A Sacred Place or Tourist Spot?
Rediscovery of Sri Caitanya's Birth Place and the Development of Mayapur as a Mass Attraction Site

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1. Introduction

It is a common scene in India that sacred places of the Hindus attract thousands of different kinds of people, the young and the old, the rich and the poor, and renouncers and householders. Pilgrims arrive on foot or by car, bus and train at the place of pilgrimage. While a rich family visits the places by a private car, a group from remote villages shares a bus and walks around together holding hands, so that individuals will not be separated from the group. We can observe the aged chanting holy words, ascetics practicing meditation, young students chattering, and families spending their leisure time. The sacred place is usually called tīrtha (literally, ford or crossing place), and pilgrimage, a deed to visit sacred places, is called tīrtha-yātrā (yātrā means journey) in Hinduism.

Many studies have been done on Hindu sacred places. The studies can be broadly categorised into two. The first encompasses literary studies which consider tīrthas as "sacred space" and argue their his-
torical and factual background and symbolic implications. They include studies like Vidyarthi [1961], Eck [1983] and Entwistle [1987]. The other covers sociological studies which focus on pilgrims and survey their purposes of pilgrimage and attributes (age, sex, occupations, etc.) in addition to reference to literary aspects of sacred places. Bhardwaj [1973], Chakrabarti [1984], Morinis [1984] and Sakata et al. [1989] are examples of these studies. Naturally, most of the studies belonging to these two categories deal with sacred places and pilgrims in the context of religion.

Is it, however, appropriate to refer to all of the people described above as “pilgrims”? Nowadays it is very common that buses hired by tourist agents bring the masses to sacred places. Are they pilgrims or tourists? Most of the previous studies on sacred places and pilgrims neglect or at least pay little attention to the important aspect of pilgrimage today, that is, the link with tourism. If we trace the history of development of pilgrimage in India, it is clear that pilgrimage has a close link with tourism or runs parallel to it in many respects.

In India, Hindu pilgrimage may be said to have become fairly widespread by the medieval period and it was a popular way to remove sins and accumulate merit [Brockington 1981: 196]. However, as Fuller explains,

Pilgrimage has always been a vital part of Hinduism, but never more so than in the modern era. Today, the mass media and better education have improved ordinary people’s knowledge about Hinduism’s sacred centres and how to reach them. Pilgrimage has also become safer. The most important factor in the expansion of pilgrimage has been improved communications, which has made long-distance travel quicker and cheaper.1) Communications began to improve markedly in the nineteenth century. During the last twenty or thirty years, there has also been a large increase in pilgrimage by road [Fuller 1992: 204–05].

The physical conditions that caused the expansion of pilgrimage in India remind us of the similar conditions in the historical development of tourism in Europe. The textbooks dealing with tourism usually suggest, for example, that great advance in science and technology made possible the invention of rapid and relatively cheap forms of transport like the railways in the nineteenth century [Davidson 1993:
Pilgrimage and tourism have benefitted from technological development almost simultaneously. As Smith [1992: 2] states, travelers, whether they journey as pilgrims or tourists, generally share the same infrastructure.

The similarity between pilgrimage and tourism is not limited to the physical conditions but can be seen in aspects like the experience of pilgrims and tourists. Turner [1973: 196], after observing the simultaneous process of infrastructural development in his study of pilgrimage, points out that pilgrims and tourists are mingled under such conditions, and refers to "... the numbers of visitors to shrines, many of whom should perhaps be considered as tourists rather than pilgrims per se." The similarity between them has been one of the major concerns among the scholars, particularly for those who study tourism. For instance, in an introductory book on anthropology of tourism, Burns [1999: 97] says that it can be reasonably argued that there is no clear division between tourism and pilgrimage and that tourism may be considered as a form of pilgrimage in the sense that it may mirror similar stages or characteristics (also see Vukonić [1996: 84]). Fuller [1992: 205] similarly states in the context of India that for all classes of people, even when the religious purpose is uppermost, pilgrimage is commonly combined with ordinary tourism to monuments and museums, beaches and beauty spots, and a clear distinction between sacred and secular journeying is often impossible to draw.

In this paper, I will discuss the relationship between sacred places and tourism. My position is, however, different from the above mentioned studies in the following three respects. Firstly, whereas the previous studies are more concerned with the relation between pilgrims and tourists (or pilgrimage and tourism), I will pay more attention to the relationship between "sacred place" and tourism. Like tourism and pilgrimage, the sacred places have their own historical processes and changing characters that have affected their relationship with tourism. Secondly, I will argue that focusing on the sacred place will enable us to show that in addition to the development of the infrastructure in the sense of communication, the infrastructural development of the sacred place itself has provided a basis for the advent of mass tourist phenomena in the sacred place. Lastly, I will discuss how such development of the sacred place has resulted in attracting the
“gaze” of mass tourist visitors to the sacred place. I use the word gaze in the sense that Urry applied to the study of tourism [Urry 1990]. Taking a hint from the analysis of the clinic by Foucault, he states that the “experience (of tourists) is to gaze upon or view a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscapes which are out of the ordinary... And this gaze is as socially organized and systematised as is the gaze of the medic” [Urry 1990: 1]. Urry argues that tourists have their particular gaze which has been historically structured by an institution in society, such as that of medical science, and tries to consider its development and historical transformation. In view of the account by Urry, I will discuss how the transformation of the sacred place started to attract the tourist gaze and examine the simplistic claims that there is “no clear division between tourism and pilgrimage”.

The following part of this paper has eight sections. The next section deals with the historical background of a sacred place called Mayapur, which I take up as a case study for my discussion.3) Section 3 and 4 show that the modern revival of Vaisnavism in Bengal led to the rediscovery of Mayapur and the emergence of a new sect. Section 5 and 6 point out how the development of Mayapur per se plays an important role in the advent of mass tourism to the sacred place. Section 7 gives an overview of the present positioning of Mayapur as a tourist site. Section 8 examines how the development of Mayapur pluralized the gaze upon the sacred place by adding the tourist gaze. The last section points out that the close relation between the sacred place and tourism largely depends on the common act of “gazing” in pilgrimage and tourism.

