

Full Length Research

Rural Tourism: Hidden Treasures of Destination¹

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Scope of tourism development in South Asia (hereafter mentioned as SA) is boundless and so the village tourism. Tourism has been one of the fastest growing industries in recent decades across the globe and its importance is likely to increase even more in days ahead. Nepal, one of the SA countries is the hub of tourist destination. She has nature and culture as potential tourism products. Sky to land, i.e., Mt. Everest, the highest peak of the world to Lumbini, the birth place of Lord Gautam Buddha per se, are known products all across the globe. Such salient products are unique in SA. Nature's endowments to manmade artifacts and cultural heritages attract tourists from dawn to dusk in this region. Atithi Dewo Bhawa (a guest is a deity) is the motto of SA, culture of hospitality. Tourism is an entrepreneur where a big business takes place between two parties and along/among a series of stakeholders. A tourist is a thirsty man with money and curiosity. The two parties' interests converge into satisfaction. A triangulation takes place among three elements- product-entrepreneur-tourists. Different sub-systems and entrepreneurs work together in this business. Tourist desires to quench the thirst of mind and does not much care for money when highest happiness takes place. Tourism is reciprocal business of products and human thirst. Sustainable rural tourism takes place if home grown resources are used and natural setting is preserved. Promotion of tourism highly depends upon the active participation of private sectors and communities where the role of government is simply facilitation. RT is synonyms of domestic tourism. SA comprise of all products of rural tourism. It has vertical and horizontal tourism corridors; i.e., ecological patterns. This part of the world has ample and incredible potentiality of rural tourism. A tourist can see famine to feast and so the area has a hidden treasure for tourism. Rural Tourism in SA can provide all scopes of destinations, however, very little has so far been explored and marketed.

Keywords: Community-based village tourism, ethnographic tourism, rural tourism, home-stay, eco-tourism.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Today tourism has become common parlance for economic development of a country. Affirmatively, it is a business of attraction (of five big organs) with full satisfaction or pleasure. It is selling of dreams. Rural tourism (hereafter mentioned as RT) pairs with community tourism. It's tourism in the village, by the villagers for the village/rural lovers (Ghimire, p29, 2009). It is village related allurements for tourists. A tourist feels enchantment on natural settings and village phenomena (lifestyle). It opts for natural lives, pristine life style and organic or original tastes. RT

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helps to retrospect human civilization and its evolution trend. It's close to "eco-tourism" which assumes high value, and low impact on tourism.

The practice *Atithi Dewo Bhaw* (a guest is a deity) is prevalent in oriental culture (SA). It unfolds who South Asians (SA) are and how do they treat their door step guests hospitably. This inherent cultural practice is very much in use in "tourism" in our lives (eg, SA). Greetings of the tourists with folded hands signify that (I'm) free and open from any bad/evil intention. 'You're welcome.' 'Bless us for prosperity and stay tonight with us'. In modern term, tourists are sources of money if they receive good treatment and feel satisfied.

Rural tourism can be achieved through an active and effective participation of individuals, community and local authority who have to have conservation and marketing of rural products (items of attraction); in this context, building new infrastructures are not imperative, except the basic ones. Tourism is a competitive business. Tourism is particularly related to the economic development of an individual, society and the nation. It is equally beneficial to the hosts as well as the guests. About quantity and quality in exchange are determined by the capacity of the party involved in it. The fundamental premises of the tourism development are based on the demand and supply driven mechanism.

It flourishes in the initiation of private sector, however, public private partnership approach is more appropriate for developing countries. Likewise, rural tourism can be promoted in countryside through community approach. Community involvement/engagement and their active participation for utilization of their local resources and common heritages, either natural products or manmade cultures, (common cultures) are the basic premises of rural tourism. In Nepal, it has been proved that community home-stays are more advance or successful than individual ones.

