

## A Study on the Ruins of Buddhist Monasteries in West Bengal in the Context of Buddhist Tourism Development

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### ABSTRACT

Buddhism and its heritage draw the attention of around 10 percent of total tourist traffic in India but unfortunately, West Bengal is not getting its justified share although the country was under Buddhist rule for about 400 year since the mid 8<sup>th</sup> century. None of the available studies have focused on its reasons. This paper is an attempt to evaluate the scope of Buddhist tourism in West Bengal while addressing this research gap found from interdisciplinary literature survey. Although there is abundance of descriptive historical and archaeological studies on abandoned Buddhist monasteries of West Bengal, spatial analysis dedicated to Buddhist tourism development is rare. Extensive literature survey has been followed by committed field work to obtain data which are historiographic, toponymic and archaeological in nature. IRS/ISS III images have been analyzed to evaluate the changing course of rivers on the Buddhist ruins and the effects of flooding on them. An appraisal is made on policy measures to exploit the maximum potentials of Buddhist tourism which may bring opportunities of income and scope of employment, thereby contributing to backward area development.

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### Introduction:

The Buddhist sites distributed across the whole India are considered as precious resources for heritage tourism development. The states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha and Maharashtra are drawing large influx of Buddhist tourists, both domestic and international every year by virtue of Buddhist heritages but instead of the rule of a Buddhist dynasty from 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> century AD, the tangible Buddhist heritage in Bengal, particularly in West Bengal, a state of India being considered insufficient till the discovery of the Moghalmari Buddhist monastery of Paschim Medinipur district which is comparable with the Somapura monastery of Bangladesh, a UNESCO declared world heritage site. Before the discovery of Moghalmari, Nandadirghi monastery of Jagjivanpur, situated in the interfluvial of Punarbhaba and Tangon River, was the

only structure around which the issues of Buddhist tourism have been seriously dealt with. Three other seats of ancient Buddhist monasteries namely Karnasubarna (Murshidabad district), Subarnabehar (Nadiadistrict) and Bangarh (Dakshin Dinajpur district) are woefully neglected because of the lack of appreciation of their tourism value in government level. The goal of Buddhist pilgrimage is not merely the visiting of the sacred centres considered to be 'axis mundi' (Eliade, 1959) but to pass through an itinerary of greater and lesser sites (Behrendt, 2009). The lesser category sites are characteristically not associated with the life of Buddha or any miraculous event associated with the divine power of the Lord. Buddhist tourism of India incorporates a number of such sites that are more cultural and historical rather than sacred. Monastery tourism is already emerged as an offshoot

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of Buddhist tourism, which could rather be classified as heritage tourism than a branch of religious tourism. With a focus on addressing the research question on why the ruins of Buddhist heritage in West Bengal have not been successfully utilized for tourism, the present study is undertaken to fulfill the following objectives:

- a) To evaluate the status of the Buddhist ruins in West Bengal with special emphasis on the role of river on them.
- b) To recommend policy measures for a comprehensive planning and management of monastery based Buddhist tourism in West Bengal

With a view to the growing tourist traffics in excavated Buddhist sites, it is essential to focus on their art, architecture and cultural history for better tourism marketing. This not only may generate income and employment but also sensitize the community living in the vicinity of such centres on the past glory of their civilization so that spontaneous public participation could be obtained for ensuring the preservation of the past heritages. There is no doubt that lack of community awareness on the value of excavated sites in the past led to their decay which could be prevented otherwise. This paper is an attempt to address the research gap on the past role of rivers in depletion of Buddhist monasteries when the popular hypothesis assumes only on the role of religious rivalries for their mysterious disappearance from cultural landscape.

#### Data and Methods:

Spatial distribution of the ruins of Buddhist monasteries of West Bengal is under study with special emphasis on Moghalmari. Detailed field work was made first at Moghalmari and it has been then compared with Jagjivanpur where experimentation to develop heritage tourism could not be materialized few decades ago and scope of developing such tourism in the soils of West Bengal is somewhat challenged. Extensive field works have been made to collect both

primary and secondary data on the places of other three famous Buddhist ruins of West Bengal namely Karnasubarna, Bangarh and Subarnabehar (Table.1). Satellite images (IRS LISS III) have been used to analyze their spatial organization focussing on shifting of river courses in relation to their survival from flood hazards. In this context, maps have been produced using Geographical Information System (GIS) in the domain of Arc GIS 10.1 version. With triangulation of qualitative aspects of the attraction factor, the Buddhist heritages have been assessed from tourism promotion perspectives. A number of policy recommendations have been derived by studying the demand of the visitors and perceptions on the value of Buddhist heritage by the host communities.

