

Travel & Tourism

Puri : Information for Travellers

by Shahrier Khan

HOTEL tariff-between Rs 75 (single bed) and Rs 800 (Air conditioned suite), plus a 10 per cent government tax. As Puri is mainly a tourists' resort, there are hundreds of hotels as well as holiday homes. Many of the hotels are owned by Bengalees.

How to get there

From Calcutta on train: One person first class sleeper reservation: Rs 431, up to Puri. Distance between Puri and Calcutta: 553 km. Regular bus service is also available.

Sight seeing

Visiting Chilka lake, Dhauligiri, Udaygiri, etc. If you ever go to Orissa, don't miss the great Chilka lake. There is nothing much to see but you can tell people that you have been there. It would only cost you Rs 85 on a tourist bus to go there and come back in the same day from Puri. The distance is around 150 km.

Chilka is an enormous 1200 sq km salt water lake, which, if properly invested could be a major tourists attraction of India. It has 16 small islands inhabited by fishermen and migrating birds.

The tourist guides claim Chilka to be the biggest lake of Asia. (10 points to the readers if they can name the biggest lake of Asia. Answer added at the bottom of the story.) The first vision of the lake would stun you: It looks like a sea, but there is no strong wave. Chilka was actually a part of the Bay of Bengal, now enclosed by a thin border of land by the bay. However before your optical

nerves can swallow its immensity, your nostrils would perhaps fail to withstand the smell of fish at the bus stoppage beside the lake. Fishermen unload their daily catches at the stoppage, so you should hurry finding a boat for a jolly ride.

A jolly ride with other people from Puri, who basically come there on a pilgrimage, should be discouraged. I advise you hire a boat for your own group and find your own destination in one or two of the 16 islands of the Chilka. Unfortunately being a know-all, I thought package boat ride with other people would be the best and I believe our tour guide took us to the worst possible island in the lake. I believe the guide thought taking us to a small island where a small Kali temple was erected would interest all the tourists. In Orissa, there are thousands of temples just like there are hundreds of mosques in Dhaka. So, visiting a not-so-exclusive temple on an island which is otherwise very polluted and almost uninhabited, would not interest a tourist who prefers colourful migrated birds.

However, the motorised boat trip I took with others was not so great but educating. The only thing I learned about Chilka is that it is full of weeds, although at the surface it looks clean and deep green.

Before going to Chilka, don't forget to take some food as the food of the local hotels is not very exciting. Mind another thing, the bus trips to Chilka lake from Puri is available only on Mondays

and Fridays. As you finish visiting Chilka that day, you can plan another package tour on the next day which would take you to the amazing Konark temple (a world heritage), Daulgiri, Udaygiri, Bhubaneswar (the capital of Orissa), Nandan Kanan (a natural park) and other places. This

is a remarkable trip, covering 225 kms, which will cost you only Tk 75 on bus and take one whole day. Some informations regarding this package tour are given below: Chandrabhaga: This is a neat sea beach not far from Konark temple. Only 33 kms from Puri. In the wake of Saraswati festa, the great

annual Chandrabhaga Mela of myriads of polyglot pilgrims is held on Saptami day here for holy bath before rising of Sun-god to invoke his blessings. There are a few temporary souvenir and tea stalls at the beach.

Dhauligiri: Dhaul means white (that's right, its similar to dhola in Bangla) and giri means hill. It is famous for the historic rock out inscription of Emperor Ashoka, who ruled the great sub-continent, minus the Deccans, during BC 272-36 (imagine, even in this jet set age how many of us had even visited three corners of the sub-continent?). Here on the top of the hill lies the Kalinga world peace pagoda newly built by the Kalinga Nippon Buddha Sangha. From this hill, you can see the historic Kalinga war site which became a pool of blood some 2000 years ago.

Lingaraj Temple : Situated in old Bhubaneswar, the Lingaraj temple was built in 11th century. Distance from Puri-108 kms. Non-Hindus are not allowed inside this temple.

Kedargouri: Here lies the ancient temples of Mukteswar and Sidheswar.

