around the world, a fledgling image of Bangladesh as the "birthplace" of micro-credit. Coalesce this image with a well-advertised tourism model, and there will be tourists, plenty of them.

The modern tourist loves to be educated about things that are inspirational. The Grameen Bank, Brac, Asha, and other micro-credit agencies can team up with the tourism industry to create a chain of "exhibitable" micro-credit centres, and even launch a global advertisement program. If the appreciative responses of my own team were any indication at all, a new generation of tourists will come here to dig deeper beneath the "Lonely Planet" version of Bangladesh.

On our way back from Manikganj, we swung by a brick-field, a fascinating and common industry along the Dhaka-Aricha road. The team learned from local workers how bricks are made with indigenous technologies. Women comprised half the work-force there, an unexpected gender condition that disrupted the Western stereotype of oriental women as passive sideliners. I sensed another tourism opportunity.

The next day, the team embarked on an architectural journey from the Curzon Hall to the Art College -- from the early twentieth-century colonial politics of the British Raj to a modern moment in then East Pakistan. We then went to see Shankhari Bazar in the heart of Old Dhaka, a labyrinthine urban enclave that not only makes visual its hybrid history but also reveals how humanity can adapt to extreme urbanity. The living conditions are inhumane, but there is a lot to learn from the way Shankhari Bazar's Hindu community arranges their domestic life and the musical instrument cottage industry in these oppressive linear houses. Organised and informative tours of this area would surely bring foreign tourists and their pocket-books, which would in turn improve the economic health of the area. I remember once paying $80 for a tour of Rio de Janeiro's infamous favelas, one of the largest urban slums in the world.

There are other opportunities for attracting tourists. How about organised tours of ready-made garment factories? In the West, a growing number of people can make a spontaneous connection between Bangladesh and ready-made garments. If John the American is wearing a crisp shirt made here in Bangladesh, he would pay $20 for a tour of apparel factories here, provided those factories are advertised as a locus of the country's economy. The factory must also then maintain strict safety standards and invest the money from tourism in its workers to improve their living conditions, which would in turn enhance their productivity.



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