#### Study Area:

In the present study, focus is primarily made on Jagjivanpur buddhist site in Habibpur Block of Malda district, and Moghalmari buddhist site of Dantan I Block in Paschim Medinipur district. From a mound named Tulabhita, a copper plate inscription of Mahendrapaladeva (9<sup>th</sup> Century AD) was discovered (Chakrabarti, 2001) from which patronage of Pala dynasty of Bengal to this monastery is prominent. The ground plan of the monastery resembles with the world famous Nalanda Mahavihar while the sculptural pattern is the manifestation of post-Gupta art of India (Sen Majumdar, 2013). The discovery of the Buddhist monastery at Moghalmari was made in the year 2003 from excavation of a large mound at Moghalmari named "Sakhisonar Dhipi".

The Bengali word *Dhipi* denotes the structural mound while Sakhisona according to folklore, was the daughter a local king named Raja Bikramkeswari. The love story of Princess Sakhisona and Ahimanik, the adopted son of one of the ministers of the then Amarabati state (presently in West Bengal and Odisha border) is a subject matter of popular folklores in the region. In Jhargram under Jambani block, in a picturesque village named Kuliapal, a local weekly market is named after the princess Sakhisona.

Table 1: Ruins of monastic complexes in West Bengal

Sl. No.	Place	District	Name of the Mahavihar
1	Datan	Paschim Medinipur	Sribandak
2	Jagjivanpur	Malda	Nandadirghi
3	Karnasubarna	Murshidabad	Raktamrittika
4	Bangarh	South Dinajpur	Devikot
5	Subarnabehar	Nadia	Subarnabehar

