

A Case Study on Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery, Dhaka Uchinlayan*

Abstract

Religious tourism has become very popular arena nowadays. Visitors travel to religious places for worship, meditation, prayer and in search of inner tranquility. This paper highlighted the factors that motivate the travelers to visit Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery. The study highlighted the background of the monastery and its contribution for the Buddhist community as well as for Bangladeshis. In this paper, two, sections have been discussed focusing on demographic profile of the respondents and purposes of the visitors to travel Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery. In the demographic part age, gender, marital status, profession and income of respondents have been taken into consideration. On the other hand; visitation information, source of information about the Monastery, companion during visit and motives to visit the Monastery have been collected from the respondents. The present study also highlighted some of the guidelines for further improvement of the Monastery for greater interest of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Religious tourism, Buddhist, visitor, *Monastery*, place, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the fastest and booming industries in the world (Sayeda, 2017: 31). It has been a single largest economic generating sector for both developed and developing nations. Like other developing nations, tourism has become as thrust sector in Bangladesh. This is because; there are a lot of natural,

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cultural, man-made, historical, archeological resources around the country. All these rare and unique tourism products are potential sector of attractions for tourists (Roy & Roy, 2015: 53-61).

From the ancient time people travel to satisfy their inner quest. They used to travel for multifarious reasons and purposes to religious place (Uchinlayen & Suchana, 2018: 193-207). Most of cases; motives were to fulfill curiosity, to experience, to learn, and so on. As the purpose varies; people started to travel religious reasons as well. That's why; religious tourism and travelling to religious places, becomes a preference for all religions.

Religious tourism has been popular and potential sector nowadays. It can be defined as pilgrimage tourism as well. People make travel to religious places to take part of religious events. Moreover, they travel to seek prayer, to participate cultural and religious activities. However, Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery is such a religious place where devotees visit for religious and cultural purposes. In many occasions, this place becomes a destination of gathering for the followers of Buddhism and tourists as well (Banglapedia, 2017).

1.1 Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery: An Overview

According to Bhuiyan & Darda (2019: 11) Dhaka is the capital city of Bangladesh with unique tradition, culture and history. There are a lot of attractive and religious places for the travelers to explore their experience. The architectural site of Dhaka city is the blend of both ancient style and modern construction. Among the growing establishments Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery is a religious place for Buddhist community of Bangladesh (Amber, 2022). It is a place of significance for the Buddhist community in Bangladesh. It is also known as Bashabo Buddha Mandir or Vihara which has been used since establishment for worship, learning and meditation. There is a pond besides a golden statue of Buddha on the lotus.

Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery was established in 1962, Dharmarajika Fine Arts Academy in 1995 and Dharmarajika

Nikkiuniyano Clinic in 1996 and has been serving Buddhist community since. This monastery is operational as an orphanage, a place of worship, school and health clinic (Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery, 2020). Thus this monastery plays significant roles for the Buddhist communities as well as for Bangladeshis. This monastery is a place of worship which teaches the devotees the universal principles of peace, compassion, wisdom, and harmony to live in with others (Banglapedia, 2017). The monastery authority runs a welfare project to assist the community members during their problems and though running an orphanage school it serves to the community and nations.

Inside the monastery the visitors and devotees will be able to witness black stone Buddha statue, relics, bronze statue from across the world all of which carry religious and historical values (Amber, 2022). Visit to this monastery is definitely worthy as it represents architectural wonder, historical values and religious importance and teaches to be compassionate to others and community (Sunithananda, 1995: 230). The figure 1 shows the location of this monastery below;

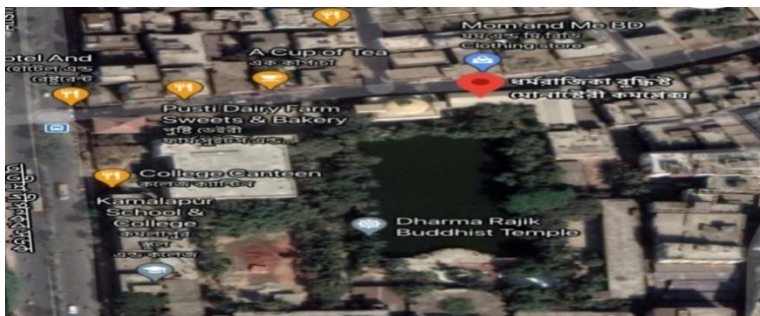


Fig-1: Source: Google map of Dharmarajika Buddhist monastery/monastery Available at:

<https://www.google.com/maps/@23.7364336,90.4296643,21z>

Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prochar Sangha: It was established as Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prochar Sangha (Earlier name East Pakistan Bouddha Kristi Prachar Sangha) on 4th December 1949 as an organization for the well-being of Buddhist community. The objectives of this establishment were to spread the cultural,

social, and religious position of Buddhists in the newly emerged Pakistan. The present name was named after the liberation war of Bangladesh. Srimat Dharmadarshi Mahathero and Srimat Bangish Bhikkhu were president and general secretary in its first executive committee. Then Mahasanghanayaka Visuddhananda Mahathero came to Dhaka and established Dhramarajika Buddhist Monastery at Sabujbag, Atish Dipakar road, Dhaka in 1960 for the social, cultural, and religious activities for the Buddhist in Dhaka city (Sunithananda, 1995: 230). After that, Mahasanghanayaka Visuddhananda Mahathero established Dhramarajika orphanage for helping poverty stricken students of our country in 1972. Dhramarajika Buddhist Monastery has played an important role in the liberation war of Bangladesh. Mention may be made that, at that time, the national leaders accelerated the liberation war by staying in this monastery (Barua, 2020: 228-229).

