasons are unknown, may be natural, political or socio-economic. During 17th century due to reclamation process, human habitations began to spread but mainly through migration from other places. Tribal people from Chotonagpur plateau migrated from the other state as a cheap labour force required for reclaiming forest lands. With them, people (mostly downtrodden low caste people) joined from other districts like Purulia, Bankura, Medinipur, Nadiya and northern part of 24 parganas itself as agricultural labourers since agricultural activities began in 1770. Moreover, people from other parts of undivided Bengal settled here for various reasons as this region had been developed as a district. After partition, the flow of this migration from East Bengal has been increased due to socio-economic reasons. Therefore, the inhabitants of this region do not inherit any ancient cultural attributes or traditions like the Egyptians or the Aryans; rather possess a trend of migratory culture of their respective origins. They bear the cultural tract and traditions of the places from which they were being shifted and still follow the socio-cultural practices in daily life which were being practiced by the ancestors in their homeland. For example, the tribal culture found in Chotonagpur region will also be seen here. In addition to this, a distinct culture with unique socio-religious attributes have been developed amongst the locals during the last four hundred years of their survival, based on worshipping the nature and natural attributes in order to protect them from natural calamities, wild animals and diseases. The Sunderbans, with its unique
biodiversity, creates tremendous hindrance for survival of human beings, especially to those fishermen, woodcutters, honey collectors and others who largely depend on forests. Life is uncertain for them as rivers are full of crocodiles, forest areas are dominated by snakes, tigers, wild boars and other wild animals and cyclones, floods and epidemics are frequent. These uncertainties enable them to visualize certain saviors from various threats and number of ethnic gods and goddesses controlling wild animals and diseases were begun to be worshipped. Therefore, we find here Bonbibi - the goddess of tiger, Manasa - the goddess of snake, Kalu Rai - the legendary figure supposed to be the leader of the crocodiles, Jwarasur - the deity to control fever and so on. The primitive worshipping was gradually inculcated into the daily practices, beliefs, social functions, festivals and cultural lives of the inhabitants. These ethnic deities and legendary figures are different from the mythological deities worshipped in other parts of the state and the country and are away from the mainstream religious practices. The presence of these localized divinities, along with distinct ethnic practices, creates an essence of cultural wonders which can only be found in this region of unique and vulnerable world heritage site. Thus, the people of The Sunderbans inherit mixed culture. Tribal culture-migrated from outside the state, cultural attributes and traditional practices of other districts of East and West Bengal from where people being shifted here and the unique ethnic culture inculcated within the socio-religious practices during the last couple of centuries.

4.3.2 Need to Develop Cultural Tourism in The Sunderbans

It has already been discussed that the current tourism scenario of The Sunderbans is jungle safari centric. As a result, high concentration of tourists during tourist seasons creates adverse effects on the natural environment and habitats of the sanctuary and other conventional tourist spots of the Sunderbans (for details, please see chapter 3). Moreover, the tourism of The Sunderbans is highly seasonal. During summer and monsoon, tourism hardly takes place due to adverse climatic conditions and infrastructure inadequacy overcoming it. This is the main cause of tourism - under development of the Sunderbans region. In this perspective, the need to develop cultural tourism is illustrated below:
• **Need to diversify Tourism**

Like modern business strategies, tourism as an industry needs to be diversified for its survival. This is more appropriate in order to develop ecotourism sustainably in the vulnerable ecotourism site like The Sunderbans.

The diversification will effectively diffuse tourist concentration in the jungle and spread to other important tourism sites of historical significance, health resorts or cultural hubs situated in different parts of the region. With the presence of unique and diversified cultural attributes, The Sunderbans can be potentially identified as a distinguished cultural tourism site in future. A visionary effort should be taken through appropriate measures to protect the traditional values and cultural aspects to protect the traditional values and cultural aspects of the region for developing cultural tourism spots - separating from the conventional jungle safari. This will surely fulfill two-fold goals of sustainable tourism. Firstly, it will reduce tourist concentration on certain jungle points resulting minimization of destruction of natural attributes. Second, it will spread tourism into new destinations throughout the year through discovery of new dimensions.

• **Low intensity tourism**

Prerequisite of ecotourism development is to concentrate on low intensity tourism. The reason is to create minimum adverse effect on the environment and natural attributes of a region. Development of cultural tourism will fulfill these criteria to a great extent as the cultural tourist spots are scattered in different parts of the region and various cultural events take place throughout the year, the possibilities of high concentration of tourist for a particular event will be minimum. On the other hand, this new dimension of tourism will reduce tourist concentration and jungle safari as repeater tourists will find new places to visit in the Sunderbans.

• **Need Based Tourism**

It is not expected that all tourists prefer jungle safari. Due to lack of choice or information, majority tourists visit the forests. If cultural tourism infrastructure can be established and publicized, tourists prone to cultural mindsets will be attracted to these type of tourism. Therefore, tourists’ desire may be satisfied according to their needs and diversification results to revenue earnings from the cultural spots.
• **Perennial Tourism**

The main criticism against the current tourism scenario of The Sunderbans is, it is highly seasonal and concentrated to jungle Safari only. Introducing cultural tourism will negate this criticism as cultural events like festivals, fairs, folk songs programmes etc. occur throughout the year. These functions and events take place in the inhabited part of The Sunderbans and spreading of tourism in these areas will create minimum effects on the forest environment and ecosystem of The Sunderbans. The movement of tourists throughout the year will create a positive impact in terms of revenue generation, sustainable growth and economic development of the region.

• **Overall Improvement**

Developing cultural tourism in the Sunderbans will open the new avenues of research in social and cultural aspects of the region as people will be exposed to new dimensions of The Sunderban’s uniqueness. The revenue earnings generated from cultural tourism, if distributed properly, will improve the economic conditions of the local people and local artisans will be encouraged to uphold and improve their expertise in international arena. Finally, the goal to achieve sustainable development may be achieved through this venture.