Nandanakanan — a lovely story: Nandanakanan is a lovely 1000 acre natural park with a modest but rapidly expanding collection of brilliant plumage, wild animals like lions and tigers, bison, deers and reptiles like pythons and crocodiles. There is also a 134 acre lake with self-boating facilities. Safari trekking on jeeps to see wild in the wilderness. Special attraction: a six-inch monkey from South America called

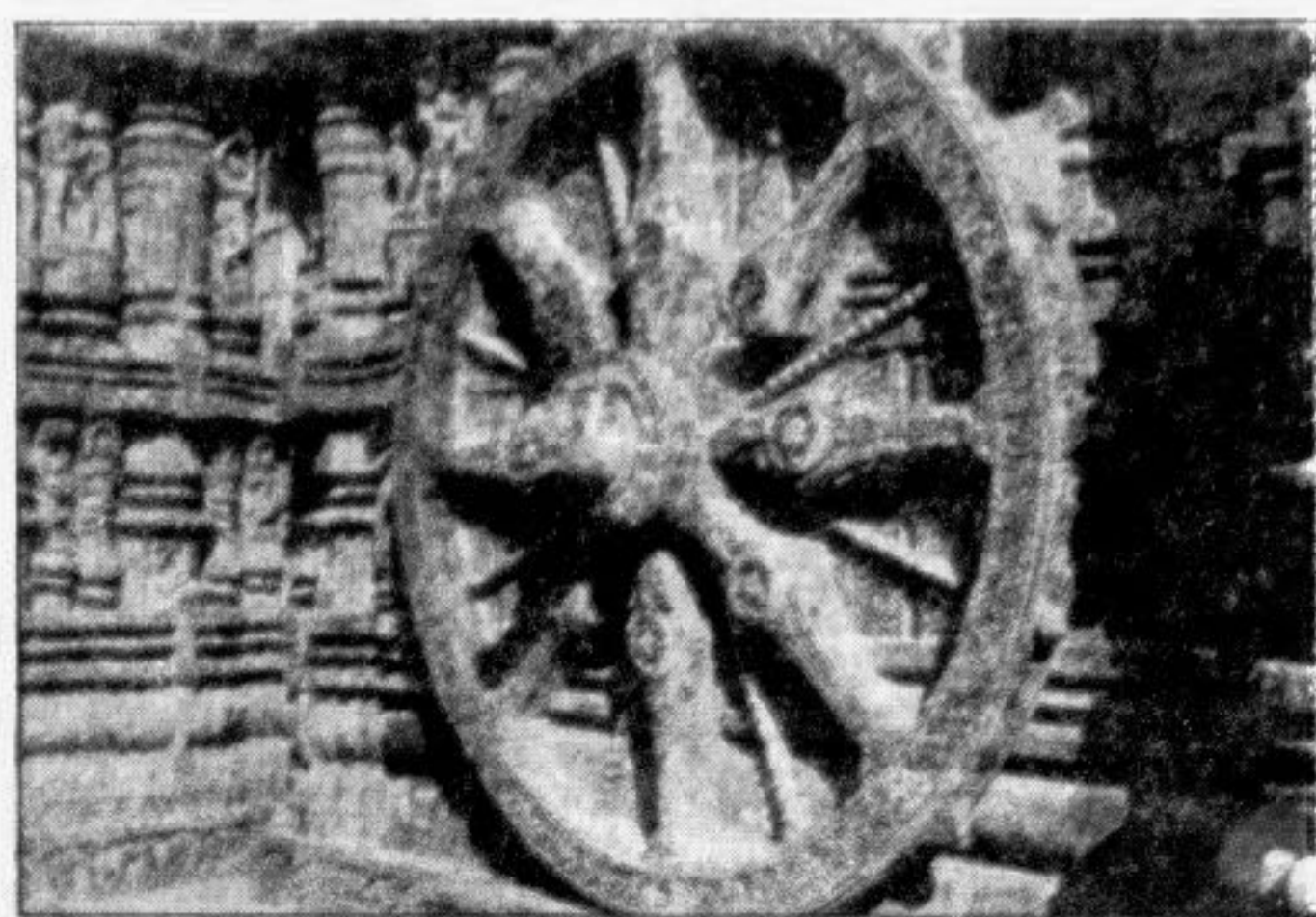
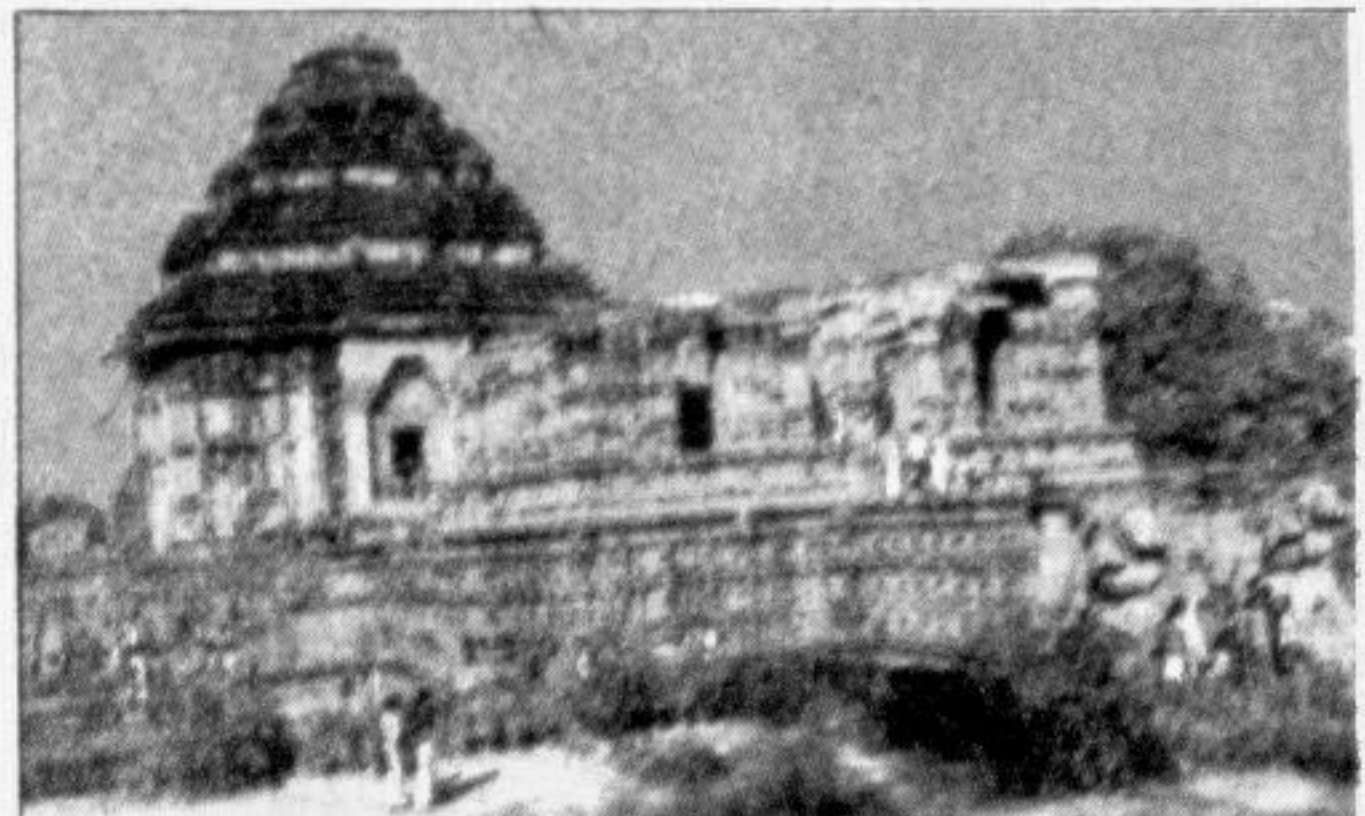
marmoset. Marmoset is a rare pygmy monkey which lives six years. This one is already five years old.