Source: Compiled by the authors, 2021

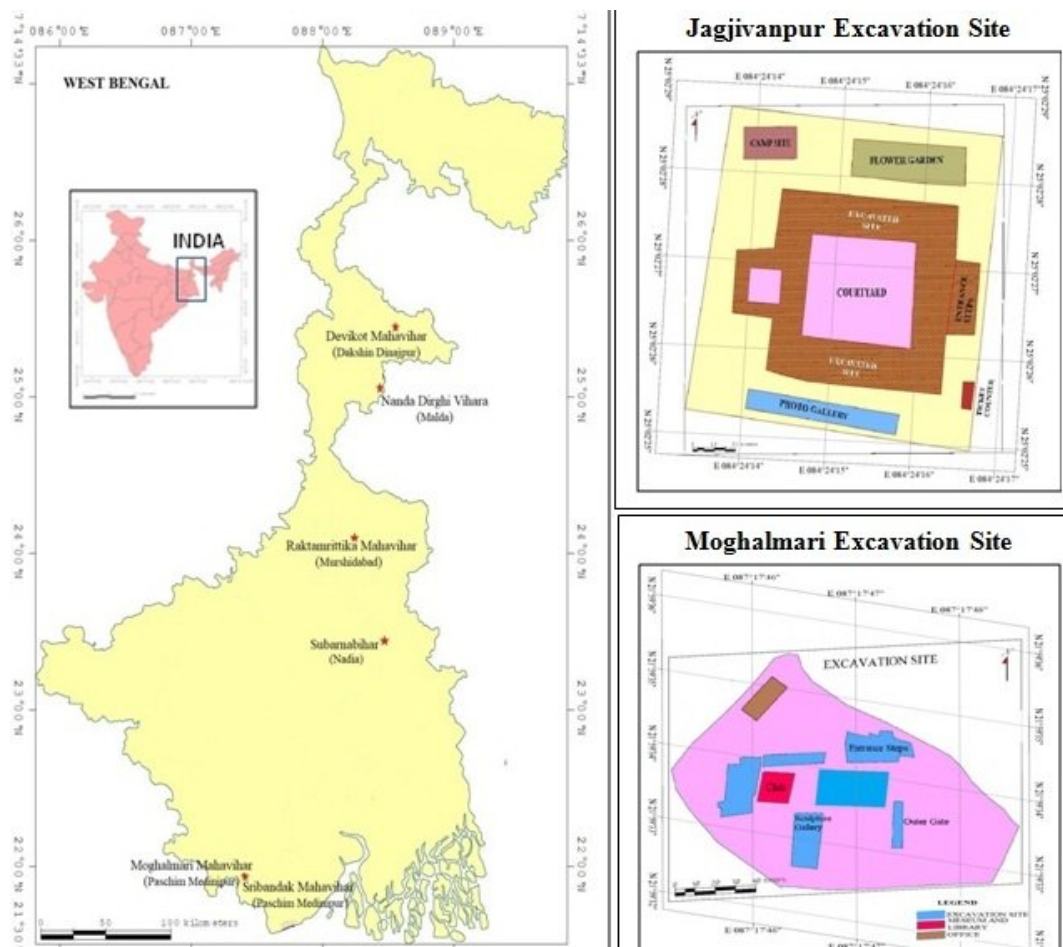


Fig. 1: Study Area  
Map prepared by the authors

In Nayagram Police Station, a huge ground is also named after her. The mound in Moghalmari was popularly known as “Sakhisonar Pathsala”, the primary school (called *Pathsala* in Bengali language) where Sakhisona met first Ahimanik. The epigraphic records from 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> century, establish the historic presence of Dandabhukti as a province of ancient Bengal, where the monastery was situated. Table.2 presents a comparison between these two Buddhist sites.

Among the other three Buddhist ruins, the condition of Subarnabehar site is the worst. Only a few bricks of the ancient monastery is found scattered in Subarnabehar where maximum human encroachment took place and the site was never been under any protection. Both in case of Subarnabehar and Bangarh, role of river as a destructive agent is worth mentioning.

The situation of Karnasubarna however is better but the neighbouring community is reluctant on its preservation since the site never contributed to the local economy by generating sufficient revenue from tourism. The occasional domestic visitors interested in history come and become disappointed viewing its condition and also lack of facilities and tourist amenities. Such grim scenario is the inspiration to undertake this study with research question on the requirements that could make the state a Buddhist tourism paradise. Fig 1 represents the location of these monasteries with special emphasis on Moghalmari and Jagjivanpur.

**Results and Discussion:**

Moghalmari, the site of ancient Buddhist Sribandak Mahabihar is the most promising site for Buddhist

Table 2: General comparison between Jagjivanpur and Moghalmari archaeological sites

Items	Jagjivanpur	Moghalmari
Location	Lat- 25°02' N, Long- 88°22'E	Lat- 21°57' N, Long- 87°16'E
Nearest Town	Malda	Kharagpur
District Headquarter	Malda town in North Bengal	Midnapore town in South Bengal
Distance from District Head Quarter	41 km	63 km
Area (sq. mtr)	78.58m × 78.33 m	80m × 80m
Antiquity documented	9 <sup>th</sup> century AD	6 <sup>th</sup> century AD
Involvement of conservational agency	State Archaeology since 1990	State Archaeology since 2013
Community involvement	Not found	Yes
Museum on site	Not found	Yes
Nearest Railway station	Malda town (41 km)	Belda (15 km)

