

Tourism Development in Puthia Temple Complex Site of Bangladesh: A Search for Potentiality

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ARTICLE INFO

Date of Submission: 16-07-2025
Date of Acceptance: 11-09-2025
Date of Publication: 25-12-2025

Keywords:

Tourism, Sustainability, Temple architecture,
Heritage, Puthia, Rajshahi, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

This research was initiated with the goal of determining the tourist potential of the 'Puthia Temple Complex', a unique historical monument in Rajshahi Division with a history spanning over 400 years. The site is a living testimony to native building techniques, Mughal colonial influence, Hindu temple design, and restoration. Both primary and secondary sources were used in the research. In-depth interviews (IDIs) and field surveys have been used to gather primary data. For the purpose of interviewing tourists, an open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire was created. The analysis demonstrates that Bangladesh's Puthia Temple Complex has the potential to become a major historical tourism destination. In addition to being a large Hindu temple complex in Bengal, it is also known for its terracotta artwork and traditional architectural design, which make it a historic site. The objective of this research is to make Puthia a popular historical tourism destination in Bangladesh, drawing thousands of visitors from both domestic and international countries to take in its unmatched beauty and three-dimensional blend of architecture and history. For the Puthia temple complex to become a center of world tourism, the research also recommends that immediate conservation and preventative actions be implemented there in order to promote sustainable tourist growth.

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Introduction

Bangladesh has enormous potential to become a popular travel destination due to its rich cultural heritage and lengthy history. However, Bangladesh's tourist industry has long trailed behind because of the lack of suitable and established infrastructure outside of metropolitan regions. The government of Bangladesh has decided and carried out a number of measures to advance the tourist industry since the country's independence in 1971. Nevertheless, only a small number of historical and archeological sites have had substantial infrastructure development, leaving many more undeveloped prospective locations. The current study focuses on the Puthia Temple Complex, one such location that has not gotten enough government attention as a tourist attraction while having notable historical and natural beauty. This location has the potential to become a popular domestic and international tourism destination with the expansion of its infrastructure (Alam, 2013). In northern Bangladesh's Rajshahi city, the Puthia Temple Complex lies around 32 kilometers from the mainland.

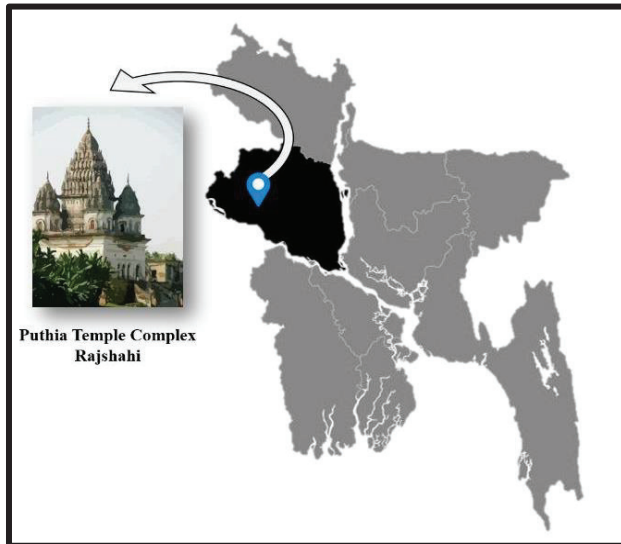


Figure 1: Location of Puthia temple complex in Bangladesh Map
(Source: Created by Author)

Muslim architecture, Hindu revival, local construction styles, and colonial influences are just a few of the trends and aspects that have been combined to create Puthia's temple architecture over the Mughal and colonial periods. Puthia is one of Bangladesh's most significant archeological sites, and its temples stand out for its historical impact and modifications. Nearly every kind of temple architecture constructed in Bangladesh is represented in the complex. This location is extremely significant as a religious institution and architectural legacy. Sadly, these complex's historic structures are in a precarious condition, needing intensive conservation work since they are being harmed by a number of outside forces (Saha et al, 2020). Scholars, heritage specialists, and

conservationists will all benefit from the data from this study, which will form the foundation for further conservation initiatives.

Due to infrastructural limitations in Bangladesh's tourism industry, many historical sites like the Puthia Temple Complex remain underdeveloped; this study evaluates its tourism potential, highlights its architectural heritage, and provides suggestions for sustainable development.

This study will provide insight into the Puthia temple complex's architecture, historical details, and tourist potential. Scholars, heritage specialists, and conservationists will all benefit from the data from this study, which will form the foundation for further conservation initiatives. It will assist in identifying the conservation and infrastructure development tactics required to draw both domestic and foreign visitors. Additionally, this study can support the local community's sociocultural and economic growth, which is possible by sustainable tourism.

Research Objectives

- (a) To thoroughly record and analyze the Puthia Temple Complex's architectural characteristics, historical significance, and cultural values in order to develop it as a heritage tourism destination.
- (b) To determine and examine the obstacles to the growth of tourism at this historic location, including those related to infrastructure, conservation, and service quality.
- (c) To draw attention to the Puthia Temple Complex's potential as a significant tourist attraction and to suggest conservation, infrastructure development, and promotion tactics for the growth of sustainable tourism.

Social and Cultural Significance of Temple Architecture

Temples are important to culture and society because they are places of worship. In addition to being places of religious devotion, they serve as centers of social and cultural activities. Temple construction and maintenance employ a large number of architects, painters, priests, musicians, dancers, and other professions, which strengthens the local economy (Ramanaiah, 1989). Because of the exquisite beauty of the terracotta artworks and metal and stone sculptures created by Bengali artisans, temples are today acknowledged as symbols of cultural heritage.

Temples serve as centers of the community's culture, presenting performances of the performing arts, such as theater, dance, music, and bhajans. These efforts have greatly impacted the development of devotion, literature, music, and dance (Kavitha, 2017). Temples served as centers of education in medieval Bengal, fusing academic pursuits with religious instruction (Pandey, 2022). Festivals and religious events like the annual Rath Yatra, which brought people from all walks of life together, enhanced social

cohesion. Free food and accommodation were provided during these festivities, demonstrating the unity and cooperation of the community (Shastri, 1955).