Mayapur is about 120 km north of Calcutta (Kolkata), the capital of West Bengal (see Map 1). It is an important sacred place in West Bengal because it is thought to be the birthplace of the saint, Sri Caitanya, who was the founder of Bengali Vaisnavism and considered as an incarnation of the supreme God, Lord Krishna, in its tradition. However, a remarkable fact here is that Mayapur is a “newly” found birthplace. That is to say, the birthplace of Caitanya was considered to be “Navadvip” until the late nineteenth century when a man named Datta began to promote Mayapur as the real birthplace. While Navadvip is located on the west bank of the Bhagirathi (Ganges) river, Mayapur
is located on its eastern bank. The two sacred places face each other across the Bhagirathi river. At the place where they are located, there is a confluence of Jalangi river with Bhagirathi. Since the confluence of rivers is considered sacred in Hinduism — as mentioned already, tīrtha means crossing place — it is sacred in a geographical sense, too, though there has been controversy over the legitimacy of the birthplace of Caitanya to date. During the last century, Mayapur surpassed Navadvip in terms of mass attraction. In this sense, the history of these two places, and especially the historical development of Mayapur, is closely
connected with the development of pilgrimage-tourism phenomena, as it will be shown below.

2. Modern Revival of Vaisnavism in Bengal and Mayapur

Vaisnavism in Bengal is identified with Sri Caitanya in every aspect. He was born in 1485 (1486?) as a son of a Brahman scholar. Although it was during Muslim rule, his birthplace was a well-known centre of Sanskrit learning. He completed his study at an early age and started teaching at a Sanskrit school. A turning point came when he was twenty-two years old. He had travelled to Gaya for his father’s funerary rites and met a mystic sannyāsī (renouncer). This experience inspired him to become devoted to Lord Krishna. When he came back, he was not a Sanskrit teacher any more. He brought together his companions and sang kīrtana (devotional song) with them every night. Sometimes, he went into an ecstasy over his devotion to Krishna and fell down on the floor. He was already considered as an incarnation of Krishna at that time. He took initiation to become a sannyāsī when he was twenty-four years old. He travelled to south and west India and to Vrindavana in north India, the sacred place of Lord Krishna. After a series of long pilgrimages, he spent the rest of his life at Puri, Orissa. He passed away at the age of 48 in 1533. His devotional movement was taken over by his close disciples. In Navadvip, the most important four disciples were called, together with Caitanya, “pāṇca-tattva (five principles)”. Although he was not a theologian, his teaching was synthesized by his disciples known as the Six Gosvāmīs (preceptors). These disciples were sent by Caitanya to Vrindavana to restore and develop Krishna’s sacred place. Thus, the devotional movement affiliated with Caitanya spread over eastern and northern India and had substantial influence in these regions. The sect and his teaching which he developed later are generically termed “Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava”, named after the old name of Bengal: “Gauḍ”.

After Caitanya and his contemporary disciples, the development of Vaisnavism was, apparently spearheaded by the activities of three personalities in the seventeenth century. Among them, Srinivasa Acharya is prominent for his conversion of the king of Vishnupur in Bankura. Narottama Datta, who was a prince of Gopalpur near Kheturi in
Rajshahi, made his territory a centre of Vaisnavism and held famous great festivals there. From his place, Vaisnavism spread to the eastern border area of Bengal. Syamananda Das, who belonged to a low caste, extended influence to western Bengal and the adjacent area of Orissa, which was essentially a tribal habitation.

After them it is believed that Vaisnavism in Bengal witnessed the remarkable emergence of numerous “deviant” or “semi-Vaiśṇava” sects, though some of them had appeared even in the wake of Caitanya’s period. According to Chakrabarty [1985: 346–349], most of them emerged as identifiable sects during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He enumerated fifty-six such heterodox sects. They are popularly called “Sahajīyā” order and considered as responsible for the degeneration of Caitanya’s teachings. The people thus blamed were those who were concerned with the development of Mayapur.

It was in the second half of the nineteenth century that the revival of Caitanya movement took place in Bengal. The revival formed a part of the Hindu reform and revival movements that flourished in the nineteenth century. The British colonial rule created a large number of English-educated Indians and was responsible for the emergence of so-called “middle class” particularly in Bengal. It enabled them to evaluate Hinduism introspectively under the encounter with Western thought. Some were led to reform some “anti-human” elements found in Hinduism such as widow immolation, child marriage, taboo on widow remarriage, and so on. Reform movements passed their peak after the 1870s in Bengal. They were swamped by the rising tide of Hindu revivalism that was at its height in the 1880s and 1890s [Sarkar 1983: 83]. Hindu revivalism depended on reinterpretation or “liberal interpretation on the myths and the philosophical systems of the Hindus” [Chakrabarty 1985: 402], by which Hinduism could be represented as a match for Western thought. This revivalism provided a basis of identity for middle class Bengalis. As Sarkar [1983: 72] states that “revivalism was most effective when it sought to appeal to emotions rather than to the intellect: through the neo-Vaiśṇavism of Amrita Bazar Patrika . . .”, Vaisnavism was revived as a significant part of Hindu revival movement.

Kennedy summarizes the development at that time in the following way:
The neo-Krishna movement, which sprang up in the 1880s, was the most direct cause of the revival of Vaishnavism. It was largely a literary movement... This movement led to the study of the old \textit{Vaishnava} literature of Bengal, and to the rediscovery of the stores of religious inspiration in the beginnings of the Chaitanya movement. Two works on Chaitanya, among others, resulted from this study, both the product of the facile pen of the late Shishir Kumar Ghose, the well-known Calcutta newspaper, \textit{Amrita Bazar Patrika}. Two emphases were evident... He was hailed as a great social reformer who had risen up against the caste system and heralded a new day. Chaitanya was the Lord Gaurâṅga, deity incarnate, the counterpart in Bengal of the Lord Jesus Christ in Palestine.

The revival of interest in Chaitanya revealed itself in various ways. Efforts to interest the educated classes were evident. The production of literature was stimulated, vernacular magazines sprang up, informal organizations were formed in many places for weekly saṅkīrtan and the study of \textit{Vaishnava} teaching, lectures went about preaching on bhakti and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the loose organization of the district and provincial \textit{Sammilanī} (associations) was revived, and it was sought to make the celebration of Chaitanya’s birthday a popular affair. One interesting feature of the revival was the development of what has been termed neo-Vaishnāvism, the creed of some latter-day adherents attracted by certain phases of Vaishnāvism, but having no connection with the sect [Kennedy 1993: 79–80].