After that, he established Dhramarajika high school for patronizing education for the welfare of Dhramarajika education in 1972. Later on, he established Dhramarajika primary school, Dhramarajika kindergarten school, Dhramarajika musical academy, Dhramarajika printing press, Dhramarajika technical school, and Nikkiuniyano clinic in the campus of Dhramarajika Monastery and in the meantime, he has visited Sri-Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Bhutan, India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Nepal, China, Korea, Singapore, Mongolia, Japan, and many other countries. He made friendships with different Buddhist nations and people of the world. Then he arranged to bring the ash relics of great Buddhist scholar Atish Dipankar Srijnan from China in the year 1978 which is being preserved with proper care and dignity at the campus of Dhramarajika Buddhist Monastery (Kristi, 2023: 22- 26).

Then Mahasanghanayaka Visuddhananda Mahathero traced out the birth place of Atish Dipankar Srijnan at Mushigonj, Dhaka. Then he purchased a plot of land to repair the complex with Atish Dipankar Srijnan stupa. He has arranged a big conference in 1983 at the Dhramarajika Buddhist Monastery premises for observing the birth 1000th ceremony of Atish Dipankar Srijnan.

Here, a good number of foreign delegates from different Buddhist countries including the president of Buddhist association from China Mr. Jhaopuchau were present. And some other delegates from Sri-Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, Netherlands, England, Australia, America, India, China, Korea, Singapore, Japan, and more than 100 delegates from many other countries were present at that occasion (Barua, 2023:93). In one invitation, former King Bhumibol Adulyadej and Queen Siriket visited this monastery in 1962, and former president of then Sri Lanka visited in 1982. After that, the first lady of France Mrs. Mithila visited this monastery. This way many international visitors visited this monastery in different times. Apart from this H. M. Ershad in 1983 and Honorable Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina also visited this monastery in 23rd February 2011 and many others distinguished scholars, religious tourists, intellectuals, researchers and students from home and abroad at different times (Kristi, 2023). Atish Dipankar Peace Award and Visuddhananda Peace Gold Award giving ceremony was initiated in 2001 and since then these awards were given to intellectuals, Buddhist Scholars, and Buddhist monks every year to the people of all religions during observance of birth ceremony of the above mentioned two Buddhist scholars. At present, Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery has all international Buddhist organizations such as Asian Buddhist Conference Office for Peace (ABCP) in Mongolia, WFP in Thailand, Asian Conference for Religion and Peace (ACRP) South Korea, World Conference for Religion and Peace (WCRP) USA, World Sangha Council (WSC) Taiwan, International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) India, and World Buddhist Forum (WBF) China.

1.2. Brief Profiling of Important Buddha Statues and Infrastructures

Standing Lotus Buddha Statue: There is a golden lotus Buddha statue inside the monastery. It is newly built 38 inch Buddha statue which is full of architectural design and beauty built in 2011. It is ever first statue in Bangladesh of such design and it has been built by the supervision of H. H. Sanghanayaka Suddhananda Mahathero and Phra Maha Boonsong Upasamo of

Wat Songmettawanaram of Chonburi, under the support of Royal Thai family, Thailand (Kristi, 2023: 22- 26).

Lying Buddhist Statue: There is a lying Buddhist statue located under the bodi tree which is very attractive sculpture for the devotees of Buddhist followers and visitors as well. The statue was established in 2014 in the campus of Dhramarajika Buddhist Monastery (Kristi, 2023: 22- 26).

Bodi tree: According to Sunithananda (1995: 230) a Bodi-tree was brought from Anuradhapur, Sri Lanka in 1964 and planted at the campus of Dharmarajika Buddhist monastery. It was a gift of the then Prime Minister Sreemavo Bandernayaka of Sri Lanka.

Pond: There is big pond in the middle of Dhramarajika Buddhist Monastery campus. It is very beautiful and there are a lot of fishes and the residential student of the hostel take bath.

Black stone Buddha statue, relics, and bronze statue: Inside the monastery the visitors and devotees will be able to see black stone Buddha statue, relics, and bronze statue from across the world all of which carry actually religious and historical values. Exploring this monastery is definitely worthy as it represents architectural wonder, historical values and religious importance and teaches to be compassionate to others, local people, and community as well (Sunithananda, 1995: 230).

Ash Relics of Atish Dipankar Srijnan: Mahasanghanayaka Visuddhananda Mahathero arranged to bring the ash relics of great Buddhist scholar Atish Dipankar Srijnan from China in the year 1978 which is being preserved with proper care and dignity at the campus of Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery. It is necessary to mention that the then government of Bangladesh played a significant role by facilitating all types support (Kristi, 2023: 22- 26).

Educational institutions: There are some educational institutions in the premises of Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery such as Dhramarajika High School, Dhramarajika Hostel, Dhramarajika High School Fine Arts Academy, and Dhramarajika

Kindergarten. The number of students in the school is nearly seven hundred students, one hundred students in the Kindergarten, and four hundred students in the hostel for all community.