Temples had a major role in social and economic development and were popular destinations for religious tourists. They served as commercial and trading centers, attracting traders from different regions to do business there. 'Yatras,' or pilgrimages focused around temples, boosted the local economy and gave money to the national and local governments. Additionally, temples represented the region's religious and cultural characteristics as well as its historical significance (Suchana, 2018).

According to estimates from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 600 million pilgrims and religious tourists visit churches, temples, and other places of worship each year. This type of tourism encourages pride in cultural history, the economic development of neighboring towns, and the exchange of ideas and cultures. Religious tourism has few negative environmental effects while preserving the social and cultural integrity of nearby communities, claim Aulett and Vidal (2018). Compared to regular tourism, pilgrimage is less vulnerable to economic swings because pilgrims usually save money for their numerous visits and religious travels (Griffin and Raj, 2017).

The Puthia temple complex's religious significance and diversity of architectural styles make it an important cultural and tourist destination. These temples would be fascinating to visitors who are not just Hindus but also those who are interested in history and architecture. The temples' terracotta sculptures, which portray the Ramayana, the tales of Krishna and Radha, and regional customs, serve as a live reminder of cultural legacy. Religious tourism has the ability to provide economic success while preserving the local community's cultural character. To fully achieve this potential, however, conservation, infrastructure development, and efficient promotion are required.

There are several types of temples that are present in Bangladesh, and it is difficult to narrow them down to just a select handful since they all have their own uniqueness and stories to offer. Secondary data shows that we have more than 200 temples in the country; few, however, have become more well-known and famous than the others as a result of the sheer volume of visitors they have received. Figure 2 shows some renowned ancient temple locations in Bangladesh:

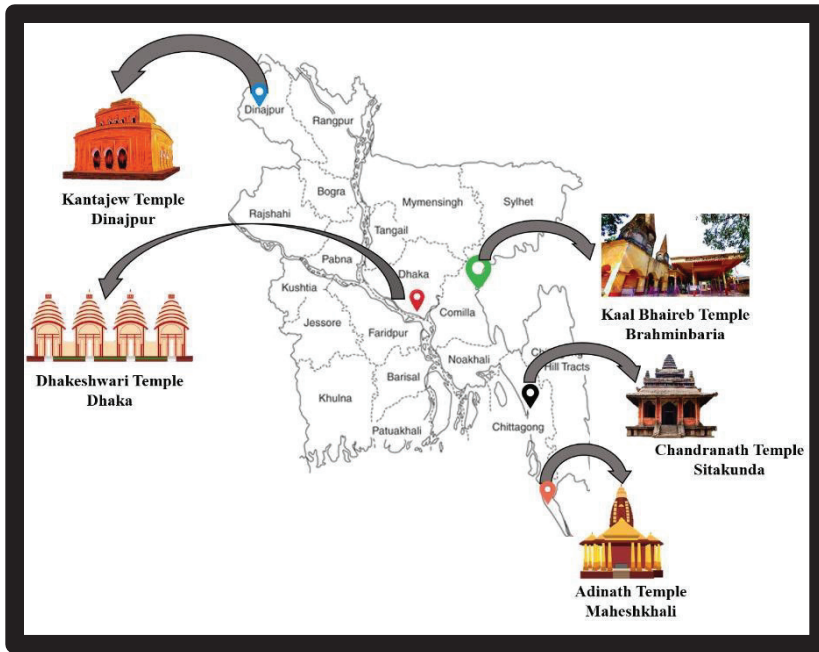


Figure 2: Historic temples location in Bangladesh Map
(Source: Created by Author)

Dhaka is famous for a historic Hindu temple called ‘Dhakeshwari’. Being owned by the government makes it the ‘National Temple’ of Bangladesh. The present style of the temple’s architecture is not indicative of its original era because of restoration and rebuilding efforts of many times (Gray, n.d.). Originally, Dhakeshwari meant ‘Goddess of Dhaka’ and with respect to the Goddess, the city retains her name. The Dhakeshwari temple was constructed in the 12th century by Ballal Sen,² a king of the Sena dynasty in Bengal.³

Another one is named as ‘Kantajew temple’ located in Dinajpur district, and is both a religious and historical landmark. In its early days in medieval times, the Kantajew temple was likely quite a sight. The temple had nine imposing spires before the devastating 1897 earthquake, but today’s visitor can only imagine the splendour with which this terracotta masterpiece once dominated the horizon (Banglapedia, 2021). The Hindu God Shiva, also known as Adinath, has his own temple called ‘Adinath temple’ on the top of Mainak Hill on Maheshkhali island, just off the coast of Cox’s Bazar, southern Bangladesh. According to Hindu scriptures, Goddess Sati’s right arm fell at

² Ballal Sen was the second ruler of the Sena dynasty in Bengal in the Indian subcontinent. He was the son and heir of Vijaya Sena and defeated Govindapala and thereby ended the reign of the Pala Empire.

³ Modi visits Dhakeshwari temple, Indian chancery in Dhaka, Retrieve on August, 2023, https://zeenews.india.com/news/india/modi-visits-dhakeshwari-temple-indian-chancery-in-dhaka_1608948.html

Sitakunda in Bangladesh, making the Chandranath Temple on top of Chandranath hill a significant Shakti Peeth or ‘a place of Shakti’. Another famous temple is ‘Kal Bhairab temple’, situated in the Brahmanbaria area of Bangladesh, which was damaged by Pakistani soldiers at the time of our independence war in 1971. Both regular and annual Hindu festivals are held in this temple and numerous pilgrims visit this place from different regions of the country.