The point here is that the revival of Vaisnavism in Bengal was accomplished by the educated middle class who emerged under the colonial rule and that the revival consisted of different activities including organization of followers and publicity through the media.\(^5\) The discoverer and the advocator of Mayapur was one such personality. His name was Kedarnath Datta (1838–1914). He was Deputy Magistrate of Krishnanagar Sub-Division of Nadia District under the colonial government and a well-known scholar in many languages including English and Sanskrit. He wrote on history, ethics and \textit{Vaiṣṇava} literature. He was a member of the Royal Asiatic Society in London [Mukherjee 1984: 35]. Chakrabarty appraises his contribution to the revival of Vaisnavism, "\textit{Vaiṣṇava}, journalism as well as \textit{Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava} organization in Bengal really became meaningful under his guidance"
In a word, what Datta intended was to revive the *Gaudīya* Vaisnavism that existed at the time of Caitanya. He wished to reestablish “pure and original teachings of *Gaudīya* Vaisnavism” [Rupa-vilasa Dasa Adhikari 1989: 5–7]. Datta attempted to tackle both the deviant *Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇava* and the reformist movement. Before Datta, deviant groups were accepted as representing standard *Gaudīya* Vaisnavism. They confused transcendental conjugal relation with physical sensuality, mixed ideologies in Islam with theirs, indulged in drugs, believed in illicit sexual intercourse, practiced Tantric rituals, and so on. Reformers brought about fusions of Indian thought with Christianity which was the religion of their British conquerors. To propagate Caitanya’s teaching, he tried out various methods: journalistic attempts (by bringing out a journal), organization of door-to-door preaching in the villages, publication of authentic philosophical works by the Six *Gosvāmīs* and their followers, discovery and establishment of Sri Caitanya’s birthplace as the principal place of pilgrimage in all of Bengal, and instructing and educating many followers [Rupa-vilasa Dasa Adhikari 1989: 5–7].

Among his wide range of activities, the rediscovery of Caitanya’s birthplace was sensational. Symbolic meanings differentiated his Vaisnavism from the other deviant groups and surely “gave a new impetus to its propagation” [Tridandi Sri Bhakti Prajnan Yati Maharaj 1994: 57]. In a sense, the appeal of the new sacred place can be thought as a very popular aspect of the *bhakti* movement because the discovery of lost or hidden images and sacred places has been one of the major aspects of the expansion of the *bhakti* movement since the medieval period [van der Veer 1987: 693]. For Datta and his followers, the revival of Vaisnavism and the rediscovery of a “new” birthplace, Mayapur were two aspects of the same process.

### 3. Rediscovery of Sri Caitanya’s Birthplace

As a result of Datta’s claim that Mayapur is the real birthplace of Sri Caitanya, two sacred places, i.e. existing Navadvip and newly found Mayapur, came to stand side by side. Although Navadvip town was always well known, its history is not clear. Navadvip was supposed to
have been founded by one of the Sena kings in 1063 [Garrett 1910: 180]. It had been the capital in Laksmana Sena's dynasty until Bengal was invaded by the Muslims in 1202 [Majumdar 1971: 234]. In the period of Caitanya, it was still under Muslim rule by Husain Shah, though it was a centre of Sanskrit learning as already mentioned. Under the British rule, Navadvip was made into a municipality in 1869 and the manufacture of brass utensils was its principal industry [Garrett 1910: 183–184]. Today, it is a large trading centre and a regional centre of handloom cloth industry [Morinis 1984: 122].

It is, however, noteworthy that the present town of Navadvip emerged long after the time of Caitanya. According to the Gazetteer [Garrett 1910: 183], the Bhagirathi (Ganges) river once had a westerly course and about the beginning of nineteenth century the flow changed and swept the ancient town (Navadvip) away. It means that the present town of Navadvip had been formed on the western bank of Bhagirathi river during the colonial rule.7) Thus, there is room for doubt regarding the exact place of birth of Caitanya in a geographical sense, too.

As an official of the colonial government, Datta must have had an opportunity to come across the fact of this geographical change (cf. Mukherjee [1984: 45]) and became motivated in finding the new birthplace of Caitanya. It is said that by studying gazetteers, Caitanya's biography and other texts written by his contemporaries, British survey maps, and old government records, he discovered that Navadvip was previously not on the western bank as it is today but on the eastern bank of the Ganges [Mahanidhi Swami 1996: 262].

Although his research on the birthplace was elaborate and multilateral, the episode of his first impression on Caitanya's real birthplace was mythically described. According to the biography of Datta, one night in December 1887 when he was sitting on the roof of a Dharamsala in Navadvip, he saw a large mansion flooded with light in the northern direction across the Ganges. Next morning he found a palm tree located there. Inquiring from others about the place, he learned that the place was known as Ballaldighi which was connected with the Sena dynasty. On the following Saturday, he went there, and at night he again had a wonderful vision [Rup-vilasa Dasa Adhikari 1989: 162–69; cf. Tridandi Sri Bhakti Prajnan Yati Maharaj 1994: 47–48]. He was motivated by the vision to pursue research on the subject.
Beside the location, the identification of the “name” of the place needs careful attention. As a matter of fact, the birthplace of Sri Caitanya during his time was not known as Navadvip but as “Nadia”, after which the district where the two places located was named. According to Mukherjee [1984: 35], there was no reference to the name of Mayapur or Navadvip in any contemporary literature at the time of Caitanya. They appeared only in the early eighteenth century when Narahari Chakrabarty named and described Navadvip and identified Mayapur as the birthplace of Caitanya in his work Bhaktiratnākar [Mukherjee 1984: 35]. The biography of Datta also supports the description of Chakrabarty, “Thakur (Datta) found the following verse in Bhaktiratnākar which confirmed his discovery beyond doubt: in the centre of Navadvīpa there is a place called Māyāpura. At this place the Supreme Lord Gauracandra took His birth” [Rup-vilasa Dasa Adhikari 1989: 166]. Thus, Mayapur is considered as the centre of Navadvip (Nadia). This point is shared by both Datta and his opponents, who doubt the authenticity of Mayapur and make a case for Mayapur called “prācīn (old) Mayapur” as I will discuss later.

However, in terms of symbolism both present Navadvip town and Mayapur are parts of an extended sacred complex of Sri Caitanya called “Gaura-maṇḍala (the circle of Caitanya)” or “Śrī Navadvīpa-dhāma (the sacred Navadvip abode)”. It consists of nine dvīpas (islands) among which Navadvip and Mayapur are included in different islands respectively, though they are not actually “islands” but roughly circular enclosed tracts. The confluence of Bhagirati and Jalangi rivers is situated in the centre. The entire area of the nine dvīpas is connected with the līlās (deeds) of Caitanya and constitutes a course of parikrama (circumambulation).