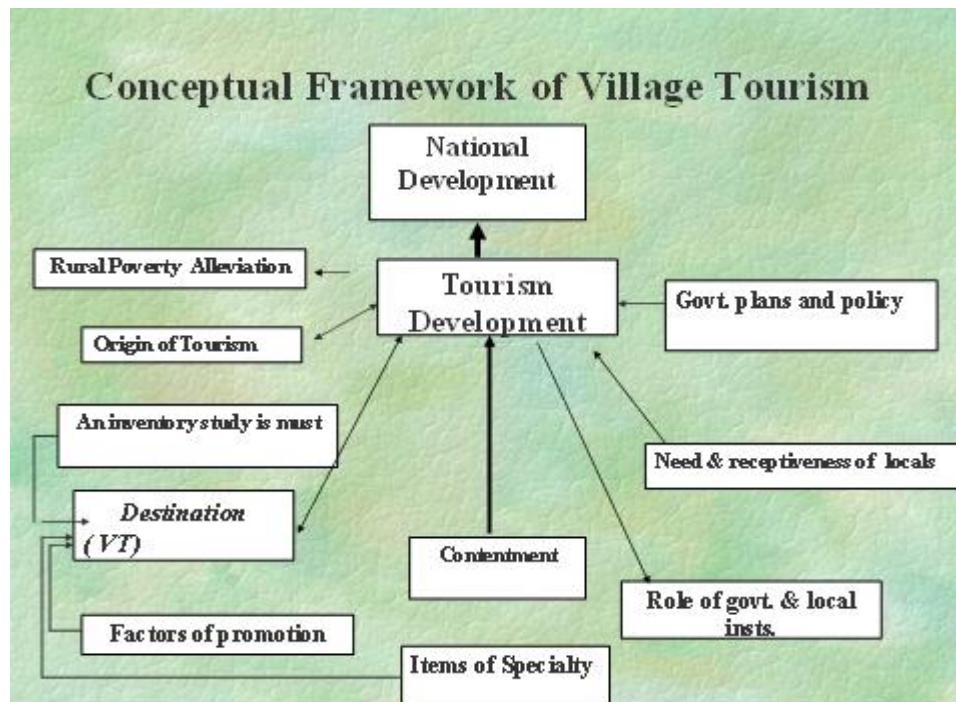
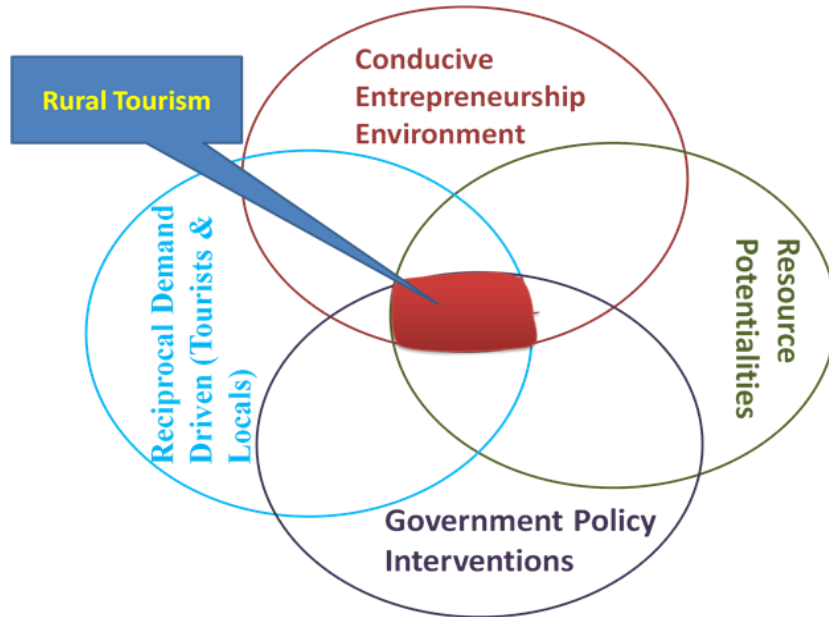
Rural poverty cannot be alleviated without economic development and therefore rural tourism can be one of the most significant factor for rural development in SA. Evolution of Tourism developed through tourist. Tourist is a person who makes a journey for the sake of curiosity or for the fun of traveling. He is temporarily in leisure who voluntarily visits place to place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change. In present context it is defined as a person who travels outside to learn, fall in love with nature, to relax and to enjoy the socio-cultural setting outside his region. A traveler learns ten times more than from a class room lecture.

Concept and Connotation

The connotation of rural and village tourism looks like the same but the scope and specialty of their nature are different ones. A rural tourism can be defined as comprehensive and multi-dimensional development paradigm of village tourism whereas village tourism is attributed simply to a specific area of tourism based on community organization run either by a community or an individual. However, the phenomena of both tourism are similar. Its origin and importance came into being at the end of twentieth century due to the fade of urban mechanical life and excessiveness of artificiality of city lives. By nature people love nature and its tranquility. Human being in the state of nature was naturalist. This thing can be obtained in rural areas as primitive life style of human civilization. At its best village tourism combines the virtues of a slower pace of life which is closer to nature and provide space for learning about agriculture/nomad life style and experiencing authentic local culture by living among local villagers for short-time. RT has been a synonyms of domestic tourism. Nowadays home-stays are designed to divert urban tourists to villages to provide such experiences and feeling of natural milieu. A paying guest in a family or community kitchen, staying for few days with natural setting of the organic village or resident is called home-stay. This entrepreneurship is called village tourism managed at countryside. It is a (micro) business, so it must be demand driven and private sector and community keep upper hand in its management. By nature tourism is defined as "traveling for recreation". It is related to the question who does travel? The affluent person who possesses money and is in leisure. The term 'recreation' covers a wide area and items of pleasure. Therefore, a tourist spot/destination must meet the aim and desires of the tourist. Items of beach pony ride or desert/destination camel, bird watch or fishing, trekking or bridge jumps and paraglide are the products SA tourism. For instance, pleasing weather, scenic attraction, historical and archaeological heritages, cultural treasures, accessibility, amenities, accommodation, hospitality, biological and psychological desires. In Austria, many village communities run small cottages, inns, and guest rooms and the tourists are provided bed and breakfast. In Israel, the cooperative (Kibbutz and Moshav) sponsors and manages the village tourism. Even she has unique family visit tourism. Since the school life many students in Israel prefer traveling. Tourists are guided to the agro-farm, local products, dairy farm and acquainted with the rural life setting. The local products are sold as souvenirs. Therefore, there is high potentiality to develop a rural-urban linkage for rural development.