Bengal temple architecture is characterized by many distinct types; for example- Chala, Bangla, Ratna, Shikhara, Math, and Composite etc. Some profiles of different temples are given below, which will give the reader clearer views about the temple’s architecture of Bangladesh.

Table 1: Types of Temple Architecture in Bangladesh

Types	Characteristics and Image
<i>Chala</i>	<p>Roof: The ‘char-chala’ or ‘chau-chala’ style consists of a square or rectangular structure topped by a hut-like roof with four sloping parts. If the base is square, the top points of these segments meet at the apex, whereas in the case of a rectangular base, they meet at a ridge.</p> <p>Dome: The ceiling of a square temple is often capped with a dome supported by pendentives. The outside of the superstructure is a close approximation of the form of thatched roofs, or ‘chala’ in Bengali. Char-chala arched domes were already in use at ‘Shat Gombujh mosque’ and ‘Chhoto Shona mosque’; hence the creation of the char-chala temples seems to be a post-Muslim practise based on surviving architecture. Ornamentation: exquisite terracotta decoration. <i>Example: Bara Shiva temple, 18th century, Hatikumrul, Sirajgonj; Gopala temple, 18th century, Puthia, Rajshahi.</i></p>



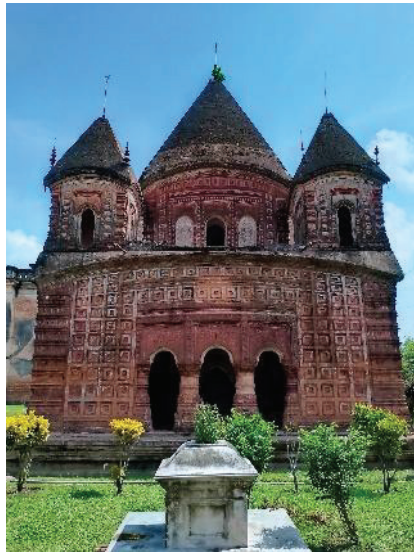
Source: Captured by Author

Bangla **Roof:** Some special aspects, such the curving roofline of the village huts, were brought into the architectural style during the sultanate era in Bengal. The material used to create Hindu temples began to shift in the 17th century. The bricks were used for the whole building of the cottage. The two-segmented roof, or do-chala, which replicates traditional Bangladeshi country house, quickly gained favour among temple architects. **Sanctum:** The rectangular *garbhagriha* (sanctum for the god) in these temples might have one, two, or even three entrances. *Examples: Chhota Ahnik temple in Puthia; Gopalbari temple in Naldanga (Jhenaidah); Narayan temple in Kaichal*



Source: Captured by Author

Ratna **Architecture:** A ratna-style temple has a square temple in its centre and an atrium or balcony out front. Architecturally, a ratna, which literally means jewel, refers to a shikhara or turret. Starting from single-towered to five to nine to eleven to thirteen and to twenty-five-towered, are all possible numbers of towers for a temple's design. There are several ek-ratna temples in West Bengal, but none in Bangladesh. Popular temple types in Bangladesh include the pancha-ratna and aat-chala. It consists of a square temple roofed over by a central tower and four corner turrets. *Example: The Govinda temple in Puthia, Rajshahi district*



Source: Captured by Author

Math

Architecture: This type contains a large number of squares, octagonal or 12-sided temples with one tall slender tower. Sonarong twin temples are one of the examples of this style. It is basically a twin temple. This wonderful archaeological monument from the 18th century is located in Sonarong village of Tongibari upazila of Munshiganj district. A stone inscription in the temple reveals that a local Hindu named Rupachandra built the large Kali temple in 1843 and the smaller temple in 1886. The smaller temple is actually a Shiva temple. The large temple is about 15 meters high. The main prayer hall of both temples has a verandah, the larger temple has a verandah of 1.94 meters and the smaller one has a verandah of 1.5 meters. *Another example: Sotalari Math at Jhalakathi, Newra Math at Chandpur.*



Source: Source: Nasir Khan Saikat / Wikimedia Commons. CC BY-SA 3.0.⁴

Composite

Architecture: A common practice among Bangladesh's temple architects was to combine elements from many architectural styles, such as those of the do-chala, char-chala, and shikhara. For example, Bara-Ahnik Temple in Puthia, Rajshahi district. The temple was constructed in the early 19th century using do-chala and char-chala frameworks.

Example: Bara-Ahnik temple in Puthia, Rajshahi, Rajaram Temple at Khalia in Madaripur district.



Source: Captured by Author

History and Architecture of the Puthia Temple Complex

In the medieval era, Rajshahi district was governed by one of the Hindu dynasties whose palace was located in Puthia, which is now part of the district. During the time of Mughal Emperor Akbar, the emperor entrusted the dynasty's founder, named as

⁴ Nasir Khan Saikat. "Sonarong Jora Moth (25).JPG – Sonarong Twin Temples, Munshiganj, Bangladesh." Wikimedia Commons, February 2010. Licensed under CC BY 3.0.

‘Pitambar’, to govern the Rajshahi region. Due to his son Nilambar’s public-spirited policies and unwavering devotion to the Mughal dynasty, Emperor Jahangir bestowed upon him the honorary title of ‘Rajah’ or king.

Nilambar, a powerful ruler in the 16th century, had a palace constructed of bricks over a stone base built for him and his court. This historic castle was demolished during the terrible Assam earthquake in 1891. Then, in 1895, Queen Hemantakumari constructed a second palace on the same site, a reminder of the once-proud royal houses of Puthia that have now fallen into disrepair. The previous Rajshahi monarchs chose this area as the capital because it was far enough from the receding Padma River and secure enough from attacking Portuguese pirates. A wide and deep moat surrounds the palace. The moat supplied the neighbouring villages and the palace with a reliable source of fresh water. Narrow passageways link the palace to the hamlet, making them vulnerable to blockades in times of crisis (Amin, 2021).

