

The Unexplored Historical Sites of Mayang, Morigaon, Assam

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Abstract

Mayang is very rich in its historical heritage and traditions, and with the proper spotlight, it can emerge from its tag as a land of “Black magic”, viewed by the people as a land of mysticism, and firmly establish itself as a place rich of historical heritage. The various governmental institutions, organisations and NGOs should play a key role in promoting the rich historical heritage of Mayang, so that it can emerge as an important historical site in Assam. Moreover, the natural beauty of the region, the presence of the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, and the river dolphin population in the Brahmaputra nearby lends further to the tourism potential of the region. All these factors together make Mayang an important tourist destination of the region, which with proper development can make it the future tourism hotspot filled with cultural, historical and natural tourism sites.

Keywords: Historical sites, Mayang, Black Magic, Morigaon, Assam

Introduction

The past has a profound impact on the present. This is even more visible in India, which is so rich in its heritage and culture, where the past and the present comes together to form a dialogue through its tourist sites. The past and the present are a continuity, and history plays a role of connecting the two. Indian historical artifacts play a key role to showcase the cultural heritage of the country. Archaeological and other historical remains are a prime tourist attraction in India. It is often seen that tourists spend their holidays seeking out the various historical sites. Thus, history has a potent pull factor to draw consumers to the tourism industry. Tourism offers history as a product of consumption. However, a key problem of history in tourism is the lack of differentiation between history and myths, i.e., legends and fables. Hence, historians play a key role in tourist consumerism, as they research into the authenticity of history and present it before the tourists as facts, which can be used for his/her own interests.

The present study takes the area of Mayang in the Morigaon district of Assam, as a prospective site for the promotion of tourism in Assam. The area of Mayang is often associated with the age-old legends of being a land of “black magic”. Rumours are abounding that people who enter Mayang, are transformed into various animals, that the chair they sit on stick on their backs, that the “magicians” can stick vessels into the body of individuals, etc. These rumours and legends, lend Mayang a very mystical aura, as a land of mystery, and gives a new prospect of tourism industry in this area. Another key prospect of this area, is the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, located in the area. This provides a great recreational area for the people, as the Sanctuary is located quite close to the city of Guwahati. This has also provided a great boost to the local economy, with many locals closely involved with the tourism industry, catering to the various needs

of the tourists. However, this is not the only identity of the area. Mayang has a greater tourism prospect, apart from its eco-tourism and its name as a “land of black magic”.

Objective

This study focused on undiscovered aspects of Mayang, which when brought to the spotlight, can provide further impetus to its tourism and develop new vistas of tourism, which are not yet fully discovered.

Methodology

Both primary and secondary methods are used in the study. As part of the study an oral interview was taken with various local people to explore the various historic and tourist hotspots. Some tourists were also asked whether they knew about the various tourist sites of the region. Secondary sources in the form of pamphlets and local books were consulted, to gather knowledge about the history of the region and the various tourist attractions in the region.

Findings and Discussion

If we trace the progression of history to the ancient period, Mayang is quite rich in historical artifacts of this period. Terracotta sculptures right from the 8th century are discovered all across the Mayang region. These stone images are mostly of Shiva-Parvati and Ganesha, and are found in the local villages of Chanaka, Hatimuria, Kalchila etc. Another key historical artifact of this period is the stone inscription found in Burhamayang, which is regarded as the longest stone inscription of Asia. These early stone inscriptions and terracotta figures, which can be traced backed to the 8th century, are important sites of historical importance. These sites also have great tourism potential, and with the right focus and impetus, these can be developed to attract more tourists to the region.

An important historical site of this period is Kajali Chowki. Kajali Chowki plays a very important role in the military history of medieval Assam. It was here that the army of Lachit Barphukan had landed before marching to Guwahati, which culminated in the historic Battle of Saraighat. The importance of Kajali Chowki is corroborated by vast historical finds of stone bullets and armaments in the site. Kajali Chowki was also an important military station for the Ahom army, and the various arms and ammunition unearthed in the site, validates this fact. This makes Kajali Chowki an important historical landmark of Assam. It has the potential to attract many tourists who are inclined to learn more about the military history of Assam, particularly the Ahoms, who had ruled Assam for nearly 600 years mostly due to its military might.

Another important cultural and historical attraction of this region is the institution of kingship, which is still prevalent to this day. The kings of Mayang trace their family line to the Dimasa kings, and similar to them, call themselves the descendants of the legendary figure, “Ghattotkacha”. The various traditions and customs associated with the royal family is still observed in the area, even though the king has no real powers in the present day. A key tradition related to this institution is the “Gossain Uliowa Utsav”, which is a royal festival instituted by the royal family. The celebration revolves around the five deities, whose statues were brought by the 10th king of Mayang, Sharascha Chandra Singha from Navadweep in Bengal. The five deities, called “Pancha Gossains” are taken out in a grand procession, with the traditional king and his Royal Officers taking an active role in it. This is a very rare occasion and has a great potential to develop itself as a great tourist hotspot of the region.

Thus, apart from its rich tradition as a centre of “black magic”, traditional healing and as a land of the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Mayang also has a rich heritage and past, which when properly brought to the limelight, can boost the tourism prospect of the region, thereby giving the local economy the impetus, it needs, and make Mayang a possible tourist hotspot of the state.

Conclusion

The past has a profound impact on the present. This is even more visible in India, which is so rich in its heritage and culture, where the past and the present comes together to form a dialogue through its tourist sites. The past and the present are a continuity, and history plays a role of connecting the two. Indian historical artifacts play a key role to showcase the cultural heritage of the country. Archaeological and other historical remains are a prime tourist attraction in India. It is often seen that tourists spend their holidays seeking out the various historical sites. Thus, history has a potent pull factor to draw consumers to the tourism industry. Tourism offers history as a product of consumption. However, a key problem of history in tourism is the lack of differentiation between history and myths, i.e., legends and fables. Hence, historians play a key role in tourist consumerism, as they research into the authenticity of history and present it before the tourists as facts, which can be used for his/her own interests.

Mayang is quite rich in historical artifacts. These stone images are mostly of Shiva-Parvati and Ganesha, and are found in the locality. The stone inscription is regarded as the longest stone inscription of Asia. These sites also have great tourism potential, and with the right focus and impetus, these can be developed to attract more tourists to the region. The efforts of the local people will be the key in unlocking these potential tourism hotspots. This will also help in promoting the region on the world stage, and give a new recognition to the region. This will lead to the development of all sectors of the region, be it economic, cultural or historical.

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