Moreover, there are many other institutions inside the campus of Dharmarajika Buddhist monastery which have been established since the inception in different times. There are also some institutions inside the campus which are playing important role for the well-being of the Buddhist society in different sectors such as Buddhist Co-operative Credit Union Ltd (1991), Atish Dipankar Co-operative Credit Union Ltd (1991), and Sanskrit and Pali Education Board. A list of such organizations has been showed in the following table 1

Table: 1

Name of the Organizations	Year of Establishment
Dhramarajika High School	1972
Dhramarajika Hostel	1972 & 2020 (newly renovated)
Dhramarajika Technical School	1972
Dhramarajika High School Fine Arts Academy	1995
Dhramarajika Nikkiuniyano Clinic	1996
Dhramarajika International Prayer Hall	1972
Dhramarajika Monks Training Centre	2022
Dhramarajika Dining Hall & Library	2013
Atish Dipankar Auditorium	2021
Buddhist Co-operative Credit Union Ltd	1991
Atish Dipankar Co-operative Credit Union Ltd	1991
Buddhist Monks Shima Ghor	2021

Source: compiled by author, 2023

List of delegates from home & foreign countries: Since 2001 Bangladesh Bouddha Kristi Prochar Sangha has arranged Atish Dipankar Peace Gold Award in the campus of Dhramarajika Buddhist Monastery. Therefore, a good number of delegates from Bangladesh and other foreign countries have participated in this program to achieve gold award. Especially, these awards are given to the scholars, Buddhist thinkers, social workers, intellectuals, humanitarian organizations, prominent teachers, and in other categories. Here, a list of awardees from home and

abroad has been depicted who visited this monastery at different times in the following table 2;

Table-2: list of delegates from home & foreign countries

2001	:	Dr. Egaku Mayeda, Japan	
2002	:	Master Kuang Hsin, Taiwan	
2003	:	Vassula Ryden, Greece	
	:	Catharina Jacobsen, Norway	
2004	:	Ven. Rinpoche Jamuyang Lousngjiemei Tudanquejinima, China	
2005	:	Ven'ble T.Y.S. Lama Gangchen, Italy	
	:	Norwegian Bangladesh Association, Norway	
2006	:	Ramakrishna Mission & Math, Dhaka, Bangladesh	
	:	Prof. Dr. Alamgir Muhammad Serajuddin, Bangladesh	
2007	:	Ven'ble Phra Rajabhavanavisudha, Thailand	
	:	Ven. Liao Chung, World Sangha Council, Taiwan	
	:	Prof. Dr. Dipak Kumar Barua, India	
	:	Roy Bahadur Ranada Prasad (R.P. Saha), Bangladesh	
	:	Mahaupasika Dr. Bongkot Sithipol, Thailand	
2008	:	Mr. Phallop Taiarry, Thailand	
	:	Ven. Dr. Buddhapriya Mahathera, India	
2009	:	Mr. Dao Surang, China	
	:	Ven. Dr. Tampalawela Dhammaratana, France	Mr. Chen Suang, China
	:	Mr. Mir Nawaz Khan Marwat, Pakistan	Advocate Pramode Mankin, Bangladesh
2010	:	Mr. Paban Chowdhury, Bangladesh	Mr. Sampad Barua, Bangladesh
	:	Ven. Xue Cheng, China	Mr. Kabir Bin Anowar, Bangladesh
	:		Mr. Saiful Hassan Badal, Bangladesh
2011	:	H. E. Phan Wannameethee, Thailand	2017 :
	:	Most Ven. Hye-Jeong, Republic of Korea	Most Ven. Vajra Master Jinke Xuanlei, China
	:	Ven. Phrakhu Sangharuk Moha	Most Ven. Prathem Pariyat Muni, Thailand
	:	Boonsong Upasamo, Thailand	Most Ven. Prof. Kotapitayee Rahula, Sri Lanka
2012	:	Dr. Pornchai Pinyapong, M.D., Thailand	Most Hon. Zhang Lianzhen, China
	:	Lion M. K. Bashar PMJF, Bangladesh	Mr. Lee Yuk Tim, Hong Kong
	:		H.E Ambassador Saida Muna Tasneem, Bangladesh
2013	:	His Holiness The 18 th Dom Tug Ripoche, Taiwan	Mr. Nooh Ul Alam Lenin, Bangladesh.
	:	His Holiness The 18 th Ah Tug Rinpoche, Taiwan	2018 :
	:	His Holiness The 18 th Drom Chen Rinpoche, Singapore	Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury M.P., Bangladesh
	:	Mr. Khalil Kazi OBE, UK	Mr. Mohammad Sayeed Khokon, Bangladesh
2014	:	His Holiness Dr. Phrathepkiitiangsi, Thailand	Freedom Fighter Mahabubur Rahman, Bangladesh
	:	Most Ven. Phra Dr. Maha Polchai Thawwaro, Thailand	Most Venerable Master Shi Dayuan, China
	:	Most Ven. Phra Ronnakrit Srilawan, Thailand	Prof. Sombat Treepratsesuk, MD. Ph.D., Thailand
2015	:	Prof. Dr. A. A. M. S. Arefin Siddique, Bangladesh	Prof. Ruenreong Leelanukrom, Thailand
	:	Dr. Mahfuzur Rahman, Bangladesh	Prof. Dr. Kanak Kanti Barua, Bangladesh
	:	Ven. Phrakru Samu Khaman Salangam, Thailand	2019 :
	:	Ven. Song Chun, Jiangsu Province, China	True Life in God, Greece
	:	Master Chonghua, Dali, Yunnan Province, China	Lama Gangchen World Peace Foundation, Italy
	:	Mr. Zhukang Tu Dengkezhu, Tibet, China	Most Ven. Lama Lobzang, India
	:	Mr. Man Hee Lee, Korea.	Prof. Dr. Shiv Kumar Sarin, India
	:	Syed Ashrafur Islam MP, Bangladesh	Mr. Zhuang Lifeng, China
2016	:	His Holiness Most Venerable Phra Somdet Mahamangalacariya, Sangaraja, Thailand	2023 :
	:	Most Venerable Khambo Lama Dr. C.H. Dambajob, Mongolia	Ven. Dr. Dhammapiya Mahathero, India