Source: Field Survey 2019-20

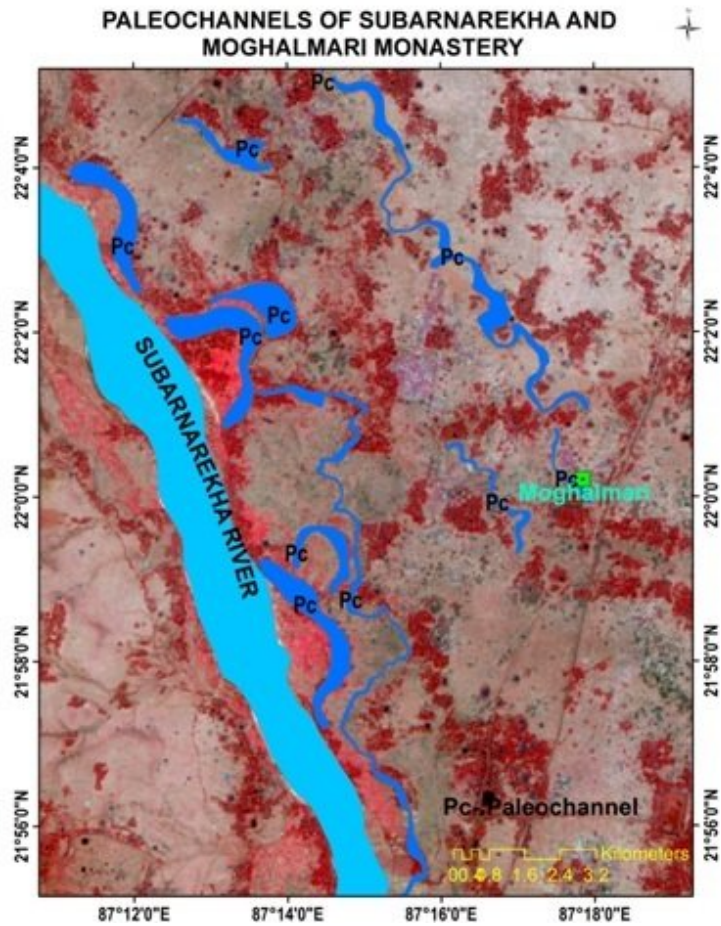


Fig. 2: Paleochannels of Subarnarekha River  
(Map prepared by the authors)

tourism in West Bengal. From the stand point of archaeological design, it is compared with the Somapura Mahabihar of Paharpur founded in 9<sup>th</sup> Century by the Pala kings, which is located in Rajshahi district of Bangladesh (i.e. eastern portion of undivided Bengal under British Rule before 15<sup>th</sup> August, 1947). Recognition of Somapura Mahabihar as UNESCO's World Heritage Site (in the year 1985) depicts the heritage value of Moghalmari monastery which is characteristically of similar type excavated in the year 2003. The Chinese pilgrim Huen-Tsang, who visited Tamralipta kingdom in 638 AD reported the presence of ten active monasteries. Moghalmari, a monastic complex that dates back to 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> century AD might be one of them (Datta, 2010). Once located on the bank of the Subarnarekha as evident from the presence of paleochannels and evidences of river shifting in the region (Fig 2), the monastery was then situated on the levee of the river near the junction point of inland trade route and the river route connecting Bengal and Odisha in ancient period. The linear inland trade route is referred to as *Danda* and the region in the reign of king Shashanka (600-637 AD), the first powerful king of Bengal was known as Dandabhukti (*bhukti* stands for the integral part of kingdom). Pataliputra, the nerve centre of the then North India's trade and commerce was connected with Tamralipta port for sea trade by this historical road, which was extended towards south probably upto Vishakhapatnam. Instead of imposing direct rule from his capital at Karnasubarna, Shashanka preferred to appoint local rulers. Somdatta was one of them, the ancestor of whom ruled present Dantan and its surrounding areas during 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century AD (Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 2014).

The word Dantan has association with another popular legend regarding the waterway transportation of Buddha's tooth that was distributed from his mortal remains after cremation in the 5<sup>th</sup> century B.C. The tooth was worshipped about 800 years at Dantapur, a place in Kalinga, a Buddhist kingdom (present Odhisha) and according to a few scholars, the shrine of Lord Jagannath at Puri was the original place of tooth worship (O'Malley, 1908). However, with the fall of the Buddhist empire in Kalinga, this tooth was said to be transported to Ceylon through the Tamralipta port, which is now worshipped at the temple of Kandy, the most revered Buddhist site in Sri Lanka. It is firmly believed that the tooth relic was sheltered at the monastrial complex of Moghalmari before it was sent to Ceylon in the first quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century from which the locality derived the name Dantan (*Danta*

means tooth and *pur* stands for city). The non-believers however relate the place name with the *Datun* (tooth stick) of Sri Chaitanya, a 15<sup>th</sup> century legendary Vaishnava leader who visited the place on his way to Puri.

Moghalmari is now a village situated at a distance of 5.2 kms north from the Dantan town. The place named Jahajghata (meaning harbour) in Dantan (near Dantan High School) is significant toponymic data supporting the presence of a sheltered site for the ships. The place named Jahajdubi (*Jahaj* stands for ship and *dubi* means submergence) within paddy field at present near the Moghalmari village is indicative of the past incidence of sinking of ship/ships. The river Subarnarekha which was then navigable used to flow beside the Sribandak Mahabihar (now it has been shifted about 5 kms in western direction) and the lowland used for paddy cultivation today was once the river bed (Fig. 2). If the tooth legend is taken into consideration, Moghalmari Mahabihar was serving the devotees even in the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In the *Dathavamsa* (literally means the history of the tooth relic), a chronicle of Ceylon, written in Pali language by Dhammakitti, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist scholar, it is mentioned that Princess Hemlata and Prince Dantakumar brought the tooth of Buddha from Kalinga to Sri Lanka using the Tamralipta port (Pradhan, 2005). The Mahagovinda Sutta, another famous Buddhist text mentions Dantapura of Kalinga was one of the six famous cities of contemporary India. The tooth of Buddha was kept there in a magnificent stupa built by king Brahaddutta who received the tooth relic from Khema, a Buddhist monk in 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. (Ganguli, 1975).

