

## RESEARCH

# *Envisaged for Sustainable Rural Development: Viability and Challenges of Rural Tourism in Nepal*

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Rural tourism is a lucrative business with many financial, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits however; the development of rural tourism compared to urban tourism is faced with numerous challenges related to its practicability and sustainability. The aim of this paper is to trace the viability and challenges affecting the motivations of rural tourists, in an attempt to improve the understanding of rural tourism motivation for the development of rural tourism in Nepal. The major argument of this paper is that rural tourism though based on need and right based concept, is lately introduced practice and one of the immense areas of entire tourism in Nepal. Principally, it is need based approach because underdeveloped rural area needs to have more jobs created and revenue to be generated. The rapid environmental crisis in urban areas mostly in Kathmandu and other big cities is widening the scope of the rural tourism outside the urban areas. As a phenomenon, rural tourism is related to natural environment, hill, mountains, agricultural terraces, river, rural society and countryside households representing conservation, life style free of cultural pollution, experience, adventure and above all benefit to the local people. A sustainable rural tourism is the product of the careful planning, management and monitoring of tourism development. This study highlighted the evolution of a new way of thinking about development in the form of the rural tourism sustainability paradigm, its viabilities and challenges. The application of the concept of sustainability to rural tourism development was traced, and some of the initiatives of the rural tourism industry were distinguished, culminating in emphasis of the fact that effective planning and implementations are crucial to the long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability of a destination and its rural tourism industry. However, local communities' inclusion as more active participants in rural tourism development may result in increasing conflicts between them and other stakeholders, including urban tourism, government at local and national levels.*

## **KEY WORDS**

**Naturophilia**

**Rurality**

**Diplomatic Tourism**

**Home-stay**

**Ethno-botany**

**Ama Samuha**

**TOURISM IS AN ARCHETYPAL BEHAVIOUR** or quality, journey and the stay place outside the normal place or residence and works which are

distinct from those of the resident and working population of the places, through which tourist travel and which they stay. Tourism study is based on *Sociology of leisure* which is the study of how the humans organize their free time including a broad range of activities, such as tourism, sports playing of games etc. With the world's highest mountain peak Mt. Everest --Nepal is an admired but precarious tourist destination for all types of tourists. The decade-long insurgency, a global economic deceleration and internal political instability threatened the tourism industry due to which the tourists' arrival in Nepal has been always unpredictable. However Nepal's conventional culture and generally unblemished natural environment in rural areas are major attraction for assorted tourist market segments such as adventure lovers, holiday-making luxury tourists, pilgrims, and special interest tourists. Nepal now serves as a concrete illustration of the nexus of tourism, conflict and peace.

Bhatia (1995) squabble that tourism is the sum of phenomenon and relationship arising from the travel and stay of non-resident, in so far as they don't lead to permanent resident and are not connected with any earning activities. The movement to destination is of a temporary, short term character, with intention to return within a few days, few weeks or months. In a wide and comprehensive term a tourist is a person who travels to learn, to appreciate nature, to relax and to enjoy a change outside his country (WTO, 1996). Based on *Sociology of leisure* tourism study deals with how the humans organize their free time including a broad range of activities, such as tourism in rural areas, sport and playing of games etc. At the present, smoke fee industry tourism is growing industry and it is the main source of foreign exchange and vital factor in the development

of industry and international trade. The most common aspect is travel that is, travelling for recreation which should be temporary, voluntary, and should not have remunerated employment as its aim (WTO, 2011). Satyal (2000) argues that, tourism creates economic resources as well as promotes international understanding. It is such a medium, through which we can exchange knowledge with each other and we can create mutual understanding with the world. Tourism also teaches to respect different beliefs, religions, traditions, and customs at the same footing. It inspires religious and cultural harmony and tries to create peaceful relationship among the nations of the world (Chandra, 2006). Besides stimulating economic growth and job creation, tourism provides incentives to protect the environment and heritage of the destination. It plays a major role in the preservation of world heritage as it generates financial means to safeguard nature, heritage sites, and preservation of environment. It also promotes cultures, and indigenous traditions. International tourism offers a unique opportunity for cultural exchange and dialogues between civilizations (Pathak, 2012).

Erik Cohen (1984), in his seminal work on the sociology of tourism, indicates that unifying tourism as a field of study is not a general theory of tourism but rather a set of empirical characteristics marking off touristic from other types of social phenomena. He further notes that the boundaries between tourism and related fields of inquiry are not clear and deal with a range of transitional phenomena. However, he leaves the task of understanding such transitional phenomena to others.