4.3.3 **Description of the Cultural Events and Cultural Attributes of The Sunderbans**

The cultural tracts and the traditional practices followed by the people of The Sunderbans can be classified in the following items:

1. Fairs and Festivals
2. Folk lore, Ballads, puppet show
3. Tribal culture and practices
4. Local deities and legendary figures
5. Local handicrafts, cottage industries and other products

Though all the above mentioned factors have been intermingled to form a unique culture in this region, still for better understanding of the importance of developing cultural tourism, the discussion is made according to the above mentioned classification.
1. Fairs and Festivals of The Sunderbans

The Sunderban’s economy is rural based. Paddy and betel leaves are two major cash crops cultivated here. Apart from these, fishing, honey collection and handicrafts are other means of economic activities. Along with these economic activities local religious practices, beliefs, worships, culture of fairs and festivals were being congregated to form various types of fairs and festivals. Fair like Gangasagar Mela was being celebrated since ancient times, but most of the fairs started during the reclamation process took place after seventeenth century. These fairs and festivals are one of the major important ingredients of the cultural attributes of the Sunderbans.

Already a detailed accounting of the fairs and festivals of 24 Parganas district are made by the Department of Census, West Bengal which was edited by Sri Asoke Mitra and published by the controller of Publication, New Delhi in 1991. Description of fairs and festivals of 160 villages of 24 Parganas have been documented and total number of fairs in the region is said to be more than 500. This number indicates the vastness of the phenomena held throughout the year. It is impossible to describe all fairs but some major festivals and fairs held in the Sunderbans can be described.

**Gangasagar Mela**

The largest fair of internationally renowned and recognized is the Gangasagar Mela held during mid-January every year. It is the most ancient fair also. (Description and importance are given in Religious Tourism Chapter). On an average five to six lakhs people visit the fair from other parts of the country and also from outside the country.

**Ambulinga Siva Mela of Chatrabhog**

This is one of the ancient fairs of the Sunderbans region. This fair takes place in the month of May near the Mathurapur railway station at a place called Chatrabhog. The fair is held in front of the ancient Siva temple. Thousands of people and devotees assemble here during the festival.
**Basantipuja in Canning**
A 160 years old *Basantipuja* is held at *Tangrakhali* in Canning subdivision. It is a family festival but widely participated by the locals. A fair is held for a week here in relation to this devotion.

**Gajan Mela of Mandirbazar**
This is a 250 years old festival held in the *Mandirbazar* of Diamondharbour subdivision. This fair is surrounded with the ancient *Siva* temple of *Kesaveswar*. Ladies observe fast and pour water on the deity during fair.

**Holi Festival in Devis Abad**
This is also an ancient festival held during the last month of Bengali calendar. The *Radhakrishna* image is being worshipped in the festival. The place is situated in Canning subdivision which was reclaimed by Mr. Derri - a government servant in 19th century. This place is known as *Derrisabad* or *Davisabad*. Thousands of people visit the fair.

**Narayani Festival at Patharpratima**
This is a renowned fair observed in *Digambarpur* village of *Patharpratima* district. This fair takes place during February every year adjacent to the *Narayani* temple. Many people visit the fair.

**Manasamela at Kachukhali (Gosaba)**
The fair takes place for 7 days during September in *Kachukhali* village of Gosaba block. Cultural functions and rowing competition are organized by the locals.

**Nagmela at Sagardwip**
A Big fair is being organized during the month of November in *Manasadwip* of Sagar Island. Earthen images of snake gods and worshipping of Manasa - the goddess of snakes are done.
**Barnuni Mela at Sandeshkhali**

This is an 100 years old fair which takes place for three days in the village Sitaliya of Sandeshkhali-2 block. This is also known as the fair of Hari thakur. Many people from Bangladesh participate in this fair.

**Festival of Barakhan Gaji**

*Pirism* is worship of *Pirs* in Islam as demigods. There are two types of pirs and Fakirs. Some pirs and Fakirs were historic characters and others are legendary persons. Their astanas and mazars are recognized as places of worship.

*Pir Mobarak Gazi* or *Barakhan Gazi* of Ghutiari Sarif within the Canning subdivision is adored by both Hindus and the Muslims. Whether he is a historic character or a legendary hero is a debatable question (Please see details in Historical Tourism Chapter) It is a popular belief that in his lifetime *Pir* had supernatural power and control over tiger population of Sunderbans, on the occasion of the *Pir's* birth anniversary an annual festival is held near the *dargah* during the month of June and his death anniversary is also being celebrated. Both Hindus and Muslims in thousands offer prayer in the *dargah* during the festival time.

**Tribal Fair**

Tribal people whose ancestor were migrated from other parts of the country still follow the tribal customs and rituals. In Amtali village of Gosaba police station tribal fair is organized. Cock fight is the main attraction of the fairs. This type of fair is also held in other places of the Sunderbans.

**Bonobibi Utsab**

Since 2002, the ministry of Sunderbans affairs organize *Bonobibi Utsab* with the help of some voluntary organizations. This is being organized in different places of the Sunderbans every year. Here many government departments and private organizations and NGOs take part. Here the cultural, religious, economic and social aspects of the people of the Sunderbans are upheld.

These numerous fairs and festivals are important ingredients in the essence of cultural attributes of this region. Many of these may act as important events and locations for developing cultural tourism in the Sunderbans.
2. Folklore, folksongs and Ballads, Puppet show

Folklore and folksongs are the portrait of public life and practices. The legends and items on which folksongs are sang are based on local events of the past and the present. Moreover, most of the folksongs are festival centric. The local poets are the founders of these songs. In the Sunderbans region the folksongs are being classified into two parts - (1) Tribal folk song (2) Folksong originated in this region.

Amongst the tribal songs: (a) Sarulsong (b) Karam song (c) Tusu song (d) Jhumur song (e) Samrai song (f) Dasoi song etc are significant.

Amongst the original folksongs of this region important are:
(a) Song of Dakshin Rai and song of Bonobibi (b) Palagan (theatrical song) (c) Tarja (kind of contest in songs composed extempore) (d) Panchali (ballads celebrating the glory of a deity) etc.

Along with these, puppet show in the form of puppet dance narrating a story is very popular in this region. In order to understand the significance of these factors to be exposed towards the tourists, a brief description of these folksongs is narrated:

Tribal Folksongs

**Samrai Song**: According to Prabhatkumar Goswami* the meaning of the term ‘Samrai’ is a period between Autumn and Winter. It is a song sung by the tribal people to worship the cow and cowshed. Tribals believe that mosquitos will be vanished if this song is being sung. People in group sing this song and roam in their area during Kalipuja.

**Sarul** Song: According to Purnendu Ghosh* this song is performed by the Onrao tribe of The Sunderbans. It is performed along with instruments during the end of the year and beginning of a year. Sarul song is sung in order to welcome a new year.