RT is a form of tourism which takes place as recreation trip in a new destination (countryside) in the quest for new knowledge of natural phenomena.

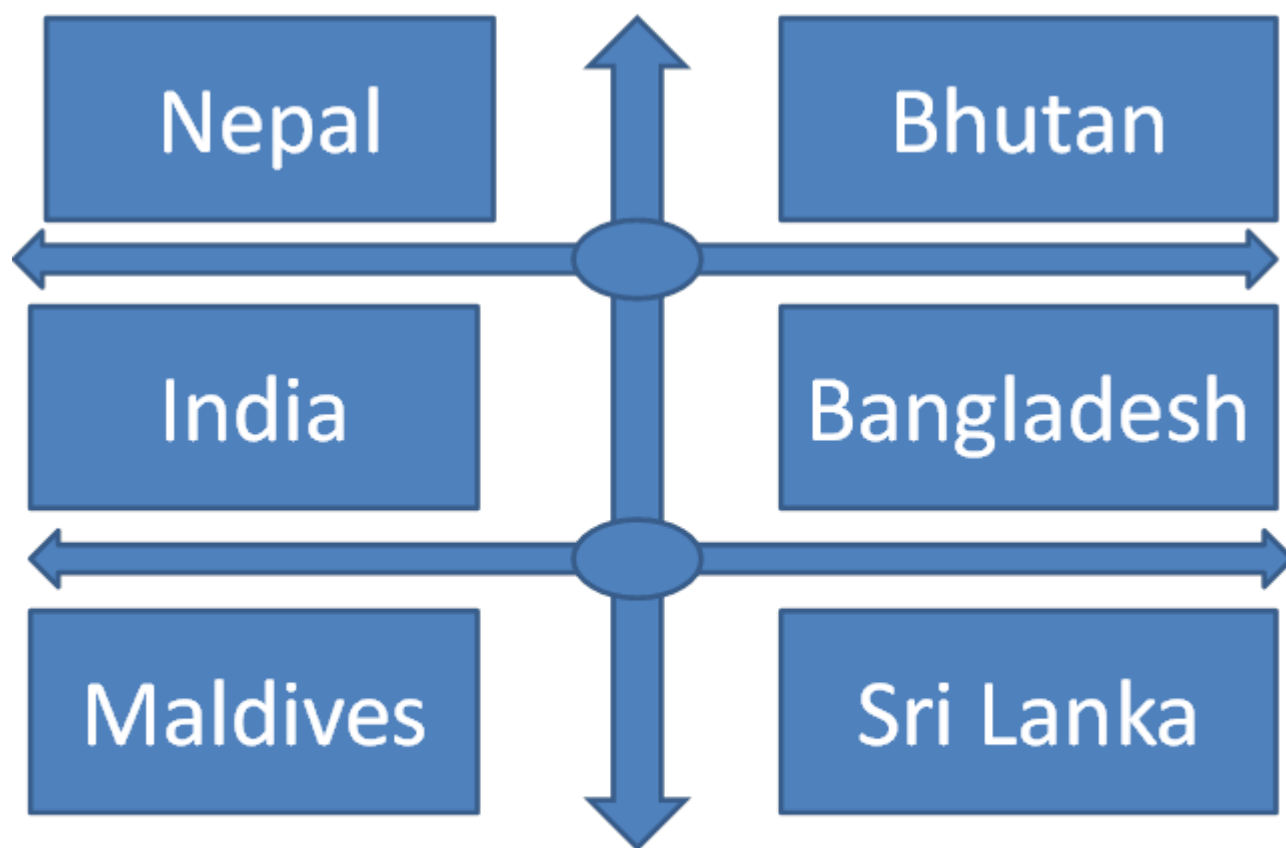
In Nepal it has been successful as community tourism based on 3 pillars- *service, facility* and *attractions*. Attractions spin in the satisfaction of five big sense organs of human being. There is no tourism and tourism product that does not attract the five organs. So it's not only that of *atithideobhawa*; rather more, based on entrepreneurship. It provides an opportunity to a tourist involve and observe the natural setting, better learn and understand rural life styles. It happens in *demand driven triangulation*: tourist, entrepreneur and product+ Government of Nepal (here after mentioned as GoN).



Source: Author.

Is Rural Tourism a Novel/Old Experience in South Asia?