4. Gaudiya Maths and Controversy over Mayapur

In 1894, Datta organized a meeting inviting scholarly people to justify the authenticity of his rediscovery of Mayapur and on that occasion formed a society called Śrī Navadvīpa-Dhāma Pracārini Śabhā for the restoration work of Mayapur. In the same year, he retired from his government service to devote himself to holy works at the age of fifty-six and became known as “Bhaktivinod Thakur (venerable person
enjoying devotion”). He raised the fund from the public, acquired land and installed the images of Sri Caitanya in Mayapur in 1895 [Rupvilasa Dasa Adhikari 1989: 188–90]. The place was later renovated and turned into a birthplace temple complex, in which there is a small hut with the images of baby Caitanya and his parents to mark the birthplace.

After Datta passed away, his work was taken over by his son, Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur (1874–1937). As he felt that the work of his father had been more or less confined to the educated classes of Calcutta and the people of a few districts, he realised the necessity of widening the sphere of activity [Tridandi Sri Bhakti Prajnan Yati Maharaj 1994: 99]. The organization of the sect and the spread of the teaching were virtually credited to him. Known as a scholarly ascetic, he published as many as two hundreds books, while his father is said to have written one hundred, established several printing presses, started journals, held pictorial exhibitions demonstrating the lives and teaching of Caitanya and other saints, organized meetings and religious festivals, and so on [Tridandi Sri Bhakti Prajnan Yati Maharaj 1994: 126–28].

In 1918, Bhaktisiddhanta Thakur became a sannyāsī and established Sri Caitanya Math as the headquarters of his mission in Mayapur [Tridandi Sri Bhakti Prajnan Yati Maharaj 1994: 100]. This math (monastery) is called “māsir bādi” or the house of a maternal aunt where Caitanya used to stay after his father’s death. It is recognized as “ādi (original) math” of the sixty-four maths and temples in different parts of India that were later established by Bhaktisiddhanta Thakur. They are generically called Gaudīya maths. Due to the schism that took place after his death, his disciples established different maths and temples and turned a commonplace landscape of rural area of Mayapur into a huge religious space. Nowadays we can observe over ten such maths, temples and ashrams on the both side of the main road from the south entrance of Mayapur (Hulor Ghat) to the north. There are some maths established by the disciples of Bhaktisiddhanta Thakur in Navadvip town, too.

In Navadvip town, there are more number and variety of Vaiṣṇava related institutions than in Mayapur. One of the important and active institutions is the Samaj Badi (literally, society house) temple. It is run
The Mahanta (head) of this temple is the president of *Sanātan Santa Samāj* (literally, eternal ascetics society) that is jointly constituted by major temples in Navadvip. However, what is characteristic in Navadvip is that many temples are personally inherited by household *Vaiṣṇavas*. For example, Sonar Gauranga (literally, golden Caitanya) temple, a famous temple that attracts many visitors for its golden colored image of Caitanya, is maintained by the family which claims its origin to the clan of Nityananda, the most important disciple of Caitanya in Bengal. This point is contrasted with the *maths* in Mayapur, which are mostly run by trustees.

Although it is not likely that all the temples in Navadvip have shown monolithic solidarity against the sudden rise of Mayapur group, there have been arguments against the authenticity of Mayapur as the real birthplace of Sri Caitanya. The most striking refutation was made by an ex-government engineer, Brajamohan Das. He was living in Vrindavana after his retirement and was said to have been dispatched by *Vaiṣṇava* communities there to discover the real birthplace of Caitanya. He came to settle in Navadvip in 1916 and started his research. He examined the biographies of Caitanya, conducted field trips, collected governmental sources, and met prominent persons. As a result of his research, he had an idea that the place known as “Ramacandrapur”, northern part of present Navadvip town, was the real place [Majumdar 1993: 54]. What he paid a great deal of attention to was the information that Ganga Govinda Singh, who was a Dewan of East India Company at the time of Warren Hastings, built a temple at the spot of the birthplace of Caitanya in 1792.10) This temple had been washed away by river erosion in 1822 but the top of the temple became visible in 1872 as the river changed its course. In the following rainy season, the temple sank again under the water and gradually the place was silted up by river sand [Majumdar 1993: 37–38]. Brajamoham Das attempted to excavate this temple. He excavated about seven hundred spots with the help of a boring machine and finally discovered the red colored stones that seemed to be parts of the temple [Mahaprabu Das Babaji 1993: 17]. In 1930, he formally declared that Ramacandrapur was the real birthplace of Caitanya and installed the monument. This place was named “prācīn (old) Mayapur” and the birthplace temple
was established there [Majumdar 1993: 1, 56–57]. This temple is run by the same trust as that of Samaj Badi temple mentioned above.

_Gaudīya math_ groups in Mayapur have not accepted the authenticity of prācin Mayapur, and, as a result, the controversy over the real birthplace of Caitanya still continues. However, in spite of the strong arguments for prācin Mayapur, the attitude of the advocates seems to be moderate or they seem to feel resigned. The Mahanta of Samaj Badi told me in an interview that as they had no money and manpower like Mayapur groups, they could not promote competitive propaganda, and therefore they engaged themselves with what they could do.

5. Development of Mayapur and ISKCON

The landscapes of Navadvip and Mayapur are quite different. While Navadvip is a congested town with narrow lanes, Mayapur is a vast rural area. In Navadvip, religious institutions are scattered and surrounded by houses and shops, but Mayapur has a panoramic view where _maths_ are serially located on both sides of the main road. Mayapur had been a village before Datta established Sri Caitanya Math. The cultivation of rice and jute and the supply of labor for weaving and construction works in Navadvip and other towns are the main sources of income in Mayapur. There is also a substantial Muslim population that needs to be noted.

The emergence of Sri Caitanya Math had a twofold impact on Mayapur. One is that Sri Caitanya Math, birthplace temple, the temples of Caitanya’s disciples, and other related institutions created a symbolic world of Caitanya, turning an ordinary village into a divine abode of gods and saints. The other is an impact in terms of the development of physical infrastructure. Sri Caitanya Math offered certain lands for the construction of roads, post office, guesthouses and hospital. The _math_ established a school named after Datta though its management was later handed over to the government. It is said that the direct bus service between Mayapur and Calcutta began by the request of the _math_. Thus, the rediscovery of the birthplace and the subsequent formation of _Gaudīya maths_ provided the basis of the development of Mayapur as a sacred place not only in terms of the spread of the
sacred aura but also of the local development of infrastructure.