**Karam** song: According to tribal belief ‘Karam’ tree is the most ancient tree created by the Almighty. This song is sung in the Karam puja during the month of September. This song is performed by the Santhals, Bedia and Onrao tribe to worship a tree.
**Tusu song**: This song is performed during the Tusu festival of the tribal people. This is the most popular festival amongst the tribals. This is a kind of crop festival and tribal people believe that if goddess Tusu is being worshiped, there will be no dearth of food in the forthcoming season. So they perform devotions and sing whole night.

**Jhumur Song**: This is an ancient tribal song which is sung with instruments. Here people dance and sing together in a group.

**Dosoi Song**: According to Subrata Chattopadhyay, Dosoi song is like a welcome song. A group of three to four people sing together. Tribals sing this song while begging paddy door to door in order to worship the god. This is to be noted again that these tribal songs are not originated here, rather these are being migrated from other tribal belts of the country by the ancestors of the current tribal generations.

**Folksongs Originated in this region**

These folksongs were created by the local inhabitants in course of time based on worshipping nature or legendary gods or characters. There are various forms of folksongs. These are being discussed in brief.

**Song of Dakshin Rai and Bonobibi**

Dakshinrai and Bonobibi are the local deities and legends of The Sunderbans. They are the god and goddess of the tigers and the forest. They are being worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims especially by the fishermen, honey collectors or the wood cutters. During worshipping these deities, the song of Dakshin Rai and Bonobibi is sung by the devotees. Ballads are also sung describing the supernatural power of these legends. The worshipper also pray to protect them from wild animals and natural calamities through these songs.

**Palagan (Theatrical song)**

Rural Theatre (Jatra) is a common phenomenon found during the winter season in the villages of The Sunderbans. The theme of these theatres are mostly mythological or historic events. Legends of Bonobibi, Manasa, Sitala, Chandi are being acted by the local artists where long ballads are sung by a singer or a
group. This show is a mixture of song, theatrical performance and musical bonanza. This is very much popular in this region.

Another performance called “Namgan” is also common and in almost all villages this will be happened. A group of two to four persons sing continuously throughout a day and night with instruments. The stories of Mahabharata and Purana and worshipping of Krishna are the main themes of the ‘Namgans’. It is being performed by the local artists of The Sunderbans region.

**Tarja**

This is a special kind of contest in songs sung by two competing parties who try to dominate each other through questions and answers. Tarja has a long heritage in Bengal and South 24 Pargana district has a distinct place in this specific performance. A team comprised of four singers. A team started asking questions in lyrical tunes on a particular theme or subject to another and the other answer or vice versa. This requires a specific deliverance. Finally one team win the battle and was rewarded. Due to lack of competent artists this event is rarely seen now-a-days.

**Panchali**

This is a kind of ballad describing the glory and magnanimity of a legendary figure or a deity. In this region Panchali of Bonobibi, Sitala, Manasa, Chandi, Satyanarayan is often performed by local artists. One thing can be said that these various types of folksongs have overlapping character. In Palagan a part of Panchali can be sung or vice versa. Still it is differentiated by the academicians for obvious reasons.

**Puppet Show**

This is a very popular show in the district. The tradition of this show is very old - may be more than 250 years. Here the puppets are of man heights which dance through string operations of trained operators. These puppets often narrate a mythological story or legend of this region. At present, these shows are also been organized by the social organisation in fairs and festivals to alert the public against social evils like AIDS, dowry system, superstition etc.
3. Tribal Culture and Practices

It has already been discussed in the beginning of the chapter that the tribal people migrated from other parts of the country and the state and settled here during the reclamation process started since 17th century AD. Though they have been separated from the mainland, but still they are inheriting the tribal culture and practices and observe those functions, offerings and traditions in group. These are different from the cultural practices and social life of the local inhabitants but worth to be mentioned.

In the tribal society in the Sunderbans, the rituals and festivals are observed throughout the year. The tribals are basically worshipper of nature. They praise various factors of nature instead of worshipping any particular clay or stone image. These offerings innate in their social and cultural lives in course of time. They perform Karampuja, Tusu and Vadu worshipping, Jitna, Dansai, Sohrai, Sarhul and other rituals along with tribal songs and dances (some of these are already explained in the Tribal song topic). In the fairs, cock fight is a common phenomenon which is organized mostly by tribal people. They have their own systems and rituals to organize cockfight. In various occasions they offers hens and goats before their gods and also have a special drink called Hanria. These are all part of their livelihood and have similarities with the socio-cultural practices of the tribal people of the other parts of the country.

4. Local Deities and Legendary Figures

It has been discussed in the beginning of the chapter that the local inhabitants of this region visualized certain supernatural persons as their saviours from wild animals, diseases and natural calamities, which gradually transformed in divinities and legends. These figures are purely localized and being worshipped in different times during a year by the local people. These religious affairs are important ingredients of the unique socio-cultural attributes of the region. People gather in numbers to offer prayer to these gods and goddesses, fairs and festivals being organized based on these occasions. Rural economy and society circulates through these events. In order to focus on the importance of developing cultural
tourism in this region, it is important to have a brief idea of the local deities and legendary figures of the Sunderbans. A brief account of these are given below:

**Bonobibi or Bibima**

*Bonobibi* is a legendary figure being worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims. Before entering the forest the fisherman, woodcutters, honey collectors beg her blessings as the protector of the jungle and goddess of the tiger. In *Bonbibir Jahurnama* (a medieval ballad), the legend of *Bonobibi* has been narrated. In those areas of The Sunderbans, where Muslims predominate, *Bonobibi* is known as *Bibima*. She appears as an adolescent girl. Muslim *Khadems* (Priests) perform prayers of *Bibima* with fowl and *Sirni*. But in the areas where the Hindus predominate, she poses as a female, holding a child on her lap and riding a tiger. The annual festival of *Bibima* is called *Maugan*. In many villages there are astanas(house) or than of *Bibima* or *Bonobibi* and being worshipped by the people of both the religion. She stands for the icon of communal harmony between the two religions in the region.

**Manikpir**

*Manikpir* is another legendary figure who is again worshipped by both Hindus and the Muslims. He does not have any iconic form but a raised platform is symbolized as his *astana* or *than*. There is a *darga* of *Manikpir* established in the village *Kadambagachi* within *Barasat* sub-division. During his worshipping, *Panchali* of *Manikpir* is being sung.