Tiger project is another speciality in this park. Lots of white tigers and mixed breeds.

Nandanakanan has a love story which should be shared by all. The park was set up in the sixties. At that time there were few tigers in gigantic cages. One of the tigers, a male just imported from Darjeeling zoo, was lonely. So, one fine midnight in 1968, arrived a tigress from the wild. The zoo people allowed her to meet her to be boyfriend in the cage. But sadly, the tiger did not accept her (its hard to understand tiger psychology. What was the reason for his refusal. Was she too easy to get?). Being refused and shattered, the tigress attempted to escape to wilderness by jumping across a concrete canal which was at least 15 feet deep. The tigress fell inside the canal and received serious injuries. She never recovered from her injuries but lived for ten years in captivity and died. The authorities christened her as "Nandan" and the park was also named after her in the early seventies.

While going to Nandanakanan, you will pass through the city of Bhubaneswar which is the capital of Orissa since 1964. If you have enough time then drop in. Later you can visit Sakhigopal or Jaigopal and the forest of Similipal.

* Asia's biggest lake is "Aral Sea." It is 24904 sq km Baikal, which is second largest, is 12162 sq km. *



Top: Konark — the Sun temple is one of the greatest attractions of Orissa. Bottom: The Sun dial which also depicts the everyday life of men and women.

Travel Briefs

Arabian Adventures Programmes: Dubai's Destination Management Company, Arabian Adventures, a subsidiary of Emirates, has introduced a series of tours for Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE. This is in response to increasing demand from overseas clients for Arabian Adventures' programmes in the capital, and marks the first time the Destination Management Company is featuring a comprehensive series in another emirate apart from Dubai.

A total of eight tour programmes in Abu Dhabi are being featured in a brand new brochure, which will be operated by Sunshine Tours on behalf of Arabian Adventures. However, reservation will continue to be handled by Arabian Adventures' headoffice in Dubai, while the DMC has also based dedicated staff in the capital to provide airport meet-and assist and general support services to all clients.

The new series also offers clients the option for four departures from Abu Dhabi, for sightseeing tours around Dubai and the rest of the UAE.

Tour brochures for Abu Dhabi are available in English, French, Italian, German and Thai. — Emirates

Japan and US call truce : Japan and the US reached a compromise settlement of their dispute over fifth freedom cargo rights for FedEx beyond Tokyo — Narita and Kansai to points in Asia.

This will enable the carrier to launch its proposed new intra-Asian overnight express cargo service using its new Subic Bay hub. — Asian Aviation

US port plans sale of Land : Brownsville Navigation District last month authorised port staff to begin negotiating with the Brownsville Economic Development Council for the industrial park. — BD Shipping Times

Calcutta to have third port : Calcutta's third port and its first private one will have an initial capacity of more than 40,000 tonnes a day.

The port is being built at a cost of more than eight billion rupees by Kevenor Cargo Ltd., a firm controlled by the Mukand Group owned by a Bombay based family. It is sited at Kulpi on the east bank of the river Hooghly. — BD Shipping Times

Asia News : Royal Brunei Airlines is asking \$110 million for three extended — range B757-200ERs together with a spare package that includes two Rolls-Royce RB211-535E4 engines.

Asiana is understood to be considering a large purchase of aircraft for delivery from 1998 onwards.

Middle East Airlines of Lebanon is negotiating with McDonnell Douglas for a buy of MD-90 twinjets for operation on regional routes out of its Beirut base. — Asian Aviation

Dhaka's Architectural Heritage

THROUGHOUT the ages, travellers from far and near have made Dhaka a city rich in heritage. Hindus, Buddhists, the Moghuls, and Europeans — all settled here in the past, influencing the city's development and making it a crossroads of culture. Today, the seven million or so residents of this 816-square-kilometre city live in the midst of numerous structures that reflect the best of these influences.

With as many as seven hundred mosques, it's easy to understand why Bangladesh' capital has been called the City of Mosques. And many of these mosques are unusual and well worth visiting. But the city's architectural legacy boasts more than mosques, and no visitor can consider a trip to Dhaka complete without a tour of at least some of the city's most interesting historic neighborhoods and buildings.

Dhaka was founded in 1608 by the Moghuls, but records suggest that a bustling township existed on the site during the eleventh century, and perhaps as early as the fourth. Until the thirteenth century Dhaka was strongly influenced by Hindus and Buddhists from the south, but few if any remnants of those days are to be found today. Next came the period of the great Moghul Empire, during which a number of delightful and interesting buildings were constructed — quite a few remain standing to this day. British rule followed next, contributing its own unique style to the mix. The modern era under Pakistan and finally independence has added to the mix, making Dhaka a city rooted in the past but with an eye on the future.

The Moghul Legacy

Dhaka was the Moghul capital of Bengal. During their building spree, the Moghuls constructed palaces, forts, gardens, caravansaries, and, of course, mosques. The Old City, which hugs the north bank of the Buriganga river and is a beehive of a activity, is the best place to begin your tour of the Moghul legacy.