A massive two-story edifice adorned with beautiful Corinthian columns and suspended balconies serves as the palace’s centrepiece. Exquisite floral designs, statuettes, and coloured tiles adorn the outer walls of the palace in many locations. There is a massive entryway at the palace’s front, and on each side of it are two garages for the royal families’ carriages. The ground level of the palace served as living rooms for the staff, a barracks, a jail, and the estate’s treasury (Tareq, 2021). During the war for independence of 1971, the Pakistani army demolished three stunning statues in the Renaissance style⁵ that had graced the palace’s rooftop. The palace served as a government college until 2010. Unfortunately, the palace deteriorated into such disrepair that the college had to relocate, and it is now under the supervision of the archaeological division (Khan, 2015). Puthia temple complex has many aesthetic temples and a beautiful palace or Rajbari.

Palaces

Puthia Rajbari: In Upazila’s terms, Puthia serves as the capital. In 1744, this architecture was split among four co-sharers. The Panch-Anna (Five-Anna) and Char Anna (Four-Anna) co-sharers were well-known for their roles in managing the Zamindari. The Panch-Anna’s landlords Maharani Sarat Sundari and Hemanta Kumari were well-known for the exemplary way of their Zamindari. However, the Puthia zamindars’ contributions to architecture are noteworthy, especially those of Paresh Narayan and his wife *Monomohini* of the Char-Anna estate (Khan, 2015).

The Panch-Anna State: Nilambar’s oldest son’s share of the land was halved when it was re-divided between his two brothers in 1807. This was known as the ‘five-anna estate’ or ‘Panch Anna Palace’ (‘Anna’ meaning piece). The ‘Rajas’ and ‘Maharanis’

⁵ Sculpture styles evolved during the Italian Renaissance of the 14th-15th centuries. Renaissance sculptors, rejecting the mythological style of the Middle Ages, carved historical, classical, and current figures with a startling level of realism.

of this realm are famous for their unreserved generosity. Rani Vuban Mohi Devi, Jagendra Narayan, Maharani Sarat Sundari Devi, Rani Hemanta Kumari Devi are a few assumed heirs of this estate (Hossain & Wadood, 2020).

Rani Hemanti Kumari Residence: Towards the eastern end of Andar Mahal in Panch-Anna palace, there is a single-storied architecture named ‘Rani Hemanta Kumari’s home. It features a central receiving hall with nine rooms on its north and south side and a front porch located on the east-facing building. Both sides of the hallway include identically laid out bedrooms. Besides this, there are wide verandas with arches in front and back of the hall room. The roof of this palace was built using both iron and timber beams. This structure was built probably in the early 20th century (Hossain & Wadood, 2020).

The Char-Anna State: Western to the Panch-Anna palace is a pond known as Sham Sarobar, on the bank of which is the Char-Anna palace. Formerly, this palace compound had an area of around 1.89 hectares (4.80 acres). This palace was completely demolished at this time. Only the entry portal, the Kachari-Bari, and the Khazanchi-Khana⁶ remain, and they are in very poor condition. The Khazanchi-Khana has broad verandas on the north, east, and west sides and is separated into eighteen rooms. Construction of the Char-Anna palace began in 1886, as shown by a date stone set into the structure’s doorway (Hossain & Wadood, 2020).

Temples of Puthia: There are nine beautiful temples included in the Puthia temple complex site. All these temples are examples of Bengal architectural style.

Pancha Ratna Shiva Temple: The temple is the biggest Shiva temple in Bangladesh, popularly known as the Bhubaneswar Shiva Mandir and built by Rani Bhuban Mayi Debi. Towards the north side of the temple is a lake known as Shiv Sagar (Shiva’s Lake). This temple has a square layout and is 65 feet on each side and constructed on a platform that is 11.66 feet high and uses plaster instead of terracotta pieces for its walls. In the centre of the temple roof are styles of five-spires that are purely decorative. Two sets of stairs, one made of stone in the south and the other of brick in the north, lead up to the temple’s elevated platform. Several vertical panels adorned with mythological figures adorn the inside and outside walls of the temple. The total building of this towering brick-built temple includes just one square cell, measuring 13.25 feet in the middle, surrounded by a veranda with-cusp arched entrance on all four sides. In the holy chamber stands the biggest Shiva linga in Bangladesh, a curving monolith sculpted from black basalt stone. Built between 1823-1830 CE, the temple stands near the Puthia Rajbari’s main entrance (Rahman, 2009).

Pancha Ratna Bara Govinda Mondir: Rani Hemanta Kumari Debi, a member of the Puthia Royal Family, constructed this palace between 1823 and 1895; it is located inside

⁶ It is known as the treasury building, where monetary assets, wealth, and important documents are stored for safe keeping.

the Rajbari's inner boundaries. The temple's floor layout shows a central square cell (*garvagriha*), four smaller square cells at the four corners, and three-cusped-arched apertures at each of the temple's four thin verandas. Despite having a semi-circular dome on the inside and a barrel vault for the veranda, the outside of these cells is topped with five-ratnas that are covered in the pyramidal form of Chau-chala (four sloping roof sections) vaults. These five ratnas, or spires, are a distinctive architectural element of this temple. The temple's walls are covered with intricately detailed red terracotta artwork depicting scenes from the Ramayana and the narrative of Radha and Krishna, as well as other mythological figures and a variety of floral and geometric patterns. Some of the terracotta on the facing western and southern side are recreated in recent times. The structure seems like it was designed after the Dinajpur district's Kantojew temple (Husain, 2007).

Do-Chala Chhota Ahnik Mandir: Towards the north-west corner of Maharani Hemantakumari's home stands the east-facing do-chala (two sloping roof sections) Chhota Ahnik Mandir. It has a rectangular layout on the ground and is used for Rani Hemantakumari's 'puja' (prayer) after her morning bath. In the east and south, there are three separate arches. Similar to the Bara-Govinda Mandir, its interior walls are covered in plaster, while its east and south facades are elaborately ornamented with terracotta plaques representing Radha-Krishna-Balram stories, Ramayana scenes, and floral themes. A do-chala roof with a rounded crown tops the whole building. It is speculated that it was built somewhere between the turn of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century (Alam, 2013).