Source: Kristi (2023)

Image of different Buddha and infrastructure: There are many Buddha statues and infrastructural development in the campus of monastery which are attractive for the devotees and visitors. The

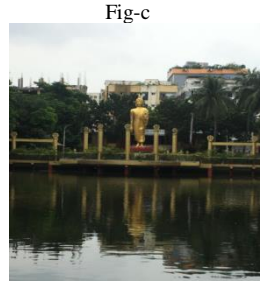
devotees and travelers will be able to explore this destination and enjoy that has been depicted in figure 02 (a-o);



Buddha Statue inside the prayer hall
Fig-d



Dhyani Buddha Akhavya
Fig-e



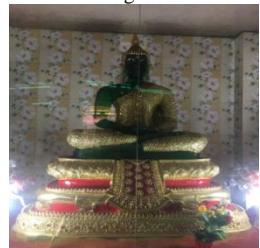
Standing Lotus Buddha
Fig-f



Lying Buddha Statue
Fig-g



Buddha Statue
Fig-h



Buddha Statue
Fig-i



Buddha Statue
Fig-j



Bodi-tree
Fig-k



Atish Bhavan
Fig-l



gate



Main gate



ধর্মরাজিক বৌদ্ধ মহানিহার অভিসিদ্ধায় কনভেন্স
কলকাতা, ভারত-১১১০
সংস্করণ: ২০০৬

Auditorium

Fig-m



Dinning & L

Fig-n



Bhikkhu training centre

Fig-o



Bhikkhu Shima Ghor

Source: compiled by author 2023

1.3. Objectives: The objective of the study is focus on the motivational factors to visit Dharmarajika Buddhist monastery as a religious tourism destination.

2. Review of Literature

Religious tourism is related to traveling to a place of religious importance. For Buddhist followers it has been a very popular practice to visit Buddhist monastery and stay temporarily at a monastery to meditate and practice traditional rituals (Kushwah & Singh, 2018: 39-49). Nowadays this system has been practiced in Korea that represents a close nexus between tourism and Buddhism (Wang, 2011: 5-10). According to Rinschede (1992: 51-67) as cited in Wang (2011: 5-10) apart from religious reasons, cultural events have become a motivational source of religious tourism. He has also mentioned religious tourism that is related to holidays, cultural events, and cultural programs.

Buddhist monasteries have become a secular place and service providers for travelers and Buddhist monks (Gao, 2017: 112-115). Many political leaders of the Buddhist world used to visit Buddhist monasteries during their visit to any country. That’s why; Buddhist monasteries have become a destination of cultural icons along with religious significance. It has become a cultural conversion of Buddhism in this society (Lee, 2006: 97-106). However, Buddhist monasteries have reflected a place of

facilitating both religious and cultural offers for tourists and followers of Buddhism.

Spiritual place has been turned into a heart of travelers to visit for religious drives (Sirirat, 2019: 97-111). Visiting to religious place for salvation and meditation has been booming in India (Kundu, 2016: 53-54). The Kamakhya monastery of Assam, India has been regarded as the most celebrated spiritual center in the world. Millions of tourists visit the monastery for attending various cultural and religious festivals. Though there are some positive and negative socio-economic impacts of tourism during festivals celebrated in this monastery (Sarma, 2019: 15-17).

There are many reasons why people believe in religions and religious beliefs. Some of these beliefs are to achieve justice, and hope for better position afterlife. From religious faiths people visit religious places to fulfill the expected desire. These factors significantly influence daily life of human being (Pepper, 2013). Moreover, leisure, recreational and religious activities work as driven force as special interest of tourism. Lumbini, the birth place of Buddha, is main attractive place of Buddhist followers all over the globe. Most of the tourist, used to travel Nepal mainly for religious faiths as well as to enjoy their special interest (Gurung, 2016: 3-5). He also added the need of some marketing strategies and role of stakeholders to brand and to promote Lumbini as Buddhist spiritual tourism destination.