Although the basis of Mayapur was laid by Sri Caitanya Math, the remarkable development that elevated Mayapur to the site of mass attraction was solely made by ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness). ISKCON is a faction that derived from Gaudīya maths. It is a well known sect as it preaches Caitanya’s faith in Western countries. Its founder, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977), was a disciple of Sri Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakur. Swami was entrusted by his guru (master) to preach in the Western world. It was in 1965, when he was sixty-nine years old, that he went alone to the United States of America on a regular cargo carrier with a complimentary ticket with food [Satsvarupa Das Goswami 1994: 1–3]. Before he passed away in 1977, he opened more than a hundred of centres all over the world and his movement had become known as the “Hare Krishna Movement”. His achievements are summed up as follows:

Before leaving India he had written three books; in the next twelve years he was to write more than sixty. Before he left India he had initiated one disciple; in the next twelve years he would initiate more than four thousand. Before he left India, hardly anyone had believed that he could fulfill his vision of a worldwide society of Krishna devotees . . . Before sailing for America, he had never been outside India; but in the next twelve years he would travel many times around the world propagating the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement [Satsvarupa Das Goswami 1994: ix].

While the purpose of Swami at the beginning was to preach in foreign countries, he tried to re-import his movement into India, too. He regarded Mayapur as an important centre in India and as the world headquarters of ISKCON. For example, he referred, “We cannot expect the whole world to become perfect. But at least there should be one place, an ideal place . . .” or “Then spiritual Mayapur will naturally become the capital of the world, from where the flood of the saṅkīrtana (congregational singing of devotional songs) movement will spring”. He even gave specific guidelines for the development of Mayapur. He envisioned a self-sufficient spiritual city of fifty thousand devotees with schools and food production that would require 350 acres of land and Rs. 200 crores expenses for the construction of a
spiritual town. He also wanted roads, parks and gardens like the description of Dvārkā in the myth of Krishna [Mahanidhi Swami 1996: 273–74].

Since the initial acquirement of land in 1971, ISKCON has continued the construction of the project with the financial support of developed countries. The construction works are still going on. So far they have established a huge complex of different facilities. The most attractive facility among them is “puṣpa samādhi (flower mausoleum)” of Swami. Its construction took eighteen years and was completed in 1995. Its huge white dome with a height of 160 feet can be observed from the bank of Navadvip town. The samādhi attracts every visitor to Mayapur and symbolises the influential presence of ISKCON in Mayapur. In addition, there are temples, a big wall with the relief of the life of Sri Caitanya, four guest houses, fountains, deer and elephant parks, exhibitions which show the propagation activities of ISKCON in different places in the world, a vegetarian restaurant, the hall for the distribution of prasāda (food taken by devotees after offering to deities), a book shop, a souvenir shop, a parking for cars and buses, STD/ISD telephone booths, a foreign exchange counter, and so on. Another unique character of the ISKCON complex might be the presence of many foreign devotees who wear Indian dresses, chant holy words, and preside in the worship in the temple.

It is also worth mentioning that though it is not a part of Swami’s project, there is a trend that overseas Indian devotees of ISKCON purchase land in Mayapur and construct guesthouses, where they stay for months when they come to Mayapur on the occasions of festivals.

6. Mayapur as Mass Attraction Site

In this section, I will examine the characteristics of Mayapur as a site of mass attraction and compare the respective patterns of visitors to Mayapur and Navadvip. If visitors come from Calcutta, they usually take either a direct bus to Mayapur or the way via Krishnanagar (the capital city of Nadia district). There are two different direct buses: the State Bus operates everyday, and ISKCON Calcutta office operates four times a week. If visitors come via Krishnanagar, they first arrive at Krishnanagar by train or by bus. Then they take a bus to
Mayapur (Hulor Ghat) or take a bus to Swarupganj (opposite bank of Jalangi river to Mayapur) and take a boat to cross the river to Mayapur. To reach Navadvip, visitors take a train from Howrah station in Calcutta to Navadvip Dham station or take a train to Krishnanagar and from there take a bus and cross by boat.

Beside the regular public transportation, the chartered buses provide an alternative mode. However, visiting Navadvip by bus is very difficult or impossible due to its congested narrow lanes and scarcity of parking space. Thus it is very common for bus passengers to get off at Mayapur and then travel to Navadvip from Mayapur, crossing the river by boat. Therefore, a large number of bus tours became possible owing to the emergence and development of Mayapur.

In Mayapur, visitors taking bus tours, first visit ISKCON, leave their buses there, and then go to see other temples and mathās in Mayapur area. The visitors to Navadvip usually take cycle rickshaws at the ghāṭ. They negotiate the charge with the rickshaw pullers. As the visitors seldom have knowledge on religious institutions in Navadvip and geographical ideas about their location, the rickshaw pullers usually suggest four or five spots to visit (and they sometimes receive a commission from the sites). In such cases, Poramā Goddess temple, a non-Vaishnava temple which is located in the central square of the town, may be included in their itinerary.

It is clear that of all the places in Mayapur and Navadvip, ISKCON attracts the largest number of visitors. Although a reliable data of the total number of visitors to Mayapur and Navadvip is not available, it is possible to make a relative comparison between some visiting spots regarding the number of inbound visitors. For this purpose, I selected three spots and conducted a brief survey: Sonar Gauranga Temple in Navadvip, Sri Caitanya Math and ISKCON in Mayapur. The figures below show the number of visitors to each spot on a weekend (Saturday and Sunday) in August 2000.

Table 1 shows that ISKCON attracts an overwhelmingly large number of visitors. Although Sri Caitanya Math is the original math of the entire group of Gaudīya mathās, it cannot compete with ISKCON in number. Sonar Gauranga Temple is one of the most favoured visiting spots in Navadvip but its number is far less than ISKCON's. The situation will be clearer if we compare the number of shops, restau-
rants, souvenir shops and rickshaw pullers waiting for customers around each spot. ISKCON alone attracts them. In addition, travel related facilities are concentrated in front of ISKCON: restaurant-cum-guest houses, a foreign exchange shop, a branch of the bank that deals with foreign exchange, a car-rental agent, etc. Moreover, ISKCON flaunts devices to satisfy the tourist mind. Souvenir shops inside ISKCON complex are selling T-shirts, stickers and even toys for children along with holy books. The families take photographs with elephant and gardens in the background.