**Dakshin Rai**

*Dakshin Rai* is one of the most important folk divinities worshipped in this region. He is believed to be the god of the tiger and in some places of the Sunderbans, god of the crocodiles. There are two types of icons of *Dakshin Rai* found in the south 24 Parganas district. Where this icon is situated inside temples, it is being decorated as a warrior armed with sword, gun, bow and arrow, riding a tiger or an horse. In other places where the icon is kept under a tree or on a raised platform, it is worshipped in trunk less human head from which is known as ‘*Dakshin Raier Bara*’ or ‘*Barathakur*’. Both Hindus and Muslims worship *Dakshin Rai* as divinity. In the village *Dhapdhopi* of Baruipur station *Dakshin Rai*’s temple is most famous and being worshipped daily.
Kalu Rai
Another legendary figure of this region is Kalu Rai. He is seemed to be a historic person but his time of activities not been clarified. In most cases he is worshipped as a subsidiary god to Dakshin Rai and being treated as the god of the crocodile. In Muslim dominated areas, Kalu Rai is worshipped as Kalu Gazi and is regarded as the Brother of Barakhan Gazi.

Sitala and Manasa
These are two female divinities originated from the folk but have been accepted in the Puranic Brahmanical pantheon of Bengal. Sitala is regarded as the goddess of poxes and Manasa of Snakes. Worships of both deities are found frequently in almost all parts of The Sunderbans region as well as other parts of the districts of south and north 24 Parganas when there are occurrences of poxes and snake bites. Otherwise, annual festivals of Manasa take place during monsoon and of Sitala during spring.

Chandi
Chandi, worshipped in rural Bengal has numerous variations depending on the causes and places. The functions and iconography of Chandis differ widely because they are worshipped in accordance with Sakta-Tantrik rites and are supposed to be endowed with powers to do harm, if not properly propitiated. The varities of Chandis are Mason Chandi, Olai Chandi, Dolai Chandi and Harijhi-Chandi. These are all folkish divinities representing Chandi in various forms. For example, Olai Chandi is being worshipped to prevent cholera epidemic.

Tripura Sundari
In some of the villages of The Sunderbans region through which the old course of Ganga-Bhagirathi (Adi Ganga) flows, during fifteenth century onwards a distinct sect of religious cult was developed beside the conventional Puranic Brahaminism. This is known as Tantrism - a religious cult to worship power. Therefore, number of temples or divinities are found who were being worshipped according to Tantrik rites. One of these divinities is Tripura Sundari. Tripura Sundari is one of the ten Mahavidyas “Worshipped as the manifestations of the kinetic female principle”xiv There are two temples of Tripura Sundari in the region. One is situated in the village Chhhatrabhog where the icon is made of wood. Another is situated in village Boral with a castmetal deity. During the puja goats are sacrificed and liquor is offered.
Narayani
This deity is also worshipped according to the Tantrik rites. The temple of Narayani is situated in the village of Khari. The icon is of four armed, three eyed female divinity riding a lion. According to a medieval Tantrik text Dakarna, Khari is one of the 64 main centres (pithas) of Sakti worship.

Panchananda
This is also a local divinity who is also known as Babathakur in South 24 Parganas. This deity is regarded as Lord Siva. There are many temples situated in various parts of South Bengal and large number of devotees offer their prayer to him.

Jwarasur
This deity is worshipped to prevent fever and in many places worshipped together with Panchananda. The icon is of peculiar shape, blue coloured, with three heads, nine eyes and three legs.

Ateswar
This deity is supposed to protect domestic animals and fishes from wild animals. In many places the deity is decorated as a warrior as a protector of the village. Mainly low caste Hindu people worship this deity.

Panchuthakur
This divinity is being worshipped by mothers for the welfare and good health of their children. There is no concrete formation of this deity, but villagers present their offerings beneath a banyan tree or beside a pond.

5. Local Handicrafts, Cottage Industries and Other Products
The rural economy of The Sunderbans is not only based on agriculture but a considerable section of the population is involved in small scale and cottage industries including local handicrafts, pottery, timber and woodcrafts, conch shell and solawork. These small-scale industries are runned by the local artisans and are not organized. These are spread in various parts of the region and apart from the normal day-to-day business, items of local handicrafts, cottage industries, food products are being exhibited in various fairs, festivals and cultural events held in different occasions. There are historical evidences that the artists of this region were proficient in potteries, ship-building, woodcrafts and conch shell grafting. Glimpses of these
expertises are found in the temple walls and artifacts found here through excavation. The present-day artists are still carrying the inheritance of their golden past especially in making of wooden toys and earthen dolls, terracotta work and sola work. Proper conservation, display and exposure to these works enable these arts and the artists to be the important factors in order to develop cultural tourism in the region.

4.3.4 Limitation of the Study
The information and description given by this researcher on various items of cultural attributes of The Sunderbans region is not comprehensive. However, keeping in mind the major objective of this chapter, an effort is made to give an outline of the cultural scenario and traditional practices performed by the local people. Detailed research is made on various ingredients of culture and traditions and people of The Sunderbans by different individual researchers and research groups and it is still on. This researcher depends on the secondary data collected from various books, journals, descriptions and interviews of the local people.

4.3.5 Proposed Operational Strategies to Develop a Cultural Tourism Circuit in The Sunderbans Involving Different Cultural Aspects and Events for Sustainable Development of the Region
The current tourism scenario of The Sunderbans is not very bright. It is confined to jungle safari. The need of developing cultural tourism in the Sunderbans has already being explained in the beginning of the chapter. For this, the proposed operational strategies are discussed below:

a) Scientific Mapping of the Cultural Aspects and Events
It has been mentioned earlier that Sunderban’s cultural events are numerous and diversified. In order to develop tourism sustain ably based on the cultural events and aspects, it is most important to prepare scientific maps of cultural events in a tourist friendly manner. Detailed information should be provided regarding historical significance of the places, distinct features of the events, cultural excellence and uniqueness of the aspect. Month-wise or season-wise event map may also be prepared for ready reference.
b) Advertising Cultural Events for the Attention of National and International Tourists
Strategic marketing and advertisement should be made to expose these cultural bonanzas to varied number of potential tourists. Separate tour plans to be made for ecotourists and cultural tourists. Event Brochures and information booklets should be prepared to attract international tourists.
c) Relevant Information and Guidance to Interested Tourists
Tourists who show interest to visit any cultural event or any place with cultural significance, should be given proper guidance and adequate information for their assistance. Information centres can be established at different entry points in order to help the tourists.
d) Infrastructure Development
At present, mostly local people visit the fairs and festivals of The Sunderbans region. In order to expose unique cultural attributes to outside tourists it is important to build up tourist facilities like road connections, tourist stay, communication systems and entertainment facilities of international standard. For this, capital to be invested by venture capitalists and entrepreneurs through government intervention.
c) Guide Facilities
As the cultural events occurred here are mostly based on local characters, mythologies and divinities the outside tourists will not understand the significance of the happenings unless guided properly. Language is also a barrier to understand. Guides should be properly trained to handle the tourists.
f) Value Added Services-Integrating Cultural Events with Jungle safaris
Jungle safari can be made more attractive if cultural aspects like offering local foods, exhibition of local handicrafts and art, meeting local people, story telling by a honey collector etc. are included in the tour. Special cultural show by local artists may be conducted.
g) Policy Formulation for Retention and Sharing of Revenue Earned from Cultural Tourism
Comprehensive policy should be framed in order to retain a considerable portion of revenue earned through cultural tourism activities in the region. The amount should be spent for preservation and development of cultural heritage of The Sunderbans region, improvement of village infrastructure and promotion of sustainable tourism in the region. Revenue sharing amongst the locals, government and other stakeholders will motivate
local artists and entrepreneurs to uphold their expertise before the international tourism arena.

h) Creating Opportunities for Export Promotion, Cultural Exchange Programmes, Further Research etc

Measures should be taken for exporting local products and handicrafts to other countries and to generate foreign exchange earning, to organize cultural exchange programmes in order to expose the talents internationally and to create suitable atmosphere for further research on the cultural and traditional aspects of The Sunderbans region.

End Notes and References


iii Detailed description of the migration process has been depicted in District Gazetteers of 24-Parganas published by Barun De(1994) p143-144

iv Paschimbanger Puja Parban O Mela (Pujas, Festivals and Fairs of West Bengal) Vol.3 p43. Published by Controller of Publication, New Delhi in 1991

v Ibid p531

vi A list of fairs and festivals is given in Annexure, collected from District Gazetteers of 24-Parganas pp 694-707

vii Ibid pg 184

viii Ibid pg 186

ix Sreedarsan(2005) Sunderban Anchaler Loksangeet (Folksongs of The Sunderbans) Sreekhanda Sunderban p 517

x Ibid

xi Ibid

xii District Gazetteers of 24-Parganas p 175

xiii Ibid p 173

xiv Ibid p 172

xv Ibid p 172

xvi Bhattyacharyay P (1995) Dakhsin Pargana Zilliar Loksanskriti O Loksilpa (Folk Art and Folk Culture of South Parganas ) Paschimbanga Pg 186

xvii Many individual researchers have contributed inexploring the cultural aspects and traditional values of The Sunderbans. Number of research articles is found in Sreekhanda Sunderban book and Paschimbanga magazine.
### APPENDIX

**Chapter VI: Table II**

**LIST OF FAIRS AND FESTIVALS IN 24-PARGANAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police Station</th>
<th>J.L. No.</th>
<th>Mauza/Place</th>
<th>Time (Bengali Month)</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
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**APPENDIX**

Jagaddal

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<td>Jaynagar-Majilpur</td>
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<td>Rathayatra</td>
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<td>Jyaishtha</td>
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<td>Falgun</td>
<td>Pancham Dol</td>
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<td>Kalinagar</td>
<td>Chaitra</td>
<td>Chaitra Samkranti</td>
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**APPENDIX**

Kakdwip

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Duration</th>
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<td>Paush</td>
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<td>Charak</td>
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<td>Baisakh</td>
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<td>Rathayatra</td>
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<td>Baisakh</td>
<td>Gosthayatra</td>
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<td>Baisakh</td>
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<td>Jyaishtha</td>
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<td>15 days</td>
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<td>Chaitra Samkranti</td>
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<td>Falgun</td>
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<td>Gosthayatra Utsav</td>
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<td>7 days</td>
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</table>

**APPENDIX**

Dolyatra

Kalipuja

Mabkan-ghunti's Mela

Dolyatra

Raspurina

Panchamol

Saptamol

Jay Chandi

Rathayatra

Kalipuja

Baisal Kankanwati

Charak

Dhanwantari Kalibari Utsav

Rathayatra

Gosthayatra

Annual Festival of Dhanwantari Kali

Chandipuja

Pancham Dol

Chaitra Samkranti

Sree Panchami

Gosthayatra Utsav

Mahotsav Mela

Gosthayatra Mela

**APPENDIX**

Dolyatra

Kalipuja

Mabkan-ghunti's Mela

Dolyatra

Raspurina

Panchamol

Saptamol

Jay Chandi

Rathayatra

Kalipuja

Baisal Kankanwati

Charak

Dhanwantari Kalibari Utsav

Rathayatra

Gosthayatra

Annual Festival of Dhanwantari Kali

Chandipuja

Pancham Dol

Chaitra Samkranti

Sree Panchami

Gosthayatra Utsav

Mahotsav Mela

Gosthayatra Mela
### Table II—Contd.

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<th>Mauza/Place</th>
<th>Time (Bengali Month)</th>
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<td>Goshthayatra</td>
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<td>Dharmaraj Puja</td>
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<td></td>
<td>209</td>
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<td>Paushparvan</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Sivaratri</td>
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<td>Chaitra Samkranti, Gajan &amp; Goshthayatra</td>
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<td>Magh</td>
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<td>Paush Samkranti</td>
<td>Nana-Samkrant Mahotsava</td>
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<td>Sannyatra</td>
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<td>Charak</td>
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Chapter 4.4
Possibilities of Developing Health Tourism in The Sunderbans

Contents

4.4.1 Emerging Concept of Health Tourism
4.4.2 Medical Tourism as a Contemporary Development in Health Tourism
4.4.3 India's Experience with Health Tourism
4.4.4 Comparative Advantage of Health Tourism Potential in India
4.4.5 The State-of-the Art of Health Tourism in India: The Experience of Kerala
4.4.6 Future Prospects of Health Tourism Prospects in India
4.4.7 Possibilities of Developing Health Tourism in The Sunderbans