The name Moghalmari (literally means the slaughter of the Mughals) is of medieval origin. It may have historical association with a series of battles fought by the Mughals in the year 1575 against the Afghans in which they faced considerable casualties despite of final win. A few scholars however reserve a different opinion that 'mari' is a word depicting road, which facilitated the movement of Mughal troop in the 16<sup>th</sup> century that persisted since the time of Shashanka in 7<sup>th</sup> century connecting Pataliputra with Visakhapatnam. The disappearance of the monastery beneath a mound at Moghalmari might be the outcome of the destruction made by Mohamedans during the battle fought at the time of Akbar, the Great Emperor (Vasu, 1911).

Buddhism was established in Bengal by royal patronage of a number of dynasties among which the Mouryan of

the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC was the pioneer. King Ashoka (273-236 BC), the Great Emperor himself was said to be present physically at Tamralipta port on occasion of sending his son and daughter to Ceylon with the branch of Bodhi tree. It was I-tsing, a Chinese traveler who noticed the presence of Ashoka's stupa during his travel at Tamralipta in the later half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century which was probably one of the 84000 stupas said to be built up by Ashoka in different parts of Indian subcontinent. The archaeological evidences and epigraphic records represent that Buddhism was a dominant faith in Tamralipta kingdom during the Sunga (185-73 BC) and Kusana (30-300 AD) period when Tamralipta's maritime trade with outside world was at its high (Dasgupta, 1958). Buddhism had been more consolidated itself in the region in succeeding years as evident from the travel record of Fa-Hien (405-411 AD) who observed the presence of 24 monasteries in the region. (Ramachandran, 1951) The monastery where tooth relic of Buddha was kept before its transportation to Ceylon might be one of them.

As the excavated monasterial complex of Moghalmari dates back to 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, it may be assumed that it had been developed on ruins of previous Buddhist establishments. By the Hindu Guptas, who ruled during 300-500 AD century, Buddhism was never treated as the religious rival of Hinduism. The Palas who rose from the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century and ruled for a period of about 400 years were devout Buddhists and their reign is known as the Golden Age of Buddhism in Bengal (Chakma, 2011). The similarities between the Moghalmari monastery and the famous Somapura Mahabihar of Paharpur (that was founded not before the 8<sup>th</sup> century) depict that art and architecture of Paharpur was guided by the model of Moghalmari monastery, because Moghalmari which was established much earlier as evident from

historiographic records. As the gigantic monastery and the magnificent temple at Somapura were not built even in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, it was unnoticed by Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang during his travel (Gill, 2007). Archaeological data further reveals that the Buddhist establishments of Moghalmari were inspired from the art and architectural stage of Nalanda, the principle seat of Buddhist learning in Northern India where Hiuen-Tsang stayed for years (Hazra, 1983). The great monastery of Nalanda came into prominence towards the close of 5<sup>th</sup> century AD (Roy Acharyya, 2005). The stucco work of Stupa No- 3 at Nalanda clearly depicts the relationship between Nalanda Mahabihar and Sribandak Mahabihar, which are contemporary and thereby considered to be the paradise for archaeological tourism. For architectural ornamentation, stucco work was made at the outer boundary wall of the Buddhist temple complex of Moghalmari following the Nalanda architectural style, which provided protective coating for the structures (Basu, 2008). The ground plan of Moghalmari Buddhist complex is different from Nalanda, which resembles Paharpur. Moghalmari is thus endowed with heritage tourism potentials not only from the standpoint of antiquity but also for a finer craftsmanship manifested in its art and architecture (Sanyal, 2001). Table 03 represents the phases of excavations undertaken by the Department of Archaeology, University of Calcutta who discovered the monastery excavating a mound at Moghalmari in the year 2003.