Dhaka was a key commercial center in the Moghul Empire — merchants from Europe and the Middle East regularly visited and helped build a successful import-export trade. The city's rulers had to protect their interests by building forts along the river banks to ward off pirates. One of these is Lalbagh

(Red) Fort, built by Prince Mohammed Azam and located in the southwest part of the old city. It is the most imposing Moghul structure in Dhaka. Construction of the fort began in 1678. The Prince wasn't able to finish building it, but his successor, Nawab Shaista Khan, continued the project. Unfortunately, Shaista Khan's favorite daughter, Pari Bibi, died before the work was completed. Pari Bibi's Mazar (Tomb of the Fair Lady) stands adjacent to the fort. A long fortification wall on the south, high walls on the west, and two northern gateways still stand. The audience hall — now a museum featuring displays of beautiful Moghul miniature paintings and calligraphy — and the Hammam of the complex are in the center, and a small mosque with three domes sits on the western boundary.

From Lalbagh, follow the road leading southeast along the Buriganga to the Chowk, Dhaka's old marketplace. As you travel the twisting and turning road it's easy to imagine what Dhaka must have been like a hundred years ago. Narrow streets, tall old houses that seem to defy gravity, and shops selling every type of merchandise mark the way. Crowds jostle with rickshaws, pushcarts, bullock carts, and even some cars. The Chowk is just as important to business in Dhaka today as it was the old days. There are many mosques to be found within walking distance as well, including the seventeenth-century Chowk Masjid, the Husaini Dalan Mosque, baroque in style and built during the Moghul period, the finely painted nineteenth-century Kashaitully Mosque, with its attractive floral and geometric design, and the five-domed Kartalab Khan Mosque, built in 1704.

Some of Dhaka's most architecturally important buildings can be found nearby. Bara Katra built by Mir Abul Qasem in 1644, once had a river frontage of some sixty meters. It was planned in the traditional manner of central Asian caravansaries and was likely a resting place for travellers. Bara Katra is decorated with classic imperial Moghul features. Its seventy-one-meter-high dome opens to a panoramic view of the city. Very little of Bara Katra survives today, but not far to the east is a smaller version, Chota Katra, built in 1663 by

Shaista Khan. While in this area make sure that you don't miss the Tara (Star) Mosque, a beautiful center of worship built in the eighteenth century and known for its star-patterned mosaic made of broke china set in white tile.

The Ahsan Manzil, or Nawab's Palace, south along the river, is a most impressive building — its pink edifice is hard to miss (see cover photo). The majestic building was once the home of the Nawab of Dhaka. Renovated and now a museum, the place's thirty-one rooms are topped by a huge dome which can be seen from afar. Wander through the palace's twenty-three galleries for a look at the Nawab's furniture, household artifacts, and portraits. (And if you have a chance, visit the National Museum, Jadughar, where a silver model of the original palace design is on view among the many historical and folk art displays.)

If you have time to explore other parts of the city, the Sat Gambad, or seven-domed mosque is of architectural interest and should be added to your itinerary. Located in the northwest part of Dhaka, it is thought to have been built by Shaista Khan. The mosque was erected in the seventeenth century and has three domes over the main prayer hall, while four more sit at the corners.

European Influence

The first Christian mission was established in Dhaka in 1599. Shortly thereafter Shaista Khan granted land to the Portuguese; among their legacies is the Church of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, which was built in 1677 and is the oldest church in Bangladesh.

Other Europeans soon followed. The Dutch established trading posts and were followed by the French. Armenians and Greeks joined the European community, settling mainly in the area near Tezgaon. It was the Armenians who began the jute trade that expanded under the British and has become so important to Bangladesh as a major export. The Armenians' most important architectural contribution was The Church of the Holy Sepulcher, better known as the Armenian Church. It sits in the midst of the area where they settled and is still in use. Built in 1791, it's a peaceful refuge from the busy city.

Source — Digonto.

An Abiding Beauty in Bogra

by Ekram Kabir

IT WAS 1987. Kandkar Aminul Karim — popularly known as Dulal Bhai — started his Karupalli Studio which is now a near-Disney Land.

Well, Disney Land or Jurassic Park it ain't, but Dulal Bhai's Karupalli does have many things to offer for the visitors to wonder at. Those who usually go northward to make a holiday, well... don't just bracket your tour within Mahashangar and Paharpur. Karupalli will be no less an added attraction, and you won't regret sparing time at its premises.

Imagine a Disney Land in the country where irrespective of age, people will be able to be educated through entertainment; where there will be theatre productions, restaurants, cafes — and the documentation of prehistoric giant creatures. Well yes, precisely in the manner of Jurassic Park.

Karupalli at the city-centre of Bogra imparts, just that feeling. The best possible comparison of Karupalli can be given with the Disney Land and Jurassic Park. Don't yet raise your eyebrows — there's more to it...