End Notes and References

226
Chapter 4.4

Possibilities of Developing Health Tourism in The Sunderbans

4.4.1 Emerging Concept of Health Tourism

Health tourism is a special kind of tourism where movement of tourists takes place for treatment of specific ailments or diseases. In this type of tourism, tourists travel from one country or state to another in order to undergo medical treatment or health improvement. Medical tourism is becoming a common form of vacationing, it mixes leisure, fun and relaxation together with wellness and healthcare. The concept of health holiday blends with medical tourism. Here one can enjoy holidays by visiting and staying near a mountain or a beach and side by side receive an orientation in terms of one’s health and general well being. “It is like rejuvenation and clean-up process on all levels - physical, mental and emotional.”¹ Health tourism is also named as medical value travel. This type of travel normally takes place to medically advanced countries or states from medically backward regions. Medical tourism is actually thousands of years of old.² In ancient Greece, pilgrims and patients came from all over the Mediterranean to the sanctuary of the healing God, Asklepios, at Epidaurus. In Roman Britain, patients took the water at a shrine at bath, a practice that continued for 2000 years. Therefore, Health tourism has always existed, but it was not until the eighteenth century that it became important. From the 18th century, wealthy Europeans traveled to spas from Germany to the Nile. In England³ also health tourism was associated with spas, places with ‘supposedly health giving mineral water, treating diseases from gout to liver disorders and bronchitis.’⁴ Places renowned for healing of specific diseases or have conventional treatment facilities which are time proved also enjoy revenues due to medical travel. In the 21st century, relatively low-cost jet travel has taken the medical tourism industry to a new hype which is said to be one of the high foreign exchange earning business that is shooting up time to time.
4.4.2 Medical Tourism as a Contemporary Development in Health Tourism

It is prominent from the concept of Health Tourism that the patient is a traveler to a particular destination preferably enjoying a natural endowment or to a region having specific medicinal plant base with or without a tradition of medicinal treatment of a particular nature. On the contrary, medical value travel or medical tourism is not necessarily developed in a distinct natural base, though this type of tourism is location specific. In this case, patients are motivated to treat certain ailments depending on the brand valuation or image or reputation of certain organization/group of organizations. Therefore, medical value travel is monitored through human intervention rather than natural attractions. In many health tourism destinations, infrastructure and treatment facilities are being established by medical entrepreneurs based on the natural advantages, making the scope much wider and it can be said that medical tourism is a special case of health tourism. According to Percey K. Singh Medical tourism can be broadly defined as provision of cost effective private medical care in collaboration with the tourism industry for patients needing surgical and other forms of specialised treatment. This process is being facilitated by the corporate sector involved in medical care as well as the tourism industry - both private and public.

According to the definition given by Wikipedia online encyclopedia, medical tourism is "the act of traveling to other countries to obtain medical, dental and surgical care.”

4.4.3 India's Experience with Health Tourism

It is an established fact that the ancient civilizations have developed their medical systems which are unique and distinct from each other. Ayurveda, Unani, alchemy etc are some examples of traditional medicinal practices followed in India, Arabia, Greece and China. Ayurveda and Siddha were being practiced since long time in India and were recognized as the main courses of treatment before the gradual establishment of the modern medicinal (Allopathic) treatments. The significance of Indian systems of medicinal treatments has played a pivotal role in developing health tourism in India-these are discussed in the following ways:
1. Increasing Popularity of Alternative Medicinal Therapies

Over the centuries, these ancient Indian systems of medicines have proved to be not only the cure for illness but also the natural way to maintain health. The secret of Ayurveda lies in the unique understanding of delicate balance of five elements of nature on human body - earth, fire, wind, water and the sky. When the balance is disturbed, it manifests as an ailment. Ayurveda diagnoses these ailments and cures them by applying various medicinal and herbal plants and other natural elements, the knowledge of which have been adopted through generations. In modern research, the application of these herbal drugs is proved to be authentic and in a survey it is found that in modern medicine also, 60% of the drugs are being prepared from the plants. In India, out of 45000 plant species more than 4000 are medicinal plants.

Though modern medicine (allopathic treatment) is being mostly recognized as an accepted treatment methodology throughout the world, it fails to cure certain diseases like hypertension, rheumatic disease, chronic headaches, insomnia, diabetics, many chronic illness and viral diseases. Two remarkable discoveries of modern medicines i.e. antibiotics and steroids are able to relieve the patients temporarily in certain ailments but fail to cure permanently and the adverse effects of these drugs are mostly fatal to the patients. As a result, the medical researchers are searching for alternative medical treatment, which will be effective and harmless to common man. Due to this reason, demand for medicinal plants, herbal drugs and cosmetics, herbal tea etc. in the international market is gradually uprising. India is trying to organize its health sector giving due importance to its traditional medicinal heritage. Funding is made to develop ancient Ayurvedic and other means of treatment through further research, patenting indigenous medicinal plants, establishing naturopathic and Ayurvedic cure centres, promoting advertisements and exporting herbal drugs to international markets.

Dabur India Limited- a leading Company selling and exporting Ayurvedic medicines and Cosmetic products is spreading its business to several countries. It’s international business is growing by almost 29% to Rs.292 Crores in 2006 – 07 (extracted from the Annual Report 2006 – 07, Chairman’s message 2006 – 07). Total Foreign Exchange earned during 2006 - 07 is Rs.6918.60 Lakhs and export sale of Dabur India Ltd. During 2006 - 07 is 7253.16 Lakhs in comparison to 4513.65
The volume is increasing day by day that creates the need of large scale sustainable cultivation and processing of medicinal plants and prevention of extinction of rare herbal plantations.

2. Increasing Volume of Medical Tourists

In recent times, more and more people are traveling in order to get quality healthcare as affordable, enjoyable and safe alternative to having treatment in their countries. Medical tourists are generally residents of the industrialized nations but affluent class of people of less developed and developing countries also travel to relatively advanced countries in search of better treatment. Not only that, medical tourists are seeking out places where they can combine vacationing and obtaining their medical care at an affordable cost. India, at large, offers desired destinations to these tourists. Medical tourism in India is one of the best options available to people across the world. India provides world class medical facilities with hospitals and specialized multispeciality health centres providing their expertise in the areas of cosmetic surgery, dental care, heart surgeries, coronary bypass, valve replacement, knee replacements, Indian traditional treatments like Ayurvedic Therapies and much more, practically covering every aspect of medicine combining modern treatments with traditional experience.