Since November 2013, Archaeological Department of West Bengal Government took over the custody of the excavated monasterial complex and the conscious efforts on developing tourism based on this Buddhist site had been initiated from the Block level administration of West Bengal government. Organizing a Buddhist festival at the site in the year

Table 3: Major Excavations Outcomes at Moghalmari

Phase	Major discoveries that attract the attention of tourists
2003-04	Phase I in the mound MGM I (Sakhisonar Dhipi) gave indication on presence of a monastic complex
2006-07	Phase II concentrated on eastern and southern side of MGM I and discovered a wall of the monastic complex, the square/rectangle structures used as cells of the resident monks, structure of circular bricks forming the bases of stupas and other antiquities such as pottery strewn over the surface, stucco figures
2007-08	Phase III was devoted to the discovery of stucco decorated walls in the eastern side specially
2009-10	In the Phase IV, the entrance of the monastic complex was discovered in the northern side
2010-11	In the Phase V, the prayer hall of the monastery was excavated
2011-12	In Phase VI, stucco works, pottery, and votive tablets are further discovered

Source: Review of literatures and excavation reports by the authors, 2012

2016, the place was first successfully introduced in the Buddhist tourism map of the country. It is noteworthy to mention that on the day of the festival (i.e. 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2016) in which Buddhist monks from all over the country were gathered at Moghalmari for special prayers, about 40 artifacts dating back to 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries had been unearthed by the effort of the Archaeology Department, Govt. of West Bengal (Khanra and Pandey, 2016). Undoubtedly such coincidence boosted the glory of the place as a potential Buddhist tourism destination.

Among the sites in the periphery of the ruins of the Moghalmari monastic complex, Satdeula (the name derived probably from presence of seven deuls) is another archaeo-tourism site. According to folklore, the Pala king Dharmapala (770-810 AD) visited this place and his presence could have been linked with rejuvenation or reconstruction of the Buddhist establishments in the region. Archaeological investigations revealed that the rebuilding of the monasterial complex took place in the 9<sup>th</sup> century for the second time after its 6<sup>th</sup> century construction phase. Dharmapala and his son Devpala (810-847 AD) were very famous for their patronage to the Buddhist monasteries of eastern India and Sribandak Mahabihar, one of the oldest monastery in their kingdom could not be deprived from their aids and supervisions. Satdeula, only 7 km from Moghalmari is famous for its archaeological remains said to be built by Dharmapala, who married the granddaughter of Dhruva, the king of Biratgarh. Some historians however identified this Dharmapala as the regional ruler of Dandabhukti, who dug a pond (nearly 7 acres surface area at present) in the east side of the village for the benefit of people. It was named Dharmasagar after him. The nearby conspicuous Sharasanka Dighi was probably named after Sarasanka Deva of Ganga dynasty who ruled over present Odisha. It is the largest pond of the state covering 117 acres 35 decimals of area that could be used for diversified water centric recreational purposes. According to legend on its antiquity, the digging of this water body was initiated by King Ashoka (273-236 BC), while Shashanka in the 7<sup>th</sup> century had further dug it and thus by the effort of a number of kings in different epoch, such a huge waterbody came into existence. A few kilometers of its west, there is another pond named Bidyadhar (surface area 21 acres 30 decimals) named after Bidyadhar, who was a minister of 12<sup>th</sup> century Odisha king. The territory was under Odisha kingdom after the end of the Pala rule in eastern India. According to a tale, this waterbody was connected with Sharasanka

Dighi by an underground tunnel (Ghosh and Mahapatra, 2016). All such water bodies offer immense potentialities to develop recreational tourism coated with historical flavor.

Hsien-Tsang wrote a vivid description of Karnasubarna. Archaeological excavations in the early 1960s unearthed the Buddhist monastic complex but the excavated ruins still lie in total neglect from heritage tourism development point of view (instead it is located only 15 km far from the modern town Berhampore) situated in the left bank of the river Bhagirathi (Fig-3). It is noteworthy in this context that this monastery was also affected due to multiple flooding and shifting of the Bhagirathi River after the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Majumdar, 2019). It is because of the favourable location in the interfluvium of Punarbhaba river and Tangan river the Jagjivanpur monastery was the least affected from such flooding. In North Bengal, vagaries of Punarbhaba are responsible for the decay of Devikot and Bangrah Archaeological complex.