Rural tourism in SA is both. Hotels, motels, *bhatti* (local bar), guest houses, inns and *dharmasalas* or *pati-pauwas* or what came in practices in rural areas of SA were for the facilitation/service of travelers. Some of them used to charge nominal money with the overnight guests and the rest public infrastructure services were free of cost with a (religious/pilgrimage) faith, It was different from voyages- Vasco da Gama or Columbus. The practices of tourism started from this notion. Some ethnic groups such as Thakali got involved in tourism in Nepal. It was more about service oriented than earning bare money with the travelers. The legacy of this concept can be still observed in most of home-stays in rural area of Nepal. Later in 1950s this business got changed into tourism when summiteers came to Nepal and conducted expeditions, trekking and did studies in different disciplines. This country is tourist invaded rather than the tourist entrepreneurs attracted with marketing the resources/products around them/in Nepal. Visitors of South Asia and pacific countries including Chinese are here spontaneously for pursuing the birth place (Lumbini) of Lord Buddha and the westerns are for adventure tourism; to see Mt. Everest and expedition and go to Annapurna Circuit in Nepal. Once tourists land in the capital of SA countries, the arts, artifacts and manmade monuments along the rich ethnographic cultural heritages plus grand SA hospitality allure them for next visit. We have long history of hospitality. SA comprises of all products of tourism. It has vertical and horizontal tourism corridors, i.e., East-West and South-North. Among them there are diversities as well as uniformities between them.



Note: **Core/heartlands of RT in SA**

From the sea level of Maldives 7 m. to Nepal 8848m. high altitudes (from coral island Maldives to Hindu Kush Korola pass /Mustang Nepal) provide all seasonal tourism products which is not possible in other parts of the globe.

This part of the world has ample and incredible products of rural tourism. A tourist can see famine to feast in SA. However, RT activities are virgin in SA and the region has super potentiality for tourism. The region also has some constraints such as caste hierarchy, ethnic groups, religio-cultural dogmas or Islamic and Hindu fundamentals and of course these factors are not RT friendly. But the social diversity itself provides mystery of human phenomena. Variety of natural setting from tiny island resorts of Maldives to a Sherpa village of Nepal can irresistibly attract all types of tourists. Maldives provides world famous tourism activities such as snorkeling, underwater diving along her white beaches whereas sky dive from white snow topped mountain of Nepal, bungee jumps, white water rafting and adventurous trekking- Annapurna circuit attract all. SA unfolds fabrics of rural areas for diverse interest of tourists. A visit to micro credit program of Gramin Bank founded by Nobel laureate Prof. M. Yunus, handloom weaving villages of Bangladesh; tribal villages and tea gardens of Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal are no less congenial for village tourism activities. Likewise, From mud hut/cottage of Kutch village, Gujrat, India to more than three thousand years old Chhuser's stores stone cave of upper Mustang, Nepal and respective villagers living into their way of lives in natural setting certainly attract the insight of tourists. Such products or destinations are not rare in other countries of SA. Few to cite, community tourism in the Jigme Wongchuk National Park promoted by SNV and Tourism Council of Bhutan, Home-stay of Tharu Rana villages of Kanchanpur, and Dalla Bardia and Ghalegaun/Kaulepani Lamjung Nepal attract from royal families to commoners. No one can easily figure out the potential hidden treasures of SA.

The tourism potentialities in SA mostly remain unexplored, minimum in use and less exposed at the screen of dissemination. It should be branded out because the 21st century is the age of IT and Consumerism. Tourism promotes economic development; helps familiarize people, culture and many more information among the nations and people across the nation and region. Both India and China are/can be our import and export markets for what we have and we need. So SA is fortunate being closely with two economic powers (socialist and capitalist) of Asian tigers. Even in the tourism sector if SA caters at least 10% national tourists of these closest countries (India and China plus Asia and Pacific countries) annually, perhaps we do not need guests from third countries. Therefore, there is a great chance to open a big tourism industry. However, SAARC needs a comprehensive network plan. All of them have their own nature, characters and scope. The plan needs an action plan with specific programs based on home entrepreneurs' need. As a facilitator, the government should build forward and backward linkages network. Till date the Nepalese government has paid less attention for promoting domestic tourism. Each government has to target their domestic tourists for sustainable rural tourism development. Rural tourism can be one of the strong instruments for rural poverty eradication. Rabi Jung Pandey² observes:

Poverty alleviation has been the critical component of economic and tourism development in the South Asian region and in particular the sub region comprising Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Indian (SASEC), and Greater Mekong Sub region (GMS) comprising Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

Nature and manmade products are the sources of rural tourism. These are everywhere and easily accessible. The prosperity of the nation and wellbeing of the people cannot be imagined sans the overall development of the rural areas in most countries. In previous years, tourism development was commonly a private enterprise and tour operators chose their destinations and found venture capital to construct resorts and hotels, (tab) of government agencies but currently promotion of tourism is a panacea for under employment in economically depressed areas (Kunwar, 1997: Preface). Therefore, SAARC needs a Common strategy for rural tourism development.