Bara Ahnik Mandir: It is located next to the east-facing chau-chala Chhota Govinda Mandir. It faces the char-ani Rajbari on the western coast of Shymsagar lake. The triple arch in the centre supports an open platform. The temple has three separate chambers. With do-chala in the centre and two chau-chala at each end, this structure is symmetrical. It's also known by the moniker Tri-Mandir. Do-chala means two roofs and chau-chala is square or rectangular in form with a hut-like roof with four sloping sides. It has a lot of terracotta plaque decoration, some of which are reportedly in bad shape, decorating the east side of the building (Alam, 2013).

Chau-Chala Chhota Govinda Mandir: This temple probably dates back to the 1790s or 1800s. Located on a lofty platform with a pyramidal vault 32 kilometres outside of Rajshahi city centre is the Bara Ahnik Mandir. A room with east and south pediments can be found within the temple. The south front is covered with intricate terracotta plaques showing the ten avatars of Vishnu, the Ramayana's chapter Lankakanda, Radha and Krishna's epic love story, geometric motifs, and images from everyday life in the ancient city. The decorative terracotta panels that adorn the west front have been damaged or stolen by vandals (Leungn & Meggitt, 2012).

Dol-Mandavp or Dol-Mandir: This temple, whose construction date is inscribed as 1778, was commissioned by Bhubanendra Narayan, the Panch-Ani Raja. In plan, the four-storied temple is a square with sides that are each 21.26 m long (69.75 ft). The floor plans become square at the very top, with each subsequent level being reduced in

size accordingly. The Panch-Mahal in Fatehpur Sikri area, located in India, is a close analogue of this temple (Alam, 2013). A sequence of arches makes up the outside of each level of the temple. A tower, or Kalasha, sits above the ribbed dome that covers the square room on the rooftop level. Plaster is used for both the inside and external walls.

Chhota Shiva Mandir: Chhota Shiva temple was constructed by Ananda Narayan in the year of 1804. This mandir can be found near the southwestern corner of the Panchani palace. This southwardly facing temple has a semi-circular layout with a single roofed room. This temple, also known as a Chau-chala, has a pyramidal roof and a curving cornice. Decorative terracotta elements are placed at the entryway on the south side of the temple.

Gopal Mandir: This two-story structure, which faces south, is set on a raised platform. A set of stairs leads up to the platform from the west side of the building. It has a fairly straightforward design. This building might be considered a 'one-ratna temple' in terms of its architectural design. All of the walls, both inside and out, are finished with a smooth coat of plaster. It is a structure from the twentieth century. The temple is stunning in its cleanliness and elegance. The locals referred to this sacred structure as 'Krishna and Radha's Palace'. Every year, the temple attracts a large number of visitors. The authorities also conduct periodic inspections of the temple.⁷

Tarapur Mandir or Hawakhana: It is a two-storied brick structure with a flat roof and developed on a raised platform in the middle of a massive pond. Once known as 'Rath Bagicha Tarapur', the locals have now adopted the name 'Hawakhana' for this sacred site. Upon entering, tourists will see a single room on the top level and an oblong chamber on the bottom floor separated by a balcony. Each of the south, north, and east facades lead to a ground-level room with an archway (Alam, 2013).

⁷ https://dbpedia.org/page/Puthia_Temple_Complex, retrieved on September 2023

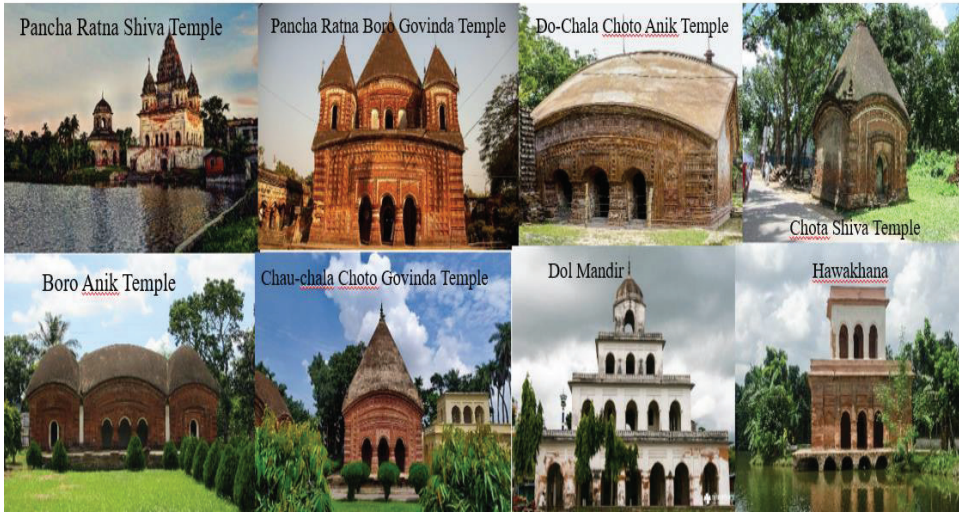


Figure 3: Features of Puthia Temple Complex
(Source: Captured by Author)

Methodology

In order to evaluate the Puthia Temple Complex's tourist potential as well as the difficulties its architecture and visitors encounter, this study used primary and secondary data. To achieve the research goals, a case study technique was used, which gathered information via secondary data analysis, in-depth interviews (IDIs), and field surveys.