As the Buddhists were subject of slaughtering by the Muslim rulers, any renovation of Buddhist complex after 12<sup>th</sup> century in Bengal was absent. Either they turned into mounds with time or converted into shrines of other religions. For the ruins of Subarnabehar (the name of a mouza at present that supposed to acquire its name from a bihar i.e. monastery), clear evidences of the course change of Jalangi river could be traced from satellite images (Fig.4). An Archaeological monument preserved under the supervision of Archaeological Survey of India named Ballalधिपी (after the name of Ballal Sen, the most powerful king of Sena dynasty in Bengal) is about 5 km from the site of the lost Subarnabehar. According to the archaeologists, a Hindu temple-palace structure was imposed on the base of a 9<sup>th</sup> century structure. In the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the region was under the Buddhist Pala rule and the Hindu Sena dynasty has taken over the monarchy from them in the 11<sup>th</sup> century after which this structure was probably rebuilt. It previously might be a Buddhist monasterial complex as seems from its fortified boundary and internal structural arrangements (Roy, 1997). Ballalधिपी is therefore a suitable site in the proposed Buddhist tourism circuit particularly when it is not possible to incorporate Subarnabehar.

There is a Hindu temple in Subarnabehar Mouza dedicated to Lord Nrisinha, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. From the sculpture, it appears that it was probably a Buddhist Tantric deity of Subarnabehar and came under the fold of Hinduism with the fall of



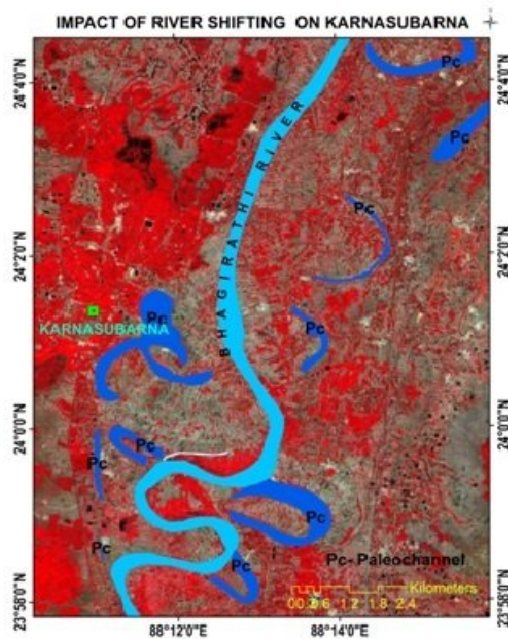


Fig. 3: Impact of river shifting on Karnasubarna  
(Map prepared by the authors)

Buddhism in Bengal. The large waterbody in the vicinity of the temple is the evidence of the past course of Jalangi that destroyed the monastery. A flow path of the paleo-channel is still prominent in the field. The Alakananda bill in the confluence of this past course of Jalangi with the Bhagirathi where Krishnachandra, the legendary king of Krishnagar built a retreat in the year 1776 named Gangabas (literally meaning an abode on the Ganga) might be the river course that destroyed Subarnabehar. The detailed microlevel geomorphological studies made by Basu (1976) and Sarkar (2002) vividly explain the river dynamics of the area which strengthens the observation on the past role of the river in the destruction of one of the stupendous monasterial complex of ancient Bengal. A devastating earthquake took place in the region in 1762 A.D. (Mukhopadhyay, 2009) and the lineament passing through the region (Chakrabarti & Nag, 2015) is the key in understanding the river dynamics and landscape change experienced by the region. The paleochannels have been widely accepted as historic evidence of changing drainage pattern in Ganga–Bhagirathi river system as revealed from the application of Remote sensing technology (Chakrabarti et al., 2001)

Sensitivity is prerequisite in developing Buddhist tourism sites because of concern over commodification

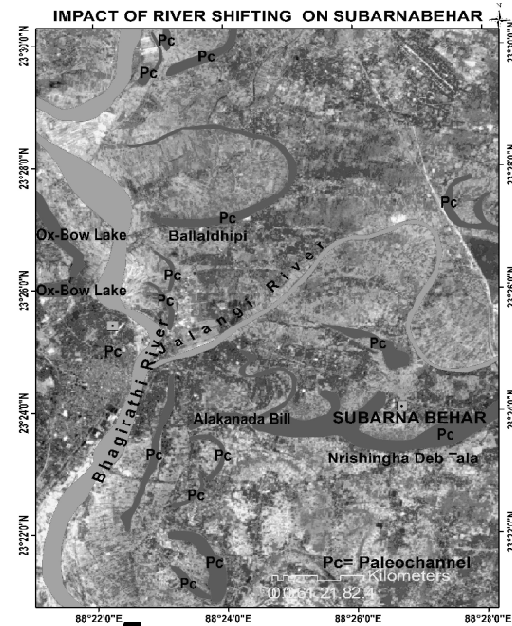


Fig. 4: Impact of river shifting on Subarnabehar  
(Map prepared by the authors)