Pandey further stresses;

Pondering over the rationality, developing tourism on Nature and Culture remains a foundation strategy of all Asian sub-regional countries. However, the primary challenge for these countries stands as to develop and promote tourism growth, while at the same time ensure pro-poor results to meet the criteria of sustainability. In this regard, ecotourism based on natural and cultural heritage and tourism based on Buddhist Circuits have come appropriately as pro-poor focused and sustainable tourism development activities if it is well managed (Pandey, 2013).

Scope of Village Tourism:

Nature and its contributions are the scope of tourism. The village tourism is based on most pleasant atmosphere at calm environment of countryside away from the hustle and bustle of the cities and mechanical

²Mr. Pandey, was Director, Nepalese Tourism Research and Service Center (NTRSC), International Team Leader/ Tourism Sector Specialist, GMS STDP, Vietnam People's Republic of China, Laos People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam. He was national coordinator of TRPAP.

boredom. Fast growing urbanizations, pollution, depression, junk and adulterated food items help to push the city dwellers to move to rural tourism. Down to dust a country side product of SA attracts a guest ,tourist. Everything fresh, organic and available at cheaper price allure the urban dwellers. With the dusty and muddy paths, green field, rugged tree thickets, herds of cattle and smoke from kilns, in Nepal, there is much uniqueness to see and feel. Diversity of flora and fauna, (see annex in the end note) amidst the beautiful snow-covered valleys and mountains are common heritages in Nepal. The culture of hospitality³ of Nepali society “*Atithi Deva Bhawa*” and the behavior of guest serve manner in the court yard of Nepali resident can hardly be compared with any country of the world. Nepali, its unique culture and traditions itself are the half products of the tourism. The rest fifty percent could be nature and its creations. That is, the man and man (Nepali) made products equalize the gift of nature. If you have capacity or idea how to please a guest at your (doorstep) village, you have to identify the interest or background of your visitor then get him/her to involve in such area where his/her antecedents drive. Tourism is also a sort of psychotherapy . There are lot of scopes of domestic, intra SAARC countries and international tourism development in South Asian Countries.

Products of Village Tourism

It is difficult to discern what rural product does not fall under the range of village tourism. Man and its products, nature and its creations are the products of tourism. Just, know it, use it and make it. Attractiveness of rural lives and nature's endowments are the products of rural tourism. What do they do, how, when, where and what makes it mystery and attractive are the treasures of village tourism. Once, Magsaysay award winner Mahabir Pun commented "every matter and activity of rural life can be an instrument (product) of village tourism". It means nature as well as man made products can be tourism products. A farmer's hut and farm, traditional farming system, his agriculture inputs, service of a primary health centre, school teaching activities, the daily life style of a farmer or student/teacher, a tailor's routine works, etc, can be tourism products. One can involve in it and get how things are going. An agricultural country like Nepal can have lot of products of agricultural tourism. So any village or farm can be potential destination of village tourism. Agricultural tourism is holidays concept of visiting a working farm or any agricultural or agri-business operations for the purpose of enjoyment, education or active involvement in the activities of the farm or operation. For instance, the weekly *hatiya* (fair) of Khadbari or elsewhere, where the trade of piglet takes place, provides a good opportunity to a tourist to know how rural economy functions. Another destination can be the banana farm of Kalu Hamal, Tikapur Kailali (agro tourism) where all the restaurant food items are made of banana. Traditional farming *parma* system, bullock cart rides, grapes, mango and other horticulture farm, labor system, folk song and dance, etc would be worthwhile as products of village tourism. To a sociologist and anthropologist the upper Humla can be a best destination. The polyandry system and the guests feeding system with the Bhote community are unique products to see and study. Why and how do they do it provides a mystery to every visitor. Tourists from Scandinavian countries and New Zealand where pasture system and livestock is quite advanced, can visit Nepali pastureland called as Kharka at the foot hill of Northern Himalayan along the northern range from the east Taplejung to west Kanchanjunga Darchula Apilekh where one can find the primitive stage of human civilization as Neolithic man or medical period in the medieval period. If you have an opportunity to visit Dhorpatan Hunting Reserve Area you can have dinner or lunch items exclusively prepared from potato, i.e., potato dal, potato *Dhindo*, potato *achar* and *sukuti* (*dry meat*) potato mixed curry. Is it not a product of village tourism to visit? Honey hunting, rock climbing, trout fish enjoying, millet liquor (Kodoko tin pani), *tomba* at Hile, Dhankuta, apples products of Marpha, buck wheat porridge (*dhindo*), pony ride, etc, are sites to mention regarding the products of village tourism. Gods and goddesses, natural healer and Jhankris, traditional meditation centre and herbal drug production such as Chentung monastery Dhorpatan, Baglung (Sharma 2067:33) and Lapchi and Bigu-Taschi Gumba of Dolakha (DTDC 2010:75). One can enjoy local food