7. Mayapur and Tourism

It is obvious from the above description that Mayapur, and in particular ISKCON attract more visitors today than Navadvip. The historical process of this change might be summarised as follows. At first, Navadvip town became a sacred place because it was thought to be the birthplace of Sri Caitanya. However, the claim of the rediscovery of the real birthplace created a new sacred place, Mayapur. The physical infrastructure as well as the sacred space of Mayapur was developed along with the development of the Gaudiya math sect. Specially, the fact that Mayapur was situated not in the town but in the vast rural area was very important because it made possible the movement by chartered buses and group tourism on a large scale. The advent of ISKCON further developed Mayapur as a mass attraction site and induced tourism-related facilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Saturday (A.M.)</th>
<th>Saturday (P.M.)</th>
<th>Sunday (A.M.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sonar Gauranga</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Caitanya Math</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>39</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISKCON</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>595</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The survey was conducted on 19 and 20 August 2000. I made four categories of time by dividing a day into morning time (A.M.) and afternoon time (P.M.) and then counted the number of visitors for an hour in each category of time.
In addition to the development in infrastructure, Mayapur appeals to visitors in other ways. First, many people including the staff of mathṣ and visitors mention the charm of the good environment and atmosphere of Mayapur. In contrast with Navadvip where temples are surrounded by shops, houses and offices, which form a congested town area, the field of vision is wide in Mayapur and one can have a distant view of mathṣ and temples which stand independently from each other. Secondly, mathṣ in Mayapur evoke a good impression, as they do not collect any admission fee. In Navadvip, some small temples collect an admission fee, though it is called pranāmi (donation). Lastly, the most appealing element is that Mayapur, especially ISKCON, creates different kinds of “things to see” for visitors. The fact that ISKCON upholds the ideal of their Swami and continues to put forward their project has resulted in the creation of many sightseeing attractions. At least in the context of mass attraction, ISKCON surpasses the math of their origin, Sri Caitanya Math. In fact, many visitors do not know about the history of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇavism and the position Sri Caitanya Math holds in it. Thus, the mahārāj of the Sri Caitanya Math often cannot help announcing to the visitors, “This math is the original one.”

Mayapur is directly related to tourism, particularly tourism development and promotion. As far as I have searched in Calcutta, no major or minor travel agent deals with the tour to Mayapur and Navadvip. What they do is only an arrangement of transportation to the destination at the request of their customers. The organized tour to Mayapur is arranged only by the ISKCON Calcutta office and by the WBTDC (West Bengal Tourism Development Corporation), which is an agent of the West Bengal government. The former is a one-day trip to Mayapur. The latter, which is titled “Sri Sri Gauranga Heritage Tour” is a two day excursion trip to Mayapur and Navadvip. In this tour, the accommodation at night is arranged at the guesthouse of ISKCON. According to the office of the WBTDC, this tour is not feasible without the guesthouse of ISKCON. They sent their staff to ISKCON for a preliminary inspection before they started this tour. The intention of organizing the tour is not to make profit but to provide tourists with an occasion for enjoying a peaceful (not necessarily religious) experience in the neighbourhood.
WBTDC organizes another tour titled “Ganga Heritage Cruise”. It is an excursion tour by a cruise ship starting from Calcutta passing Chandernagar, Mayapur and Navadvip, Palashi (Plassey), Murshidabad and coming back to Calcutta. As a pamphlet of this cruise says, it is “a unique opportunity to experience the three cultures that fashioned the fabric of Bengal: the Nawabi culture of the Mughal ruler, the Vaisnava culture, and the European culture”. It is a heritage tour that traces the modern history of Bengal. Although Mayapur and Navadvip are not able to be situated in the centre of modern history, as explained by WBTDC, they are incorporated into the scheme of the heritage tour as they are near Plassey and within the important historical area. Thus, in the context of tourism development, Mayapur is considered as a neighbouring tour spot and as an element that constitutes a part of the heritage of West Bengal.

8. A Sacred Sight or Tourist Gaze?

So far, I have traced the historical change of Mayapur and Gaudiya mathis in relation to the development of infrastructure and the creation of sacred space. In this section, I will show how such changes have provided the conditions for attracting the gaze of tourism-oriented visitors (mass tourists) to Mayapur. As already mentioned in the introductory section, Urry [1990] uses the socially and historically organized “gaze” in his analysis of tourism. It must be shown how the gaze upon Mayapur has been organized along with its development. Here, I explain by supposing the pluralization of the gaze through the historical development of Mayapur. The gaze of religious pilgrimage in Mayapur has been pluralized by adding the gaze of tourism.

First I will look at the gaze of pilgrimage in Mayapur. The gaze of pilgrimage is, I think, found in the word, “daršan” in a Hindu pilgrimage tradition. Daršan means “seeing”. When Hindus travel on pilgrimage, it is for the daršan of the place of pilgrimage or for the daršan of their famous deities [Eck 1998: 3]. However, daršan is not merely seeing but a religiously systematized way of seeing. It refers to the visual perception of the sacred [Eck 1998: 3] and an experience felt through culturally coded emotion [Lynch 1988: 188]. And most importantly, the connotation of daršan is the exchange of vision [Eck
1998: 7] or visual interaction [Babb 1981: 387] between the devotee and the deity. The devotees (pilgrims) wish to see the deity and at the same time wish to be seen by the deity.

In this sense, not only Mayapur but also Navadvip town can be considered as a pilgrimage site, primarily associated with darśan. According to the survey done by Morinis [1984: 162], among the 506 interviewed pilgrims 68.6 per cent of them replied that their purpose of visit to Navadvip was the darśan of Caitanya. In addition, 37.5 per cent of them replied temple darśan, and 31.2 per cent Navadvip dhām darśan, while only 2.2 per cent of them were making vows and 5.7 per cent death rituals, besides others. As already mentioned, Navadvip town has numerous temples associated with Caitanya. Pilgrims visit such spots to have darśan.

If this was so, what makes Mayapur different from Navadvip? Both Mayapur and Navadvip have many temples, mathṣ and monumental spots that attract pilgrims. Nevertheless, what makes Mayapur a more tourism-oriented site? We have already looked at the factors that the development of infrastructure enabled the tour by bus. We also see that Mayapur is more appealing because of the things to see and provides a new sacred space and a panoramic view of Caitanya's world to the visitors. In this sense, it is mostly ISKCON that provides sightseeing attractions, both sacred and secular. It has a huge altar and displays images of deities and performs fireworks and flaunts a procession of elephants during evening worship.

However, what is most important in Mayapur is the advent of the second gaze, that is, the tourist's gaze. Due to the increased number of things to be seen, Mayapur has succeeded in attracting the tourist gaze in a way which Navadvip could not.\(^\text{21}\) The advent of the tourist gaze has become possible, because it shares the act of “seeing” with pilgrimage. Of course, their connotations are different. While the gaze of pilgrimage was the product of the Hindu tradition of darśan, the gaze of tourism, particularly mass tourism, is a product of leisure culture of modern society, which has gained currency in Indian society today.\(^\text{22}\) Nevertheless, there are overlapping elements between them. In the context of tourism, as Urry [1990: 3] enumerates, the place gazed upon is not connected with work and the tourist gaze is directed to features of landscape which are separated from everyday experience.
The gaze is constructed through signs and tourism involves the collection of signs. All these characteristics are shared with pilgrimage, which consists of rich signs, symbols and unordinary experiences. Therefore, the close relation between pilgrimage and tourism is seen not in the fact that a single itinerary includes a visit to both temples and museums together, but that pilgrimage and tourism share the common act of “gazing”.