The case study method was used in this study because it is best ideal for an in-depth and contextual investigation of a unique historical and cultural site like the Puthia Temple Complex. This approach works well for comprehending the Puthia Temple Complex in depth as a live representation of more than four centuries of history, local construction types, Mughal and colonial influences, and Hindu temple architecture. Because it enables the collection and analysis of data from a variety of sources, including surveys, interviews, and archival data, it significantly contributes to the achievement of the study's primary goals, which include documenting the temple's architecture, identifying current issues, and evaluating the potential for tourism. Combining primary and secondary data with the triangulation approach increases the results' dependability. Furthermore, the case study approach works especially well for examining the conservation issues and infrastructure shortcomings in the historical, sociocultural, and cultural context of this heritage site, which is situated in a very undeveloped section of Rajasthan. Given the limitations of past research on Puthia's tourism potential, this is a suitable approach for exploratory inquiry, which can serve as the basis for additional research and conservation efforts. Finally, this approach provides practical and policy-based recommendations for the expansion of sustainable

tourism, which will serve as helpful guidelines for representatives of local governments and cultural preservationists.

Field surveys and in-depth interviews (IDIs) were used to collect primary data. According to the objectives of the study, an open-ended, semi-structured questionnaire was developed and used to assess visitor experiences, the state of the temple's architecture today, conservation issues, and barriers to the expansion of the tourism sector. Interviews were conducted with 14 respondents (n=14) who represented different stakeholder groups. Two of them were local residents, two were temple officials, and ten were tourists. The tourists expressed their thoughts on the inadequate facilities, dearth of guides, and service quality, and their main motivations for visiting the Puthia temple were religious and historical. The local community member raised conservation issues and the need for local involvement while the temple authority representative provided information on the conservation process, budgetary constraints, and lack of training. Every interview took place in real time at the Puthia temple complex and lasted between forty-five and sixty minutes. In order to maintain ethics, respondents' consent was requested and their names were kept confidential. The interview transcripts were coded using thematic analysis, which revealed important themes like service quality, conservation issues, and infrastructural issues.

Archival research and document analysis methods were used to collect secondary data. Relevant academic articles, journals, book chapters, newspaper articles, and reports were analyzed. This site provided details on the architectural features, historical background, and cultural significance of the Puthia temple complex. The secondary data was arranged using thematic analysis based on the potential for tourism and the variety of architecture.

Ethical Considerations

Respondents gave their informed consent and their names were kept private in order to uphold ethical conduct during the interview procedure. No personal information was revealed, and the interview material was solely utilized for research. The goal of the interview procedure and the type of questions asked were explained to the respondents in detail.

Limitations

Although the study's depth was guaranteed by the modest sample size (n=14), data saturation was not entirely attained. Nonetheless, the qualitative richness of the data was guaranteed by the inclusion of several stakeholder groups and the integration of secondary data and field observations. The data may become more complete in the future if bigger sample sizes and other stakeholder groups like archaeologists are included.

Challenges and Possibilities of Tourism Development in Puthia Temple Complex

Puthia temple complex is not just an aesthetic site but also an important source of religious tourism in Bangladesh, which has a substantial social, cultural and economic impact on the site location (Suchana, 2018). These impacts are briefly illustrated in figure 4.

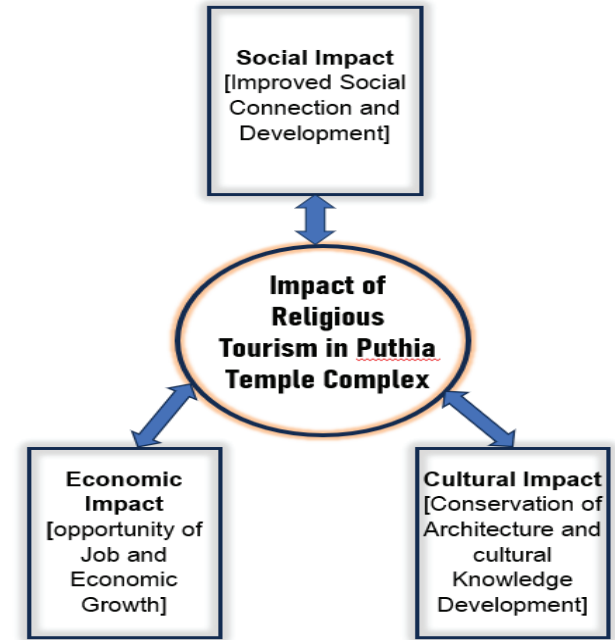


Figure 4: Impacts of religious tourism on Puthia region
(Source: Created by Author)

Besides its architectural attractions, the temple complex has special religious value to the Hindus, especially those who are Krishna-devotees. Every year the ‘*Leelakirtaan*’ (Describing the deeds and miracles of Lord Krishna and Radha) and ‘*Naamkirtaan*’ (Chanting the names of Lord Krishna and Radha) are observed several times. Religious tourists from various parts of the country gather inside the temple complex and take part in the ‘Kirtaans’ (chanting). While describing the religious value of PTC, Interviewee-2 opined that,

Not more than 30 years back, people across the border would visit the PTC during special occasions. [...] Although the number of overseas religious visitors gradually decreased over the years, still thousands of devotees across the country visit the temple complex for religious purposes. (Interviewee 2)

Therefore, it is needless to say how important and beneficial religious tourism could be for the Puthia region and its inhabitants. However, several challenges are faced by the Puthia temple complex that are impeding the tourism development of the site. Based on

the primary data collected through IDIs, research has identified these challenges, which are discussed as follows;

1. **Conservation and preservation issues:** The Puthia temple complex site is not well-conserved or preserved. There are many cracks in the walls and many of the terracotta embellishments have already perished. Few portions were fixed by the government, but this did more damage to the original, since the reassembled pieces do not look like the originals. One of the interviewees stated;

I wouldn't say that it is architecturally well preserved. But initiatives are being taken by the authorities to preserve the complex. While I visited the complex, I saw that the preservation process was going on some sides of the complex. Some terracotta was decayed so a replica was made by the authorities, but the replica was far from the original ones. (Interviewee 04)

2. **Dissatisfied service quality:** The quality of services offered by the site authority is also a concern. Visitors' expectations are not met accordingly considering the importance of the site. Lots of visitors have expressed disinterest in coming back or recommending the location to other friends and family. As per one of the respondents;