The study of religious tourism has been a new field of tourism and draws a great attention to research at present. As such monastery tourism potentiality is rising increasingly (Hermawan *et al.*, 2019: 405-410). Though China is a multi-religious country but scared religious tourism resources are not properly used. However, Guangxiao monastery is very ancient, largest Buddhist monastery, and center of cultural exchange in China. Its infrastructural design is spectacular and a piece of beauty with full of ancient relics. Most of the tourists visit to have a glimpse of beautiful monastery around the world (Liang, Wang, & Xu, 2016: 88-92).

With the development of tourism industry in China, religious tourism has become popular and able to draw the attention of commuters. Some religious relics and rare resources of China have drawn the attention of tourists. Moreover, religious and cultural activities have become a religious booming attractive tourist spot. It could be an emerging sector to acquire both economic and social benefits for the country but failed due to lack of proper branding and marketing approach (Zhenjia, 2001: 46-52; as cited in Liang *et al*, 2016: 88-93).

According Rahman (2012: 112-122) discussed that Bihar has been a spiritual tourism destination for Buddhism and Jainism. Furthermore, there are a lot of Hindu monasterys, Muslim shrines, and Buddhist sacred relics of historical and cultural importance. That's why; people from Japan, Thailand, Korea, and China travel to Bihar as a form of Buddhist pilgrimage there (Geary & Mason, 2016: 57-63). Moreover, it has been transformed into a leisure destination which includes bird watching, water activities, dolphin watching, and visiting historical religious sites besides pilgrimage tourism (Rahman, 2012: 112-122).

Croatia is rich with heritage sites which carries great cultural values and rare religious heritage resources. This paper focused on the unique features of pilgrimage and religious tourism tangible and intangible heritage resources in Croatia. It also highlighted tourists' demand, satisfaction of visitors, impacts of religion in the life of pilgrims (Rot, Mikinac, & Bogdan, 2014: 79-87). India has also been a potential tourism destination especially for Buddhist because of numerous Buddhist historical and religious resources where they can practice spiritual activities as well as explore geographical, natural, and cultural diversity (Ilahi, 2020: 1-13).

Some significant religious Buddhist destinations in India are Sarnath, Bodhagaya, and Kushinagar which very sacred place for follower of Buddhism (Shinde, 2022: 3846-3863). According to Kumari (2016: 4-10) Bihar is a state with full of natural, cultural, geographical, and religious sites which has been a rich destination to provide competitive advantages from tourism perspectives by expanding new tourist circuit such as Buddhist

circuit, wildlife circuit, and Jain circuit developed by Indian government.

One of the most emerging forms of tourism is religious tourism in Thailand, which not only boost domestic travel but also contributes significantly to promote Dhamma in the region according to Buddhist principles. It underlines the perceptions and expectations of religious tourism for that is important to promote tourism in sustainable approach (Anuwichanont, Serirat & Mechinda, 2019: 55-66). Spirituality, pilgrimage, and heritage sightseeing and education purposes of Buddhist culture and philosophy are significant in Sri Lanka for Buddhist tourism flourishing because there are a lot of Buddhist religious resources in different parts of the country (Jayasinghe, 2020: 1754-1760). However, there are also many pilgrim destinations, monasterys or monasteries, and pagodas in Bangladesh with cultural and ancient significance globally (Sarker, 2021: 1-10).

Casellas, Serrallonga, & Costa (2013:135-145) highlighted some of the religious tourism products in Cotalonia. They discussed that it is a place full of religious heritage tourism products and growing sector for interested people worldwide. According to (Shackley, 2002: 345-352) religious tourism sites, holy arts, religious routes, and symbolic meaning of religious elements are core tourism product of the country. Though there is a lack of branding and promoting religious tourism products but still have lots of opportunities to attract religious tourist. Furthermore, religious tourism involves a broader aspect of motivation, use, behaviors, and perception towards sacred spaces (Hakobyan, 2010 cited in Casellas, *et. al.*, 2013 135-145).

According to Emmanuel (2014: 524-534) religious tourism works as a bridge among spiritual affairs, personal, inter-personal, economic, and social spheres of life. Moreover, it is visualized as form of sustainable tourism development if government properly pays attentions and thus could solve religious related chaos among states and countries. Eyo festivals of lagos in Nigeria was promoted as religious tourism and able to bring social, and economic change of the region. In Bangladesh monastery

tourism and cultural activities of religious can serve the purpose as well.

Bangladesh possesses a huge opportunity to develop historical and archeological tourism as an emerging tourist destination. Though religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism in the world but little attention is paid to research in this arena in Bangladesh. The researchers critically have analyzed the scopes to promote religious tourism in Bangladesh and identified some determinants of religious factor of the country and provided an effective framework for religious tourism that significantly can contribute for the development of religious tourism (Saha & Roy, 2019: 126-144). Among the notable tourist destinations Buddhist religious monastery and monasterys are significant. Buddhist religious place, heritage sites, places, and monasterys etc are major parts of tourism industry in Bangladesh. However, culture of Buddhism, ruins of Buddhist religious sites, monasterys etc. are landmarks of historical tourism of the country (Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2015: 1-7).

3. Research gap

There are many research articles on religious and cultural tourism that has been conducted but the current topic is still new one. As there has not been found any research article on this area. As such, the present research area is a new topic. Therefore, there exists research gap on such an important area that is attempted to explore. Therefore, there is an ample opportunity to conduct research on relevant area. Moreover, this study is an attempt to highlight the gap. It will also contribute to further literature as well.