³ Hospitality refers to the relationship process (emotion and notion) between a guest and a host, and it also refers to the act or practice of being hospitable, that is the reception and entertainment of guest, visitors or strangers, with liberality and goodwill. First impression attracts the tourist and sets the prosperity of tourism entrepreneurship. Therefore, the destination or product of the tourist, warm hospitality, and the tourism friendly business management are vital issues for the promotion of tourism development. Hospitality is a kind of psychotherapy in human treatment. At a time of unfamiliarity, physically exhausted time or tired, and helpless, hospitality is highly delirious. Therefore, when a guest lands in the airport or crosses the country border, he should have warm receive and treated well. There is a mystery. Hospitality creates homely environment in any haven of human settlement

items, drinks, joining the folk songs and dance events, sharing with local celebrities and feast and festivals, observe the daily life style of locals. They all provide products of village tourism.

Nepal: A Supermarket of Products

If you open www.welcomenepal.com, you can just scan a small window of super Nepal of rural tourism. *Naturally Nepal, once is not enough* senses the potentials of tourism in Nepal. It has two dimensions viz; mass tourism and rural tourism. First international tourism products: Mt. Everest, Lumbini, Hindu shrines and manmade heritages of Kathmandu valley and multi-cultures interweaving phenomena by over hundred twenty castes/ethnicities, languages and about a dozen religious faiths with perfect harmony provide immense room size for tourists. Second, we have longitudinal land escape ranging 61 meter to 8848 meters panoramic kaleidoscope. Nature endowment bio-diversity⁴ natural beauties and rural lifestyle: nomads Raute to Mountaineer Sherpa are natural and human mysteries. Probably no country in the world or region possesses such ambience products. Nepalese hospitality is super asset for booming tourism; one can find a small sample of hospitality in most of the community managed home-stays across the country. It is advisable to all visitors none to miss the home-stays (in any one of across the country run by different ethnic groups) as Prince Harick visited Dalla Tharu home-stay in Bardiya, west Nepal. From any point and dimension, Nepal is a state of three ultimate destinations. However, Nepalese rural tourism brand is *Prakriti r Sankriti (nature and culture)*.

Over the last two decades people are more aware of the potentiality of tourism development in SA including Nepal. To materialize the people's aspirations and interest, government of Nepal has framed a tourism policy 2008 (*Paryatan Niti 2065 BS*) which envisions "to conserve and promote the natural cultural, bio-diversity as well as human contribution/heritages of Nepal and familiarize Nepal as safe, pleasant and attractive destination in the map of the world". Recently GoN has prepared a decade long strategic plan: National Tourism Strategic Plan of Nepal 2016-25 (NTSPN) with the support of development partners in Nepal. It has categorically and comprehensively (11 goals with six objectives) outlined the tourism development in two stages (MOCTCA 2016). It has set a goal uplifting the life standard of people through sustainable use of national heritages with increment of tourism activities. The tourism policy-2008 has also set four objectives. Among them, the first objective clearly defines the extension and diversification of tourism activities towards rural area and creation of self employment opportunity targeting the rural pro-poor community. It has focused rural tourism and domestic tourism as sub areas of tourism entrepreneurship. The campaign clearly state the dispersal of tourists to new destinations (at least 40% of dispersal of tourists to new destinations) in Nepal to spread the benefits of tourism to the people across the country indicating the tourism industry's exigency to organize a tourism promotion campaign having wider impact (GoN 2008:3).

Prospects and Challenges

Rural Tourism in SA can provide all scopes of destinations, however, much has to be explored and marketed. Nepal offers both Bi-centric pilgrimage sites Buddhist and Hindu shrines and faiths. Mt. Everest, the highest peak along 8 mountains out of 14 above than 8 thousand meters high lie in Nepal. Promoting tourism products successfully requires a context that allows your audience to appreciate what your country has to offer to visitors' (Cromwell, p.1). What cannot SA offer to visitors as per their interests and thirst? Adventure tourism, eco-tourism, pilgrimage, ethnographic mosaics of human beings? 'Namaste' hospitality brand with significant sacred meaning is rampant as SA bears heart touching attraction. Amidst the natural beauties, rural lives unfold a fragmented social culture with vividness. Tribal groups, nomads such as Raute and indigenous ethnic groups are living history of human being in SA.

A tourist and tourism ends where it starts. A tourist is a plant of money where a number of (tourism) entrepreneurs harvest the money according to their capacity. The tourist reaps the highest bless (satisfaction) from a product. So tourism turns up as sensitive mechanism where each bearing or stakeholder has to pay high attention to make the business profitable to all. Tourism sectors involve multi dimensional sub-systems where different overt and covert sub-systems work together for making the business success. Therefore, every element or sub-system of tourism cannot be undermined. For instance, when a tourist lands or enters the harbor of the destination country, from the visa stamp counter to his exit from the destination, the treatment of the concerned person is highly regarded.

⁴ See in detail in the Annex (endnote) and National Biodiversity Action Plan, 2014.