Visitors' service quality was very disappointing. There was mismanagement in providing tickets. Visitors have to wait for a while to buy tickets due to the irresponsibility of the staff. (Interviewee 01)

3. **Lack of on-spot tour guide:** It is crucial to have an on-spot tour guide available at each and every historic tourist attraction. Typically, these tour guides have had extensive training and are well-informed about the sites they are showing visitors. However, the Puthia temple complex does not provide any such services for visitors. One of the interviewees asserted;

There was no decent guidance available. We learn things on our own or through local residents. There was neither a tour guide nor any other expert familiar with the area there. (Interviewee 04)

4. **Lack of background information about the site:** Having sufficient historical and cultural context information about the site is important for attracting and accommodating tourists. Because that's how visitors learn about the area's history and significance. Unfortunately, Puthia temple complex lacks in this regard. One interviewee claimed, "There are not enough details given in the museum for people to know about the history and significance of the temple." (Interviewee 02)

5. **Inadequate infrastructural facilities for tourists:** Puthia temple complex lacks significantly providing adequate infrastructural facilities such as visitor restrooms, washrooms, parking spaces, ATM booths, medical services, food corners etc. for the tourists. Adequate dustbins are not available, and visitors

are not maintaining the cleanliness of this important site. A participant stated regarding the infrastructural facilities available at the temple complex:

I don't think that Puthia Temple Complex's infrastructural facilities are sufficiently developed to meet the needs of the tourists. Because there is no visitor's restroom, no proper place for prayer for the women, breastfeeding place, etc. There were not even proper parking places, ATM booths, and medical services. Most importantly, there is a lack of accommodation around PTC, which discourages tourists from visiting the place. (Interviewee 03)

6. **No use of technology in service:** Technology is becoming a central concern for a tourist spot. As a result of globalization, many tourist attractions have begun using technological solutions for managing the facilities and delivering services to visitors. However, the Puthia temple complex is still rather antiquated, since no technology is used there. Respondent 4 said, "I didn't see any technological adaptation in the Temple Complex. All the processes are done manually."
7. **Undertrained staff:** The absence of well-trained staff is one reason why the Puthia temple complex receives fewer tourists. The continued presence of untrained staff makes no improvement to either the quality of services or the progress made toward expanding the temple's facilities. Interviewee 2 stated, "They lack up-to-date training, and usually they are not helpful towards the tourist. Also, there was a lack of staff."
8. **Weak marketing strategies:** It is clear that little effort has been made to advertise the Puthia temple complex or to institute any kind of visitation rules. There are no tourism-promoting endorsement campaigns or other public activities. For this reason, it receives very few tourists all year round. One respondent stated;

I don't think that the current marketing strategy is enough to attract tourists. Some people know about the Puthia Rajbari but not about the complex. And most locals are aware of this place. Tourists from other districts barely know about this complex. Despite its huge cultural value, it's not that much known to the public. (Interviewee 04)

Therefore, from the above discussions on the findings, it is apparent that Puthia temple complex is confronting several challenges which are impeding the tourist development of the site. In order to ensure sustainable tourism at the site, these challenges must be addressed by the local and central governments. If these challenges are being addressed, then it has great social, cultural and economic possibilities as mentioned earlier.

Discussion

This research clarifies the Puthia Temple Complex's architectural elements, tourist potential, and visitor problems. To ascertain its importance and scholarly contribution,

the information gathered via in-depth interviews (IDIs, n=14), field observations, and secondary data analysis is interpreted by contrasting it with the body of literature already available on traditional tourism and the preservation of temple architecture in Bangladesh.

The study's conclusions are categorized into three primary themes: (1) the Puthia Temple Complex's architectural diversity and historical value; (2) visitor-related infrastructure and service difficulties; and (3) conservation challenges.

Architectural variety and historical significance: According to the study, the Puthia Temple Complex demonstrates a distinctive fusion of colonial, Mughal, and Hindu Revival architectural styles, which is in line with Saha et al.'s (2020) research. The cultural narratives incorporated into the terracotta artifacts of Puthia, such as the Krishna-Radha story and the reflection of the Ramayana, are given particular attention in this study even though they have only been briefly covered in earlier research. This feature supports Suchana's (2018) research, which found that temples are popular destinations for religious and cultural tourists.

Challenges for visitors: The interview data indicates that the tourist experience is limited by inadequate infrastructure, including parking lots, bathrooms, guide services, and a lack of marketing. Although these results are comparable to those of Alam's (2013) study on tourist infrastructure, the current study offers a thorough examination of these problems within Puthia's geographical context and suggests potential remedies.

Concerns about conservation: Important conclusions from this study include the degradation of the temples' terracotta artifacts, poor upkeep, and financial limitations. Although this research is comparable to that of Saha et al. (2020), the current study reveals the administrative and social facets of the conservation issue from the viewpoint of temple officials and local populations, which were not covered in earlier works.

Three significant additions to the body of knowledge on heritage tourism and the preservation of Bangladeshi temple architecture are made by this study. First, it addresses the gaps in earlier studies by providing a detailed and precise study within the framework of the Puthia temple complex. Second, by combining the viewpoints of tourists, locals, and temple officials, it offers a multifaceted foundation for the growth of cultural tourism. Third, it offers policy-based suggestions for conservation and sustainable tourism that could potentially apply to other Bangladeshi historical monuments. Although these results align with Griffin and Raj's (2017) analysis of the cultural and economic significance of religious tourism, the recommendations made in the Puthia context are more applicable and useful.