4. Methodology

This paper is anchored based on qualitative structure as research technique because it is widely accepted (Ritchie et al., 2005) and extensively applied in to conduct tourism research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: 1-10). Both primary and secondary data have been used to accomplish the purpose. A semi-structured questionnaire was designed to collect primary data from respondents and depth interview technique was used where the secondary information is

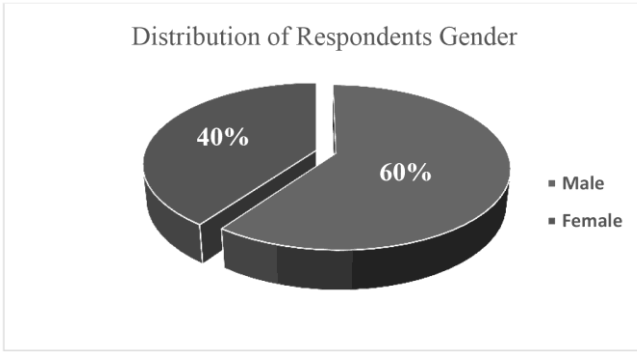
nominal and need to collect detailed understanding of the respondents (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Minichiello et al., 1995). A total of 75 questionnaires were distributed among the informants who have visited the monastery at least once for religious or cultural purposes and 65 returned. Among these, only 50 questionnaires were complete and valid for the purpose. To conduct the study, Dhaka city has been selected as a sampling frame. Convenience sampling method has been used as an instrument to collect primary data because it is the easiest way for the researcher for obtaining data (Sim & Wright, 2000) and this technique is inexpensive for data collection approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Interviewees were given comfort and flexibility to answer research questions. It was approached so that respondents could provide authentic and valuable data about visiting religious tourism places. The research survey was conducted from September 01, 2021 to December 30, 2021. However, questionnaires were distributed among the respondents and personally interviewed to collect depth interview. To present the findings and discussion frequency distribution technique has been used. Thus, results are edited, modified, and tabulated. Furthermore, secondary data have been collected from different published journal articles, books, magazines, newspapers, conference preceding papers, and related search engine. As this secondary information is statement based, these have been incorporated in different sections of this story to enrich the discussion section.

5. Results and Discussion

The research paper basically consists of two sections. The first section covers about demographic profile of respondents and the second section covers basic information and motives of tourists to visit a religious monastery of Bangladesh.

5.1 Section I. Demographic of Profile Respondents

Figure 03: Distribution of Respondents Gender

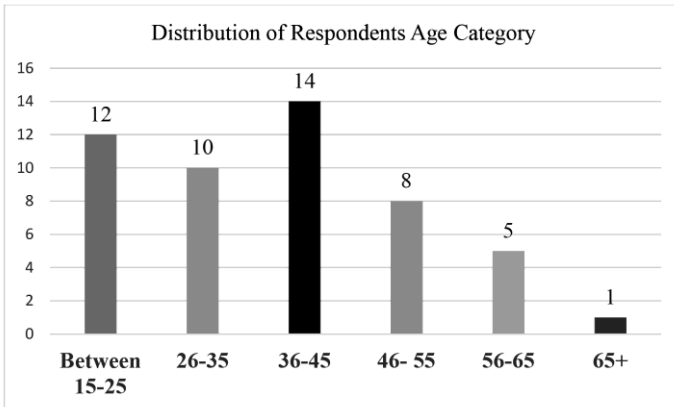


Source: Authors own

The above figure 03 shows the number of respondents visiting to the monastery where male were (60%) followed by female (40%). The majority of the respondents are male visiting this monastery to conduct religious purposes.

5.2 Age of the Respondents

Figure 04: Age of the Respondents



Source: Authors own

From the figure 04; it is clear that the age range of visitors to the monastery between 15-25 age were (24%), 26-35 age were

(20%), 36-45 age were (28%), 46-55 age were (16%), 56-65 age were (10%) and followed by (2%) 65+ age. However, the majority of visitors' age is between 36-45 (28%) followed by 2% (65+ age). It is because at the middle age majority visitors travel to religious places for religious purposes.

5.3 Marital Status of Respondents

Marital status	Number of respondents	Percentage
Single	18	36%
Married	30	60%
Divorced	1	02%
others	1	02%
Total	50	100%

Table 03 Source:

Authors own

Among the respondents single were (36%), married were (60%), and followed by divorced (2%). On the other hand, (2%) were others. Moreover, majority of the visitors are married (60%) followed by divorced (2%) and others (2%) which are presented in table 03.

