

Beautiful Bangladesh: Thakurgaon

It was around 5pm under a late November sky. Winter was just around the corner when we decided that our next destination for travel would be Thakurgaon, which is located about 467 kilometres northwest of Bangladesh and falls under the district of Rangpur.

As a first time traveller to that part of Bangladesh we did not know what was waiting for us. It takes about 10-12 hours to reach Thakurgaon by bus and by train it takes a little bit more than that. If you go by train, you have to stop at Parbotipur station and from there you have to travel by local transportation or van which can take almost an hour to two depending upon the mode of transportation.

So our journey began by bus from Uttara and it took us exactly 10 hours to reach Thakurgaon. It was around 3am in the morning when we reached. Empty roads, a dog howling in the distance, and it was cold and misty— what a welcome to an unknown city. We were lucky enough to find a place to stay in a hotel at that hour of morning.

The next day around 7.30am we were up and running to explore the place. We had little sleep the night before and a traveller sleeps less when he is travelling because he needs to see every single bit of the beauty in front of his eyes. We had our breakfast in a local restaurant and set out for our first stop: the Santal Village of Thakurgaon.

Santals are plain land adibashis of Bangladesh and the region of Thakurgaon and the surrounding district does host a number of plain land *adivasis*.

Anywhere outside of Dhaka is beautiful and I always personally believe that Bangladesh is not represented just by Dhaka or other big cities, but that there is a country out there which needs to be explored by the curious minds of travellers.

Thakurgaon was no exception.

It is a beautiful place with lush green fields with crops and mustard plants and as



far as the eye could go it was coloured yellow and green. We had to walk down the pathways of those fields as we reached the Santal village.

The first thing that caught my eye was how neat and clean the entire village was. It seemed like a painter has just finished brushing it with his paints. Generally the Santal people are of a docile nature but they can rise to the occasion when defending their rights and lands as history has shown. We met the chairman of the village and he was very generous and took us around his village to talk to his people, and heard about their life and culture, to find out what they do for a living and about their rights.

As a traveller I try to see more than just what is in front of me, the life that lies beneath the beauty and colours. One thing that was alarming was that boys and girls of the Santal community were getting married at a very early age. Another thing that was interesting to watch was how neatly the mud houses were made and that the windows of the houses were very small. Out of curiosity I asked the chairman why it was like that and he explained that it was their



tradition and hallmark to have small windows.

The following day we decided to go to Kantaji Mondir which is about 45 minutes drive by local bus from Thakurgaon to Dinajpur. You just have to tell the assistant of the bus to drop you near Kantanagar Temple, commonly known as Kantaji/Kantajew Temple at Kantanagar, which is a late-medieval Hindu temple in Dinajpur.

The temple is one of the most magnificent religious edifices belonging to the

18th century. The temple belongs to the popular Hindu Kanta or Krishna and this is most popular with the Radha-Krishna cult in Bengal. This beautiful temple is dedicated to Krishna and his wife Rukmini. Built by Maharaja Pran Nath, its construction started in 1704 CE and ended during the reign of his son Maharaja Ramnath in 1722 CE. It boasts one of the greatest examples on terracotta architecture in Bangladesh and once had nine spires, but all were destroyed in an earthquake that took place in 1897. So naturally this was a place of interest to us.

We were lucky that during the time we were visiting 'Rash Mela' – a popular fair during that time of the year – was going on. The place was buzzing with devotees and all kind of activities.

We stayed there for some time and then visited another place of historical importance: a mosque which was built over 100 years ago. It was a calm place and people were praying and few souls were strolling around. We took pictures and moved on quietly. The following day we decided that we would go to the last part of Bangladesh in that region which was Bangla Bandh– the land port. It was very kind of my friend who was travelling with me to go through such hectic trips.

We took a bus from Thakurgaon by bus around at 10am and after travelling for almost two hours we arrived. Nothing was there to see except the last point of the country. We took a boat ride on the river, stayed there for a while, and then returned.

I love to travel a lot and I do intend to travel all around Bangladesh. Food and exhaustion can be a big problem and it's just something you should be prepared for when you travel. It is something I am willing to put up with just to see the beauty of the land. Are you?

By Shahed Latif

Photo: Shahed Latif

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- বাথরুম রাখে দুর্গন্ধহীন ।
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