and negativity affecting the spiritual dimension of certain sites (Hall, 2006). Fortunately for the sites under discussions, it is not a problem because worship had been discontinued in remote past. They are rather classified as secondary sites concerning education and festivities of the Buddhist pilgrims who undertake travel as the expression of reverence to the history of their religion. Such travel is designated as pilgrimage tourism which is intermediate between religious tourism and pure pilgrimage, thereby demands a better understanding of the Buddhist heritage in terms of history, culture and aesthetics.

If the following measures would be adopted, it will gradually develop the excavated Buddhist monastic complexes suitable for promoting sustainable Buddhist tourism

- I. Beautification around the excavation sites with provision of amenities and facilities for satisfying visitors (as demanded by 97 percent respondents not being satisfied with the present state of affairs).
- II. Development of Archaeological museum near the site preferably preserving the sculptures and artifacts found during excavation (the present status is described unsatisfactory during interview by 75% visitors of Moghalmari who



- simultaneously have praised the effort of local club for display of some excavated items in their premise. In Jagjivanpur no such museum is present as well as in other three places generating utter dissatisfaction of tourists.
- III. Train the local youth to serve as guide narrating the folklores associated with the site as well as explaining the historical and Archaeological significance of the monastery in order to generate more interest among the heritage tourists.
  - IV. Launch the archaeo-religious sites through virtual tourism platform especially for the Buddhist dominated countries as it is a modern mode of tourism marketing which is information technology based and constantly growing as well as acting as means to mitigate the adverse consequences of mass tourism (Voronokova, 2018). The advanced technical capacity of fifth generation (5G) network may provide the better opportunity to experience the feeling of visit without reaching the site and thereby virtual reality could be used for advertising the Buddhist heritage places to obtain the advantages of the growing digital economy.
  - V. Provision of adequate security with the installation of modern security measures in the sites by employing civic police from local youth, who could be designated as Tourist Police.

Destination image is vital for Buddhist tourism and it is essential to develop comprehensive planning and management system so that allegation on commodification of Buddhist culture could be avoided. The idea of pilgrimage to spiritual centres which is intrinsic in nature was introduced by Lord Buddha himself (Singh and Rana, 2011). The monastery tourism has to serve both the demand of the Buddhists and the demand of secular tourists attracted for Buddhist culture and heritage for which a careful handling and sensitive planning is necessary (Asraf, 2005). This study is a contribution in such planning process with its retrogressive, retrospective and prospective approaches.

#### Conclusion:

Pilgrimage for the Buddhists is described as physical movement symbolic of inner spiritual journeys and Buddhist tourism might be effective as a sustainable activity only when environmental damage and commercialization of the spiritual experiences could be avoided by implementation of inclusive planning

measures. Excavated Buddhist sites are icons of identity and pride in the context of the past civilization of Bengal. Heritage is that part of the past given special emphasis in the present for contemporary purposes such as cultural, economic or social (Graham, et.al, 2000). Buddhist tourism could serve such purposes for which sustainable planning is essential incorporating environmental, economic and socio-cultural issues. The Buddhist monasteries like Moghalmari in West Bengal may invariably attract large number of visitors generating both income and employment. If commodification and commercialization of heritage is required to boost the arrival for the interest of local and national economies, it must be done with maximum level of sensitivity and care (Aplin, 2002). For sustainable marketing of the Buddhist monastic complexes of West Bengal, it is essential to concentrate on introducing the scope for appreciation of intangible heritages of Buddhist culture on the platform of tangible structures. There is huge scope in experimenting with different forms of dance-drama comprising diverse dimensions of Buddhist folk heritage once persisted in Bengal. Inclusive technology driven space management and a wise site sustainability surveillance may ensure the bright future of Buddhist tourism in and around the excavated Buddhist sites for which a community oriented integrated heritage tourism planning is the additional necessity.

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