5.4 Educational Qualification of Respondents

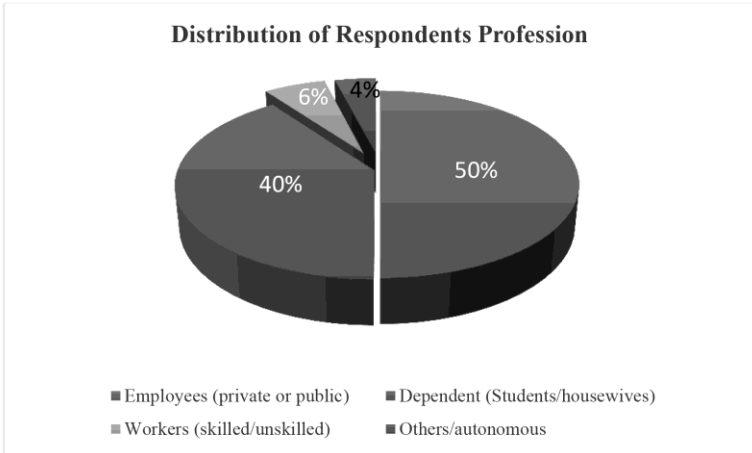
Educational qualification	Number of respondents	Percentage
Primary	5	10%
SSC	8	16%
HSC	12	24%
Graduate	18	36%
Post graduate	5	10%
Others	2	04%
Total	50	100%

Table 04 Source: Authors own

Table 04 represents that respondents completed primary were (10%), SSC were (16%), HSC (24%), respondents who completed graduation were (36%), post graduation were (10%), and followed by others (4%). Among the respondents majority were graduate (36%) followed by 2% others. It is clear that maximum visiting the monastery are educated and carries religious values.

5.5 Profession of Respondents

Figure 05: Distribution of Respondents Profession

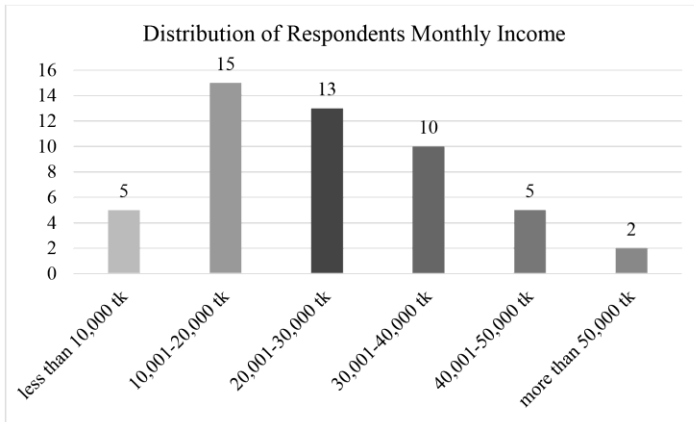


Source: Authors own

Figure 05 of shows that, among the professionals employees (private/public) were (50%), students/housewives were (40%), workers were (6%), and other occupations were (4%). Most of the visitors are employees working in public and private organizations (50%) followed by 4% working in other profession or autonomous organizations. On the other hand, students and housewife also visit this monastery for religious or leisure purposes most of the time.

5.6 Income Level of Respondents

Table 05: Monthly Income Level of Respondents



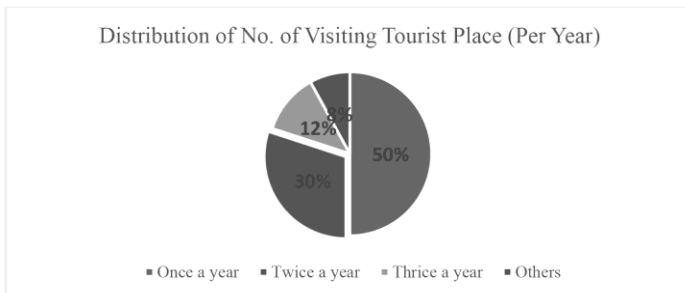
Source: Authors own

The above table 05 shows that the income level of respondents less than 10,000 tk were (10%), 10,001-20,000 tk were (30%), 20,001-30,000 tk were (26%), 30,001-40,000 tk were (20%), 40,001-50,000 tk were (10%), and followed by more than 50,000 tk (4%). Majority of visitor’s monthly income were 30% followed by 4 % which is more than fifty thousand.

Section II

5.2. 1. Visitation Information of the Respondents

Figure 06: Distribution of No. of Visiting Tourist Place



Source: Authors own

The figure 06 represents visitation information of the respondents. Among them travelers visiting this monastery once a year were (50%), twice a year were (30%), thrice a year were (12%), and followed by others were (8%). It is clearly found that maximum respondents visit particularly once in a year (50%) followed by 8 %.

5.2.2 Sources of information

Table 06: Sources of Information to Visit

Information source	Number of respondents	Percentage
Friends	10	20%
Relatives	7	14%
Family members	13	26%
Colleagues	5	10%
Newspapers	1	02%
Magazines	2	04%
Social media	8	16%
Others	4	08%
Total	50	100%

Source: Authors own

The tourist most of time gathers information about a place or destination from multifarious sources. The table 06 represents that, some of the common sources of information about monastery were friends (20%), relatives were (14%), family members were (26%), colleagues were (10%), newspapers were (2%), magazines were (4%), social media were (16%), and followed by others (8%). Majority of the visitors get information were from family members (26%), from friends (20%) and social media (16%).

5.2.3. Companion during Visit to the Monastery

Table 07: Companion during Visit to the Monastery

Companion	Number of respondents	Percentage
With family members	25	50%
Friends	15	30%
with a group	5	10%
Alone	5	10%
Total	50	100%

Source: Authors own

Most of the cases commuters prefer to travel religious monastery with family members were (50%), friends were (30%), with a group (10%), and alone (10%). It is clearly seen that most of the visitors visit the monastery with their family (50%), friends 30% followed by 10% which are presented in table 07.