3. Cost Effective Therapy

India’s natural advantages of lower production costs and its skilled workforce in medical sector enables a competitive edge towards development of medical tourism. Large number of people undergo alternative medicinal treatments especially Homeopathy as the cost of treatment and medicine is comparatively low than modern medicinal treatment. Therefore, in a country like India, the development and spreading of alternative medicinal treatments would be a good solution to the problems of managing health of the population at large.

4.4 Comparative Advantage of Health Tourism Potential in India

In general, the reasons to choose medical tourism by the people of the advanced countries to India include:

1. To avoid long waiting in the native country
2. Less cost
3. Quality treatment and personalized care
4. Touring the place

Finally, cost of Medical treatment in the West = Cost of tour to India + Cost of Medical Treatment + Savings

These reasons may be elaborated as follows:

4.4.4.1 Avoiding Waiting Time:
In many advanced countries where public healthcare system exists, it can take a considerable amount of time to get needed medical care. The time spent waiting for a procedure, such as hip replacement, can be a year or more in Britain and Canada, however, in Singapore, Bangkok or Bangalore, a patient can have an operation the day after their arrival. A chart showing the cost comparison analysis between India and other major healthcare destination and approximate waiting periods in USA/UK is given in Table 1.

This high waiting time in order to get specified medical treatment is one of the major reasons to outsource medical treatments to India where sub-contractors provide services to the overburdened medical care systems in Western Countries.

**Table 4.1: Cost Comparison Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Treatment</th>
<th>Approximate Cost in India($)</th>
<th>Cost in Major Health-care Destination($)</th>
<th>Approximate Waiting time in USA/UK(months)</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Open Heart Surgery</td>
<td>4500</td>
<td>= 18000</td>
<td>9-11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cranio-facial Surgery</td>
<td>4300</td>
<td>= 13000</td>
<td>6-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neuro-Surgery with Hypothermia</td>
<td>6500</td>
<td>= 21000</td>
<td>12-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complex Spine Surgery With implants</td>
<td>4300</td>
<td>= 13000</td>
<td>9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple Brain Tumor Surgery</td>
<td>4300</td>
<td>= 10000</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip Replacement</td>
<td>4300</td>
<td>= 13000</td>
<td>9-11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.4.2 Comparatively Low Cost Medical Treatment

The crux of success of the medical tourism industry is its cost effectiveness and its combination with the attractions of tourism. Here India is showing competitive edge due to its price advantage of foreign exchange rates and comparatively low cost medical services. Indian medical industry’s main appeal is low cost treatment. Most estimates claim treatment costs in India start at around a tenth of the price of comparable treatment in America or Britain and sometimes even a sixteenth of the cost in the West. A open heart surgery could cost up to $70,000 in Britain and up to $ 150,000 in the US in India’s best hospitals it could cost between $ 3000 and $ 10,000.14 Dental, eye and cosmetic surgeries in Western countries cost three to four times as much as in India. Hence, the slogan of Indian medical tourism industry is “First World Treatment at Third World Prices.” 15

4.4.4.3 Quality Treatment and Personalised Care

India is gradually coming out of the arena of underdeveloped medical system to comparatively modern treatment setups. Undoubtedly, on the job medical training in India is infinitely better to other countries. The investments made in recent years in the medical sectors in India is considerable and as a result increasing number of foreign patients flocking to India for treatment. According to the study conducted by the confederation of Indian Industry and Mckinsey consultants, around 150,000 foreigners visited India for treatment in 2007 with the number rising by 15 percent a year. It is estimated that foreigners account for about 12% of all patients in top hospitals of Mumbai.17 These are the indicators of improved treatment facilities provided in the country because only low cost will not attract foreign patients especially coming from the West. Moreover, renowned hospitals take personalized care towards the need of the patients which includes booking of hotels, transports, tours and air tickets. According to Narendra Pandya18 “In the US the patient is only a number. We are more involved with them as humans. It makes a difference”. This also surely adds value to the service provided to the medical tourists.

4.4.5 The State-of-the Art of Health Tourism in India: The Experience of Kerala

Kerala, a state situated at the south-western tip of India is the pioneer of health tourism in the country. This state, gifted with unique geographic features with
tropical climate is already being considered as one of the leading tourists destinations in Asia. In addition to long shoreline with serene beaches, tranquil stretches of backwaters, hill stations and wildlife, the state is diversifying its tourism potential towards promoting Ayurvedic health holidays. The state has ancient traditions of Ayurvedic practices, which provides both rejuvenate and therapeutic treatments. Blessed with hundred percent literate people, world class health care systems, with lowest infant mortality and highest life expectancy rates within the country, the state is trying to unearth and share its secret medical practice to the rest of the world. The Kerala Health Tourism 2007, four days international conference held a Kochi has set a vision to develop the state as one of the top five destinations in the world for medical tourism by 2010. Kerala is targeting to bring the number of medical tourists coming to the state to 100,000 in the next three year. Number of medical tourists coming to the state has gone up to 15000 in 2006 compared with 12000 in 2005. Though the major problems of promoting effective health tourism towards the international communities are the non approval of the Ayurvedic system of Medical treatment by the international medical insurance companies and working with limited resources in this sector, but considering the advantage of the weak rupee against pound, dollar or Euro, cost effective treatment can be provided at one fifth to one tenth the cost as in Western Countries. Kerala has adopted private-public partnership model to explore health tourism in the state.

4.4.6 Future Prospects of Health Tourism in India
India has a tremendous potential of developing medical tourism in various parts of the country. It is trying to position itself as international health tourism destination of the world. "Probably no country has been in the news for medical tourism than India in 2005-06, and the government and private hospital groups both seemed committed to a goal of making the subcontinent a world leader in the industry." In 2003, Indian Finance Minister Jaswant Singh called for India to become a 'Global Health Destination'. The following points indicate the significance and increasing relevance of India as a global destination for health tourism:
1. Survey by McKinsey and CII

According to a study by McKinsey and the Confederation of Indian Industry, medical tourism in India could become a $ billion business by 2012. The report predicts that: "By 2012, if medical tourism were to reach 25 percent of revenues of private up-market players, up to Rs.10,000 Crores will be added to the revenues of these players."