Sustainable Tourism Development through Architectural Conservation

Current trends suggest that tourism, one of the fastest growing industries, may come to dominate international commerce in the 21st century. Because of its potential benefits and advantages, tourism is widely embraced all around the world. The notion of sustainable tourism is based on the principles of sustainable development, which stress

the need for appropriate resource management in tourist destinations. When it comes to resolving current issues impeding the development of the tourist industry, sustainable tourism is the most suitable approach to adopt. Long-term viability in a constantly changing global market and variety of consumer expectations are ensured and regional growth is facilitated by a focus on sustainability (Alnafeesi, 2013). Therefore, sustainable tourism is crucial for the development of tourism as a whole since it reflects the interaction between tourism management, site conservation and preservation, and socioeconomic growth as shown in figure 5.

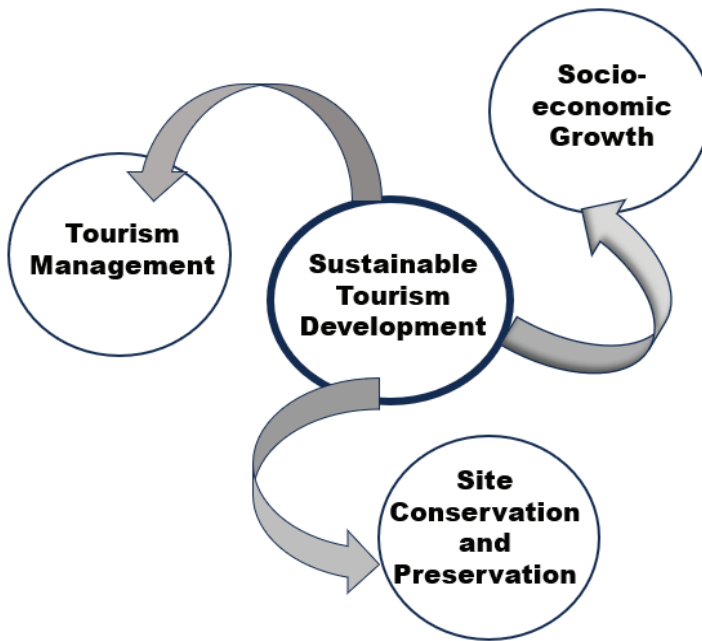


Figure 5: Concept of Sustainable Tourism (Source: Created by Author)

Sustainable tourism development seeks to manage all resources in a manner that meets our needs in the areas of the economy, society, and the arts while also protecting irreplaceable cultural artefacts, vital ecological functions, biodiversity, and essential life-sustaining infrastructure. Tourists, the tourist industry, and host communities may all benefit from a sustainable tourism model, as it ensures that future generations will be able to meet their own needs without risking those of the present. Sustainable tourism, as defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), is defined as tourism that leaves no negative impact on the environment while respecting

the social and cultural integrity of the destination and its host communities (Permana, Susanti, & Wijaya, 2020).

To preserve the material, historical, and design authenticity of humankind's-built legacy for future generations to experience, sustainable tourism advocates engage in a process known as architectural conservation. Certain measures outlined below need to be implemented to ensure that architectural conservation contributes to exponential development in the tourist industry (Hmood, Jumaily, & Melnik, 2018);

- To preserve the site's original character and integrity, all conservation initiatives should be based on genuine historical material, such as architectural plans, archival photos, and tangible proof.
- To preserve the site's cultural and historical authenticity, thorough historical and structural investigations should be carried out prior to the start of any development or restoration projects.
- To maintain the site's uniqueness and workmanship, existing historic materials and structural components should, where feasible, be stabilized or restored rather than replaced.
- In order for future observers to identify the many historical stages of construction, any additions or modifications should be easily differentiated from the original building.
- Disaster-risk management techniques should be included into heritage sites to guard against natural calamities and enable repair while preserving architectural integrity.
- To protect its archeological and historical relevance, the main heritage area should be geographically isolated from encroaching residential or commercial development.
- To preserve ecological balance and reduce environmental harm, sustainable resource and waste management techniques should be used.
- To stop graffiti, vandalism, and other types of site damage, efficient visitor management and monitoring mechanisms should be put in place.
- In order to preserve the local natural and cultural ecosystems, measures should be done to lessen traffic and pollution from cars.
- To ensure that conservation techniques align with international sustainable tourism standards, modern technology should be included into administrative, monitoring, and maintenance tasks.
- To lessen the financial burden of extensive repair initiatives, regular and preventative maintenance should be given priority.

Evidently, the Puthia temple complex site is an important tourist destination in Bangladesh, and thus similar measures should be used there as well. Positive outcomes for the public and tourists may be achieved by careful design, preservation, and administration of the site. It can uphold socio-cultural identity along with economic viability, sustainable development and tourism resource protection.

Puthia temple complex could be an international tourist spot which could help us to fulfil the SDGs goal in the tourism sector. The following statements can be derived from the survey: first, the Puthia temple complex is significant in terms of social, cultural, and architectural significance. This complex's history is intertwined with the Rajshahi region's socio-political history. Therefore, the scarcity of historical evidence on this location should be addressed through more rigorous historical research. Second, the Puthia temple complex displays a wide variety of temple designs and construction methods. This historical location represents a distinct inventory of temple legacy from the medieval to the modern eras, where diversity was contained inside constrained geographic boundaries. Third, this historic location is a significant repository of intangible cultural values associated with nearby communities.

Conclusion

Through case study, in-depth interviews, field observations, and secondary data analysis, this study examines the Puthia temple complex's architectural diversity, historical significance, and tourism potential. It also identifies conservation issues and obstacles to the temple's tourism development. The study discovered that while lack of care and inadequate infrastructure are significant barriers, Puthia's terracotta relics and Mughal-colonial architectural legacy present chances to position the area as a possible historical tourist destination. Effective conservation tactics included local community involvement, technological integration, and historical recording. In theory, the research added to the body of knowledge on sustainable tourism and cultural protection, and in practice, it offered policy recommendations to the local government, tourism board, and archeological department. The study included multidimensional data to boost the analysis, despite the limited sample size ($n=4$). Future research with bigger sample sizes, quantitative analysis, and comparative studies would offer more methodical guidance for Bangladesh's historic tourism industry's growth.

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