5.2.4. Purposes of visit to religious Monastery

Figure 07: Purpose of Visiting Dharmarajika Buddhist monastery

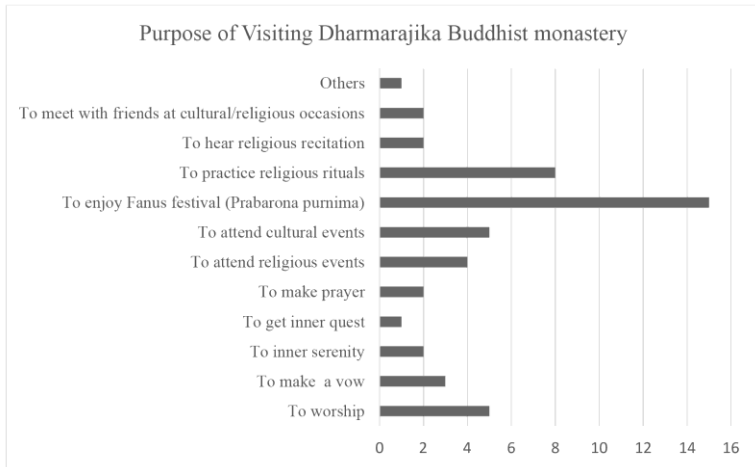


Figure 07 Source: Authors own

Tourists travel to visit a religious monastery for various purposes is showed in figure 07. Some of the purposes were worship (10%), to vow (6%), inner serenity (4%), inner quest (2%), prayers (4%), attend religious events (8%), cultural events (10%), fanus festival were (30%), religious rituals (16%), religious recitation (4%), attend cultural & religious events (4%), and followed by others were (2%). Majority of the respondents visited this monastery were to enjoy the fanus festival (30%), to participate in religious rituals (16%) and to attend at religious events (8%).

The prior studies have been focused on monastery stay for religious purposes as well as to practice traditional rituals which nexus between tourism and Buddhism as a part of cultural programs (Wang, 2011: 5-10; & Rinchede, 1992: 51-67). In some

other studies, it has been found that religious tourism has become a cultural icon and has contributed to socio-economic development when festivals are observed in the monastery regions (Lee, 2006: 97-106; & Sarma, 2019: 15-17). Pepper (2013) & Gurung (2016: 3-5) have highlighted religious tourism as a source of leisure, recreation, culture and religious beliefs, and faiths for exploring special interest which is similar with to the present study. Guangxiao monastery in China is a spectacular and ancient monastery, which is a centre of cultural exchange, always motivates travelers to visit this monastery (Liang et al., 2016: 88-92) which is similar to Dharmarajika Buddhist monastery as it the national monastery in Bangladesh for the Buddhist community. Rahaman (2012: 112-122) has highlighted Bihar as spiritual tourism destination for Buddhist because travelers from Japan, Thailand, Korea, and China visit for pilgrimage and other recreational purposes.

Some studies have investigated in the context of religious heritage tourism products (Casellas et al., 2013: 135-145), but promotional and branding initiatives are required (Casellas et al., 2013: 135-145), other studies focused religious tourism as a bridge of personal, economic, and social affairs (Emmanuel, 2014: 524-534). Saha & Roy (2019: 126-144) have examined the determinants of religious tourism in Bangladesh through empirical investigation where (Chowdhury & Ahmed, 2015: 1-7) has investigated culture of Buddhism, ruins of Buddhist heritage sites, and monasteries as landmark of religious tourism in the country. Though the prior studies have been addressed from different perspectives, hence the present study rivals potential ground to carry out the research work on the current topic. The present study will significantly contribute to the academicians, experts, stakeholders, travelers, and suppliers realizing the importance of religious tourism and contribute for further literature review.

6. Policy and guidelines for further improvement of the monastery

The monastery area should be kept under surveillance to ensure more safety both inside and outside area. Security should be

ensured when foreign diplomats visit the monastery from different countries across the world. In some cases, tourists are robbed, abducted and harassed by the misrrants. These are published in different media. Of course, the security problems are declining nowadays and the Government has now deployed tourist police in the important destination areas. Furthermore, monastery stay facilities should be ensured for the visitors who come from different remote areas. Crowd should be managed specially in the cultural and religious events observed in the occasion of Parbaronapurnima or Kathinchibor dan occasion. Pollution free, calm and quiet environment should be ensured so that visitors can take part in prayers, can worship and practice religious rituals. Even these, more measures are needed to ensure the overall safety and security of the tourists.

7. Conclusion

Religious tourism has added a horizon in tourism sector. This sector significantly contributes for social and cultural development of a country. Visiting religious place has been grown among all religions. People of all religions, travel to religious places of their own choice and time. However, the motives and purposes of religious tour to religious places are to obtain peace, inner tranquility, prayer, meditation and take part into religious rituals. Furthermore, the visit of travelers to Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery is to explore the historical and religious construction, to participate in various cultural and religious events. This monastery is a sign of peace and wisdom where the devotees come and practice their religious norms and rituals. Recently, mention may be made that many infrastructural development has been constructed under the financial aid and supervision of Bangladesh government and Indian High Commission in the campus of Dhramarajika Buddhist Monastery.

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