Thus, it is imperative to ponder how a chain of elements in a system have to benefit or suffer from a simple flaw or treatment.

Whatever attractions are there tourism hardly fosters if the destination country or region is politically unstable, civil war, widespread crime and corruption, terrorists activities, imminence of natural calamities such as earthquake, Tsunami, epidemic takes place, inadequate infrastructures or an unfriendly population plus insecure and safety problems. Individual security and safety is vital point. SA is not free from such adverse environment. Long term insurgency affect, and frequent government changes, fundamental activities and some domestic unrest in different states of region or world can be attributed as tourism unfriendly environment in SA. These are some of considerable factors. Things or situations are being improved and hopefully come into peaceful order in the region. Besides, some castes, religious faiths and dogmas and ethnicities seem to be not very (rural) tourism friendly. Visitor hostile cultures, traditions, superstitions, and practices spoil tourism. If SA holds international sports such as Olympic, World cup, it can link with rural tourism. Agro-tourism such as tea, banana, apple tourism and potato-hut potential areas or products is prominent. Most of hidden treasures of rural tourism products are not identified and half explored. Rural tourism products are scattered to and fro and around us. Poor awareness for the use of these products, the locals are poor because of ignorance to their local resources. Most local governments may lack of policies and plans. However, destinations are being reactive after the flow of tourists in their vicinities and trekking routes. Whatever tourism entrepreneurs are involved in few destinations, they are lack of knowledge, skill and know-how to harness and harvest the tourism. Therefore, the government have to come up with conducive policies and plans so that private sectors and community feel quite safe to invest their money and human capitals. Thus, the concerned stakeholders have to use their local resources for sustainable income generation activities. Despite having high potentiality, SA is benefiting less and earning less money as per the resources.

Though a wide range of attractions, strong market potential, some relatively good tourism growth performances have appeared in recent years, however, existing policy, planning and institutional arrangements in most countries of the SA have hardly realized the full potential of tourism to contribute to a more environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive pattern of socio-economic development. So SAARC countries need to chart out an integrated plan for a more comprehensive and coherent sub regional cooperation, the plan can include:

1. forward and backward linkage network;
2. streamlining cross border facilitation;
3. marketing and promotion to expand tourism in the multi-country circuits;
4. safeguarding heritage sites and enhancing the quality of tourism sites, facilities and services;
5. raising private sector participation especially in community based tourism;
6. enhancing knowledge and experience sharing human capacities; and
7. enhancing linkages with broader regional cooperation initiatives in the above areas

And the following constraints should be considered:

- more than one third of the total population is under the poverty line. Most of village tourism potential areas are beyond the accessibility of tourists
- the affluent person rarely has leisure time and the person on leisure has no money, i.e. the level of economic condition is adverse
- political instability or poor governance, and tourist unfriendly culture are impediments of it
- the specialty and identity of village tourism destinations is mostly unexplored or half-explored, inaccessible and underdeveloped
- the government has insufficient plan, policies and programs regarding the promotion of rural tourism
- Due to the lack of research studies, central information network system has not been established
- urban centre oriented development plan and priorities of the government tend urban migration; consequently most ethnic cultures, feast and festival, ceremonies and celebrities are urbanized as well as faked.
- the awareness level of the locals is very low who cannot identify themselves and use resources around them
- conservative social structure, traditional concepts and legacy, parochial culture, social taboos and slow impact of advanced cultures are some of the challenges to this regard
- there is inadequate information dissemination and communication, i.e., ads.or publicity; and etc..

Challenges

SA lacks lot of knowledge to know, figure it out, use it optimum with vivid skills and attractions. Likewise the potentiality of tourism destination in Nepal is very high, challenges to promote the tourism business is equally arduous.

Par to the potential destinations, lot of physical structures as well as human (capital) resources and software are in primitive stage. Various destinations and their products have not been explored and identified. Creation of road access and other infrastructures have to be constructed before the expansion and diversification of hitherto tourism business which is mainly concentrated in the urban areas. Government and concerned stakeholders have to develop and devise lot of software packages to capacitate the demand sides i.e. entrepreneurs. Software planning (formation of tourism catering capacities) and its effective execution are must. Government stability and good governance is a prerequisite. Maintenance of durable peace and security is highly desirable. Some of the policy implications have to be reviewed and reformulated. In spite of that "tourism development in Nepal has been visualized as a development tool not just in promoting tourism growth but also in reducing rural poverty" (Pandey, 2011: 83). So efforts towards opening doors in rural tourism development are in great need. Training packages and imparting knowledge and skills for rural stakeholders are dearth. Besides the building of tourism physical infrastructures, government has to produce human resources typically appropriate and adequate to run the tourism business in every destination. This sector has to realize that there are lot of rooms to correct and ineptitudes that have to be timely corrected and capacities. Domestic as well as international marketing is less satisfactory. Poor information network, and dissemination of potential products in the regional and international markets have to be improved. Frequent changes of governments, poor security and law and order, bands (shutdown) can be other unfavorable social milieu for the promotion of tourism business. Pull and push factors have to be identified and treated accordingly. These phenomena and situation are almost similar in other countries of SA.