If you are already thinking of Dhaka Zoological Garden, you're far from witnessing a man-made Bangladeshi wonder. Capturing different species in cages seem very much an easy task against an heart-full of artistic endeavour to build more than 40 wildlife species with concrete. Kandkar Aminul Karim passed away from this world, leaving behind him; for the people, their ancestral heritage to contemplate on, and for his co-workers — a task to complete.

Dulal first began his work with very little resource. "At a time when the whole world is fighting many uphill battles against the threats of environmental destruction, Karupalli is equally a same fight in Dulal Bhai's own way," said Pravat Sarkar Kanchon while talking to this correspondent; earlier this year. Kanchon, who works as part of the management, further said; "This (the Palli) is his brain-child through which Dulal Bhai wanted to raise awareness among the people to live in an eco-friendly way."

Dulal had a far-reaching and visionary plan regarding the place to build, of which he prepared a lay-out. The master plan elaborates many aspects — a joy-ride on train

for the kids, a swimming pool, a restaurant resembling a blue whale etc., but all he could do was to acquire a sizeable piece of land from the Nawab Mohammad Ali's palace in partially fulfilling his dream.

The animals he built portray his artistic insight in tune of a chiseled and long-experienced sculptor or craftsman. One would agree, no doubt, that Dulal not only

imagined that was very commonplace thousands of years ago — a hundred per cent nature-borne and bound world.

Some of the visitors will get bewildered the moment they walk in, if they aren't forewarned by guides available nearby... for the kids (specially under-fours) it might even be more flabbergasting. Take a breath or two, then everything will

imagination to think about the prehistoric times.

The school-kids will be enchanted, for they come partially to witness images of those they were reading in books all these years. And for elderly people, it has been made interesting by airing different types of sounds (the ones often used in movies and dramatic performances).

The dimly-lit fire-torches give it a bit of supernatural outlook. The inspired nar-

him stay in Dhaka; because he didn't want to show up before us as a failed man," added Kanchon. Dulal worked as the art designer in two advertising firms — Signorita and Lolita, for five years till he went back to Bogra when he thought himself worthy of doing something creative. Indeed, the artistic value of Karupalli's wonder-yard cannot really be dubbed an amateur's fantasy.

Side by side with his accuracy of building the animals, there are symbolic messages as well — monkeys sitting deaf-eared as if they don't want to hear destructive and painful shrilling sound of the axe hitting trees over-head and cutting them down, and tigers — looking at the forest-killer weapon with red eyes. The theme of Dulal's artistry is clear enough — "stop felling the trees."

Look aside... you don't have to keep yourself satisfied with mere still-life statues. There is a separate place of slideshow — exactly in the same manner people watch bioscopes in the villages — where you can gather them all together through cinematic rhythm.

Dulal unfortunately couldn't complete the most important creation of his life for spectators to see — an album where he intended to paint-out two centuries of Bengalee history. The incomplete volume depicts every crude event that has taken place in the past two hundred years — right from the Mughal era to the British to the Pakistani to the independence of Bangladesh. He expired before updating his album till the present time. His co-workers are planning to put the voluminous work on display very soon.

This amplitude of painting is another form of corroborative history which deserves a promotion to be published with national interest. Dulal's friends would very well be appreciated if they point their attention to this purpose. They are adamant in making Dulal's dream come true for which they are truly toiling over.

And for you, well, extensive tour may be expensive. But when you're out there to soothe your eyes and fill your hearts with beauty and history while wending around the Paharpur Monastery and Mahashangar — try not to miss the Karupalli. It's only a 10-taka rickshaw-ride from the Parjatan motel in Bogra.



See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil

had an artistic sense, but a sense of history as well. He was awarded Ashoka Fellowship in 1992 for his contributions to social sectors.

Dulal's historical wisdom becomes much brighter when visitors enter the Aadam Guha (Ancient Cave). No, don't start smelling Marabar Cave-like mystery. Dulal was no EM Foster. It's an anthropology-rich simple cave that will take you relatively or rather, entirely, to a different world — a surround-

become interestingly visible, for, you are entering into the cave from normal sunlight to pitch-like darkness.

Call the cave a museum of human history. It will be well-suited, but you can have this writer's word of honour that you won't be confronting any ill-digested Darwinian images. It's simply a documentation of the common knowledge of what it used to be thousand of years ago and how civilisation took its own course due to necessity. The cave truly will send your