The co-existence of tourist and pilgrimage gaze, however, sometimes causes frustration among single minded pilgrims. For instance, one visitor said, “ISKCON is good but there are many secular things and funs. Though what is important for me is bhakti, it is difficult to go straight to God, rolling from side to side on the way. I do not need elephant and deer. I want God”. I do not mean here that Mayapur has become completely secularised or that all the visitors to ISKCON are tourists. The inner experience of each visitor is different, whether he/she is called a pilgrim or tourist (cf. Cohen [1996]), and the path of pilgrimage and tourism might be interchangeable within a visitor [Smith 1992: 15]. What should be noted here is the fact that the development of Mayapur has attracted the gaze of more tourists than pilgrims.

9. Conclusion

Mayapur is a newly rediscovered sacred place assumed as the birthplace of the saint, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The appeal of the rediscovery was closely associated with the modern revival of Vaiśṇavism in Bengal and its propagation. The development of Mayapur has kept in step with the subsequent expansion of the sects of Gaudīya maṭh, too. Its spread to Western countries by ISKCON provided further momentum. As a result, Mayapur surpasses the preceding and rival birthplace, Navadvip, in terms of attraction of visitors.

Studies on sacred place or pilgrimage have mostly focused on textual and symbolic analysis of sacred places and the sociological characters of pilgrims. They fail to pay much attention to tourism, an indispensable aspect of pilgrimage in today’s India. On the other hand, it is said that the expansion of both pilgrimage and tourism owe largely to the improvement of means of transportation, and that pilgrimage and tourism are often considered indivisible. The purpose of this paper
was to examine the relation between a sacred place and tourism, particularly mass tourism, by focusing on the development of a sacred place itself. The case of Mayapur indicates that not only external factors like transportation but also the development of the sacred place *per se* plays an important role in the advent of mass tourism to the sacred place.

Moreover, the development of Mayapur, especially the presence of ISKCON, resulted in the creation of many things to see: the increase and enrichment of "signs" to use Urry's term [1990: 1–3]. Today, ISKCON has become a kind of a stage where the signs—both sacred and profane—are displayed. This situation attracts the tourist gaze to Mayapur and causes pluralization of gaze in the sacred place. Although the gaze offered by pilgrims and tourists have been constructed in different historical and cultural dimensions, the development of Mayapur enabled them to exist side by side, and often mix with each other. This is because pilgrimage and tourism share the same nature of the act of "seeing" or of "gazing upon something". Many sacred as well as secular things ISKCON created provide unordinary landscapes, which are indispensable objects upon which tourists keep their gaze. This is the decisive reason why Mayapur attracts mass tourists. Mayapur today is primarily a sacred place but simultaneously maintains its character of a tourist spot.

**Notes**

1) Bhardwaj [1973: 5] similarly indicates the development of pilgrimage in India as a recent phenomenon by saying, "...more people now visit more sacred places than ever before in the history of India. It is not that the Hindus have become more religious; rather it is because modern means of mass transportation have made it possible for larger numbers of individuals to undertake pilgrimages".

2) There are more arguments about the relation between tourism and pilgrimage. They can be categorised into three types in respect of the particular aspect each study deals with: historical accounts of tourism, ritual aspect of tourism, and the experience of tourism. The historical link between pilgrimage and tourism might be the most widely accepted point. Hashimoto [1999: 57] says that pilgrimage is thought to be one of the origins of tourism from the perspective of stressing the historical continuity. Urry [1990: 4] traces the medieval history of pilgrimage in his explanation of the historical development of tourism. Other scholars like Graburn [1989: 29] and Smith [1992] try to explain the link by identifying the turning point from pilgrimage to tourism from the viewpoint of historical changes in western thought. The ritual aspect of tourism has been one of the most controver-
sial points of the argument. In his influential article titled "Tourism: The Sacred Journey", Graburn [1989] sees tourism as a modern equivalent for secular societies to the festivals (rituals) in traditional societies and states that tourism creates sacred time and has a ritual function that marks off the sacred from the profane. Turner [1973] applied his well-known concept of *liminality* and *communitas* to the analysis of pilgrimage and says that pilgrims experience the separation from ordinary life and liminal state on pilgrimage. At a later stage, Turner and Turner [1978] distinguished *liminoid* from liminal phenomena and stated that pilgrimage systems are more *liminoid* (open, optional, not conceptualized as religious routine) than liminal. This distinction further made it possible to apply his scheme for the students of tourism who want to see ritual similarities between pilgrimage and tourism (see reviews by Cohen [1988: 37–41], Nash and Smith [1991: 17–18] and Nash [1996: 40–43]). The nature of experience in tourism is another controversial point widely discussed. It might be expressed as "pseudo-events versus authenticity" polemic. Boorstin [1964] considers modern tourism as frivolous and inauthentic activity in which the attitude of tourists is passive and they merely experience "pseudo-events" created and reproduced by mass media rather than reality. For Boorstin, modern tourists in capitalist society are mere pleasure seekers and quite different from the travelers in pre-modern society. In contrast, MacCannell claims that modern tourists do not want superficial, contrived experience but demand "authenticity" and that the motive behind tourism is similar to that of pilgrimage and both are quests for authentic experiences [MacCannell 1973: 593–600; 1976]. These arguments are still continuing and may provide certain insights for the study of pilgrimage and tourism in the Indian context.

3) The materials for my discussion were collected during the fieldwork in Navadvip and Mayapur in December 1994 and again in August 2000.

4) It is to be noted that revaluation of Vaisnavism can be found even in the range of reform movement. For example, Kesav Candra Sen (1838–84), the leader of *Brahma Samaj* movement, introduced into Brahma worship the *Vaisnava* forms of collective singing and processions through streets [Chatterjee 1995: 39]. See also Kennedy [1993: 78].