Upshot

Everybody directly or indirectly involved in tourism has to be familiar that a tourist is a man full of mind and money in the pocket. S/he really desires to quench the thirst of mind and cares less for money when highest happiness/satisfaction is received. To make money a tourist entrepreneur should keep in mind the highest offer to benefit him. Promotion of tourism highly depends upon the active role of private sectors where the role of government is simply facilitation. We must not misunderstand looking it as an individual benefit forgetting the collective role and benefit sharing. Tourism prospers there where collective and each sub-system functions well. Rural tourism premises on multi facet dimensions of development.

SA region comprises of multi dimensions of rural tourism. It is region of RT hub. Most products of rural tourism are virgin and unexplored as well poorly marketed. A lot of destinations and products are yet to bring in the public for marketing. The concerned stakeholders have to know it, identify, figure out and bring into use i.e., optimum benefit sharing. Tourism itself is a business of attraction where both hosts and guests are benefiteres or feel satisfied. For the marketing, the role of media is vital. Rural Tourism cannot prosper sans the role of media. Peace, security and safety measures are no less vital. Stable government with good governance, tourist friendly culture and policies, free from civil war, no sign of terrorist activities, corruption less social as well as state treatment are pre-conditions. Where does rural tourism prosper, where optimum satisfaction of five sense organs human beings take place. Attractions of nature and hospitality of human (host) take no limit. Village tourism cannot prosper sans the convergence of needs of the affluent and the needy based on the premise of demand driven mechanism because it is a need base concept. Realizing the fact, some donors and international agencies have taken initiative to promote the tourism development of Nepal as well as in the South Asian region. The mission of promotion of RT cannot be achieved without a synergic effort of public private partnership. There are few challenges to be addressed as preconditions for the sustainability of rural tourism development.

Annex: Biodiversity of Nepal

A total of 118 ecosystems have been identified in the country. The natural ecosystems range from tall grasslands, wetlands and tropical and sub-tropical broadleaved forests in the Tara iand adjoining Siwalik foothills to alpine meadows above the tree line. The country's forest ecosystems can be categorized into ten major groups, namely tropical, subtropical broadleaved, subtropical conifer, lower temperate broadleaved, lower temperate mixed broadleaved, upper temperate broadleaved, upper temperate mixed broadleaved, and temperate coniferous, subalpine, and alpine scrub. Among the rangeland ecosystems, the tropical savannas and alpine meadows are exceptionally rich in biodiversity. Nepalese wetlands have very high ecological significance, as they harbor many threatened species of flora and fauna and serve as resting places for many migratory and globally threatened birds. The wetlands also have high cultural and economic significance.

Many ethnic groups are dependent on wetlands for their livelihoods. Nine of the country's wetlands have been listed as Ramsar sites. The country includes 12 of the 867 global terrestrial ecoregions.

The diverse climatic and topographic conditions have favored a maximum diversity of flora and fauna in Nepal. The country occupies about 0.1 percent of the global area, but harbors 3.2 percent and 1.1 percent of the world's known flora and fauna, respectively. This includes 5.2 percent of the world's known mammals, 9.5 percent birds, 5.1 percent gymnosperms, and 8.2 percent bryophytes. The country is also rich in diversity of agricultural crops, their wild relatives, and domestic animal species and varieties. Over 550 crop species are identified as having food value, and around half of those species are believed to be currently under cultivation. The country's horticultural diversity includes around 400 species and subspecies of horticultural crops, including 45 species of seasonal fruits. An estimated 200 species of vegetables, including 11 different local varieties of potatoes, are grown in the country. The available information suggests that the country is also rich in diversity of domestic animals.

A total of 284 flowering plants, 160 species of animals (including one species of mammal), one species of bird, and 14 species of herpeto-fauna are reportedly endemic to Nepal. The richness of endemic species increases steadily from low to high elevations. The high altitude rangelands are especially important from the perspective of endemism.

Many species of plants and animals, including 54 species of wild mammals and 18 species of trees found in the mountains, are threatened. Birds are among the most threatened group of fauna. Over half of Nepal's nationally threatened bird species inhabit lowland forests, and over a quarter live in wetlands. Among the known species of domestic animals, pure siricattle has become extinct, bampudkepig (*Susscrofa*) is under threat of extinction, and Achhamicattle (*Bosindicus*) and lampuchhreshsheep (*Ovisaries*) are near endangered. Very limited updated information exists regarding the country's genetic diversity. Nine species of plants, 55 mammals, 149 birds, 64 herpeto-fauna and 21 fish are included in the IUCN Red List. Similarly, 15 group and species of plants, 52 mammals, 108 birds and 19 reptiles and three insects have been listed in the CITES Appendices. Several species of plants and animals, including 27 mammals, nine birds, 14 angiosperms, and four gymnosperms have been declared as protected species by the government

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