2. Government’s Prediction

The Indian Government predicts that India’s $17 billion a year health care industry could grow 13 percent in each of the next six years, boasted by medical tourism, which industry watchers say is growing at 30 percent annually. At present, the non resident Indians, patients of the neighbouring countries and people from the middle east are major group of medical value travelers in India.

3. Role of Private Players

The private players are acting major role to attract medical tourists from the west. The Apollo group of hospitals has so far treated 95000 International patients and has tied up with the hospitals in Mauritius, Tanzania, Bangladesh and Yemen besides running a hospital in Srilanka and managing a hospital in Dubai.

4. Outsourcing of Medical Services

The Ruby hospital in Kolkata signed a contract with the British Insurance Company BUPA. The management is expecting to get British patients from the queue in the British National Health services soon.

5. Attracting Medical Tourists through Collaboration

Moreover, Indian medical services entrepreneurs are trying to attract the attention of those people in the Western Countries who do not have health insurance coverage. There are 50 million people in the US without medical insurance and for them domestic treatment costs are prohibitive. In the United States, 43 million people are without health insurance and 120 million without dental coverage. These people will be eager to take foreign health care options at low cost. The private Indian hospital chains are facilitating tie ups with their foreign collaborators to provide medical services to them.

6. Employment Potential

According to rediff.com bulletin, India could create 40 million new jobs by sub contracting work from the British National Health service. The government is also supporting this venture by formulating effective policies.
7. Medical Services as Export Item

India’s National Health Policy declares that treatment of foreign patients is legally an export and deemed eligible for all fiscal incentives extended to export earnings.30

8. State Initiative

Smelling the potential of profitability and growth prospects of medical tourism in India, the state of Maharashtra has launched The Medicinal Tourism Council (MTC)31 of Maharashtra with an aim to make India a prime destination for medical tourists.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned factors it can be predicted that Medical Tourism is likely to be the next major foreign exchange earner for India. This has been reflected in the statement given by the Tourism minister of India, Mrs. Ambica Soni “We have just drawn up a year long campaign to promote a holistic picture of India. In the medical tourism front all the wings including the Indian form of medicine and naturopathy will be promoted in a strategic way.”32

4.7 Possibilities of Developing Health Tourism in The Sunderbans

Numbers of researches have been made on the medicinal plants found in Indian Sunderbans. Descriptions of those plants33, their uses34, economic potentialities35 etc. are being explored by researchers and being duly documented. It is being stated that more than hundred herbal and medicinal plants have been identified in the Sunderbans, which are being used by the local inhabitants. Though the traditional use of the mangrove products in Sunderbans for various medicinal purposes is not as old as tribals do so in the mangrove forest areas of Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines36, but the uses are effective in the remote areas of the region where doctors and modern medicines are not easily available. For example, Phoenix Paludosa commonly known as ‘Hental’ has been used by tribal and other ethnic communities of Sunderbans in medicine. The fruit of the tree is reported to have cooling effect and antiphlogistic properties (Refer to endnote no 34). In spite of the efforts of the researchers, the medicinal values of the true mangrove species of Sunderbans have not been identified in considerable numbers and require further research.

West Bengal possesses its own tradition of Ayurvedic treatment and research37. It has been receiving patients from the neighbouring states and countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal etc. since long time due to its comparative medically advanced
infrastructure and organizations. It is high time for the state to develop health tourism infrastructure and packages for both indigenous and foreign patients and tourists. Already numbers of private hospitals and medical institutions in Kolkata have made business agreements with foreign governments and hospitals for medical outsourcing, but these stray efforts should be converted into a state mission of developing this gateway of the east as international health tourism destination through comprehensive planning and effective strategy formulation.

In this perspective, the significance of Sunderbans as a new health tourism destination is important. The conventional tourist spots like Digha or Darjeeling has already been saturated and it is difficult to find place to build health tourism infrastructure of international standards. Moreover, they do not have considerable medicinal plants in their surroundings. Whereas, Sunderbans is situated within hundred kilometers of Kolkata. It is possible to transport patients from the hospitals and health centers of Kolkata to Sunderbans within hours for tourism or leisure spending purposes. Moreover, Sunderbans possesses base stock of medicinal plants which can be used for herbal and medicinal treatments of the medical value tourists visiting here. Already it is mentioned that tourism potentiality of Sunderbans is largely unexploited. Therefore, there are ample scope to create modern infrastructure and facilities of international standards for positioning Sunderbans as a reputed health tourism destination. If Kerala can take the initiatives for developing health tourism in various parts of the state, with similar climatic conditions, with endowments of medicinal and herbal plants, traditional indigenous knowledge of treatment and with the reputation of a world heritage site, The Sunderbans can become a new destination of medical value travel in the future. If Ayurvedic health cure centers and hospitals, health holiday packages, infrastructure development and related government support is extended to potential tourists as well as developers including exporters of herbal drugs from here, the possibilities of reckoning The Sunderbans as an international health tourism spot will not be a distant reality.
End Notes and References

2 ibid-pp. 302
3 ibid-pp. 5
4 ibid
5 Ibid pp. 299
6 Frequently asked questions about Ayurveda and Unani are given in the annexure 1.
8 Ibid-pp.226
9 Statewise statistics on Ayurveda are given in annexure 2.
10 National Health Accounts and Health Expenditure Statistics(2001-2002) and statement of Budget estimates(Plan) 2007-08(shown in annexure 3).
11 Dabur India Limited group’s consolidated export sale during 2006-07 is Rs. 26,834.73 lacs in comparison to Rs. 18,816.50 lacs in 2005-06(Annual Report-2006-07).
13 ibid pp. 102
14 ibid pp.120-121
15 ibid pp.120
16 ibid pp. 301
17 ibid pp. 306
18 ibid pp. 296
19 Kerala Tourism, March 2007 pp.08,: Kerala Health Tourism going popular
20 ibid
22 ibid pp. 107
23 ibid pp. 123
24 ibid pp. 113
25 ibid pp. 120
26 ibid
27 ibid pp. 129
28 ibid pp. 124
29 ibid pp. 302
30 ibid pp. 303
31 ibid pp. 304
32 ibid pp. 129
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37 Bhattacharyay Sibkali, Bangalar Banousodhi
38 Reference endnote no. 26