5) Although the revival movement became more prominent in the late nineteenth century, the influence of Vaisnavism appeared earlier. According to Chakrabarty [1985: chapter XXI], while Tantra was popular among a powerful section of the Bengali Zamindars (landlord) during the eighteenth century, almost all among the new rich of Calcutta were *Vaisnavas* in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

6) Chakrabarty [1985: Chapter XIX and XX] attributed the sprouting of numerous deviant orders in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the social and economic changes and instability created at that time (e.g. the consolidation of British power) and the growth of casteism and superstitions. However, as he suggests, the growth of deviant orders had been a reaction to the consolidation of Brahmanical orthodoxy within the *Gauḍīya* Vaiṣṇavism since caste rules began to be strictly applied after Narottama’s period.

7) Mukherjee [1984], who attempts to examine the birthplace of Caitanya from the point of view of historical and geographical analysis, estimates the erosion by the
Bhagirathi earlier than the Gazetteer. His study shows that while the map of 1660 by Van den Brouck indicates the location of Neddia (alias of Navadvip used in the map) on the eastern bank of the Ganges, the map of 1780 by J. Rennell in contrast shows its location on the western bank of the Ganges. Hence, he states that the present Navadvip city had been built anew on the western bank of the changed course of the Ganga during the eighteenth to twentieth centuries under the British rule.

8) Another biography-cum-official history of his sect [Tridandi Sri Bhakti Prajnan Yati Maharaj 1994: 54], however, suggests that some contemporary writers of Caitanya already mentioned the name of Mayapur, so that it was not Narahari Chakrabarty who gave the name of Mayapur but it seems to have been so called during the time of Sri Caitanya.

9) According to Mukherjee [1984: 36], there are three groups in Navadvip: (1) highly cultured, educated family men with traditional Vaisnava faith, (2) individual Vaisnava ascetics, and (3) Mahantas (ākhyā leaders) with their clan in the ākhyās (cohabiting religious group-residence with temple). Both ākhyā and math mean “monastery” in Bengali. However, the term ākhyā is not used by the Mayapur group. They call it math. Similarly, the term mahanta (head of monastery) is not used in Mayapur. They use mahārāj— an honorific title for those who have taken the vow of renunciation.

10) This description appeared in Territorial Aristocracy of Bengal VI [Basu 1937 or 1938: 7]. It is said that when Ganga Govinda Singh erected a temple there were still some people alive who saw and could recognize the place of Caitanya’s house. Singh could determine the birthplace of Caitanya with the help of local people and also old documents [Majumdar 1993: 37].

11) Interview with Mahanta of Samaj Badi in August 18, 2000 in Samaj Badi temple.

12) The post office was named “Sri Mayapur”. The fact that the holy title “Śri” was added to the name of the post office by the government authorities was one of the points of their appeal for and claim of Mayapur’s legitimacy as the real birthplace.

13) About the biography of Swami, see Satsvarupa Das Goswami [1994]. Evaluations of ISKCON can be found in Klostermaier [1981] and Nakano [2000]. ISKCON in India is dealt by Brooks [1988; 1989; 1990].

14) Besides the special occasion days, the majority of visitors come on Saturdays and Sundays. Many buses park inside and outside the ISKCON complex. During my fieldwork in August 2000, I observed that some twenty to thirty tour buses were parked around ISKCON every Sunday. Each bus tour is very often neither well planned nor implemented by a travel agent on commercial basis, but by a voluntary organizer of the locality who loves travelling and is used to organizing a few tours every year for his neighbours. Mayapur is not usually the only destination for them. They include Mayapur in the excursion trip to Mursidabad, Santiniketan, Tarapith, and so on.

15) The number of visitors to Sonar Gauranga Temple on Sunday (A.M.) is relatively high. This is because holidaymakers from the suburbs and those who stay overnight in Navadvip visit Sonar Gauranga in the morning. However, in the afternoon those who come from longer distances by bus arrive at Mayapur and
since their main destination is ISKCON, the number of visitors to Sonar Gauranga become less and on the contrary visitors to ISKCON sharply increase.

16) Although ISKCON preaches all over the world, it does not mean that the entire Mayapur area always attracts visitors worldwide. At least except high season in winter and festive seasons, Mayapur primarily attracts local people. It is more so in the case of other maths. For example, the list of visitors which was recorded in the guesthouse of Sri Caitanya Math shows that the visitors of low season mainly come from Nadia, Calcutta and its suburb areas. I have checked the visitors’ list of the guesthouse for three months from June to August 2000. Among the 162 groups, the highest number came from Nadia district (31 groups) and the next from Calcutta (27 groups). Others came from 24 Parganas, Hooghly, Burdwan and Howrah. Visitors from outside of West Bengal were from Bihar (5 groups) and one group each from Orissa, the Philippines and Bangladesh. During the random interviews with the visitors, I found that not a few visitors were residents of Krishnanagar town, the nearest access point to Mayapur. Although it is a common trend in any sacred place (and any tourist spot) that visitors are less and come from nearer places in the low season, Mayapur seems to have two polarised aspects. While it is an internationalized sacred place due to the activities of ISKCON, it still maintains the aspect of a local sacred place.

17) In this connection, an ISKCON related publisher published a detailed guidebook on Mayapur in English. See Jada Bharata Dasa [1997]. The “things to see” do not make sense unless their existence is widely known and information about them is provided to the visitors. In other words, providing information on a place is nothing but “marking” it out as a place worth seeing (cf. McCannell [1976: 39–48]).

18) While ISKCON plays an important role for the attraction of visitors, there are some ambivalent evaluations on ISKCON. It attracts many visitors for its fine complex. Nevertheless, some visitors doubt the sacredness and rigorosity of ISKCON and claim that it is a mere park or just a picnic spot. Most visitors as well as local residents appreciate that ISKCON preaches Hinduism all over the world. On the other hand, they feel discontented with some aspects of ISKCON. For instance, the fact that devotees of ISKCON, in particular foreign devotees, live with their families inside the temple complex without obeying celibacy causes feelings of discontent. In this sense, Sri Caitanya Math is much more accepted as all the staff obey celibacy and the guesthouse of the math is intentionally situated outside the math complex to exclude profane elements. It is also a widely heard criticism that what ISKCON is doing is business for earning money.

20) Interview at the WBTDC office in Calcutta in August 7 and 29, 2000.
21) In fact, as far as I have interviewed in Mayapur in August 2000, there are quite a few people who answered that they had came to Mayapur to see (dekhte) or to tour (ghurte), both of which are quite a touristic expression of their purpose of visit.
22) Although it is not reasonable to consider the present situation of tourism in India in the context of the development of tourism in Western Europe, it is true that at
least among the urban middle class and also among the rural middle class, there has been a differentiation of work time and leisure time and how to spend the leisure time has become a concern of such people today. See Nakatani [1996].

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