As one of the wealthy nations in worldwide cultural communities in terms of unique biodiversity, high mountains and natural beauty with cultural

heritage, there is a wide scope for rural tourism industry in Nepal. Most of the tourist came to Nepal to visit natural areas, such as mountains, lakes, jungle, national parks conservation area, for trekking, mountaineering, hiking, rafting etc. The diverse ecological zones with prosperous biodiversity and unique socio-cultural identity have termed Nepal as one of the most mesmerizing tourist destinations of the World. The mountainous landscapes of Nepal provide significant potential to use nature-based tourism as a low-cost, eco-friendly alternative to support socio-economic growth and fight poverty (SNV, 2003).

As a viable tourism, rural or village tourism creates opportunity to get acquainted with probably the main treasures of the country: rural cultures, customs, convention and traditions. The rapid environmental crisis in urban area mostly in Kathmandu has expanded the scope of tourism outside the urban areas. The parameters to define the term *rural* also differ. It means the word 'rural' has contextual meaning in developed nations. But in general term, in the underdeveloped countries, rural means those places, which are isolated, deprived, with dispersed settlement, far from the center, agro-based economy etc. Rural tourism concerns with the same type of activities but it is mainly associated with the tourist activities in the rural areas. Rural tourism is possible only when there is distinctiveness in the rural areas; it means the *rurality* that allows tourists to get in the everyday life and culture of the rural residents. The mainstream of the population in Nepal lives in the villages and a tourist has a possibility to stay in one of those. Tourists can not only to watch sidewise the rural life, but also to participate directly in it. Money, spent by tourists goes straight to the rural population. Natural and artificial geography of rural landscape stimulate the potential for rural

tourism. Fredrick (1993) explicates historical interests, mountains and other places of natural beauty, pleasant environment and clean air as significant characteristics of rural areas. While, Nilsson (2002) describes the countryside as an incarnation of calm and reflection, with a trait of backwardness and a lifestyle, different from an urban perspective that an outcome from an environment once dominated by peasants in an old idealized picture of the farmer that has not totally disappeared. Frochot (2005) argues that rural space is an ideal place that can provide alternative to stressful urban rhythms. This allows the visitors to enjoy peacefulness, simplicity and authenticity. Irvine and Anderson (2007) interpret the tourism in rural areas, comprises with natural beauty, quaintness, otherness, non-industrialization, distance and an absence of core activities that create value in the consumer's eye. Cánoves et al. (2004) note that the tourism development in rural areas is determined by different elements such as naturophilia, rural roots, a positive image of the rural environment, quality and authenticity, increased mobility and access, cultural changes in post modern society, changes in tourist market, and tourist experience . Further, they state that rural tourism is an image or a set of images constructed by the tourists and sellers throughout the history, geography and culture of the territory. Unlike other industries tourism in rural areas reconceptualise the natural and human geographical characteristics such as natural landscapes, history, ethnography, anthropology and demography (Garrod et al., 2006). This induces countryside capitalization rather than external investment on facility development.

With the development of technology, transport and communication system, expansion of international tourism in many remote parts of the country,

rural tourism has become one of most potential industries in Nepal. Tourism in Nepal has long been identified with adventure, mountaineering and trekking in particular. However, the people in local areas have not much benefited from this tourism and this is not enough to help reduce high poverty rate. Nepal has varied high prospects for rural tourism be it nature based, farm based or culture-based. It is only the rural tourism that can bring change and more differences in the life of the majority of the rural poor.

Although, the contribution of rural tourism for the development of national economy is significantly vital, people of rural Nepal have yet not been able to take adequate benefits from rural tourism. Besides, tourists used to be worried about political and social disturbances. International disturbances also affect tourism Industry severely (Bantawa, 1997). In fact, there exists a situation of core-periphery dependency in which the centre controls to a very considerable extent the distribution of tourism around Nepal, accumulating most of the income generated, organizing much of the travel activity in prepaid packages, and supplying many of the needs from the centre so that benefits flowing out to rural areas and towns are limited (SNV, 2003). Very little benefits from tourism trickle down to remote hill and mountain. Despite the potentialities, limited transport assesses, poor infrastructure and lack of appropriate marketing strategies, are the major impediment to rural tourism. Unless the local residents are not aware of their resource and capacity, desire goal of rural tourism cannot be achieved. There ought to be clear comprehension of the problems and prospects of rural tourism with adequate research studies so that to recommend policy guidelines to the planners. This is possible through a micro study of problems of rural tourism. Pedestal on

this, the key objective of this paper is to uncover the viability and challenges of rural tourism in Chitre Village Development Committee of Panchase region in western Nepal.

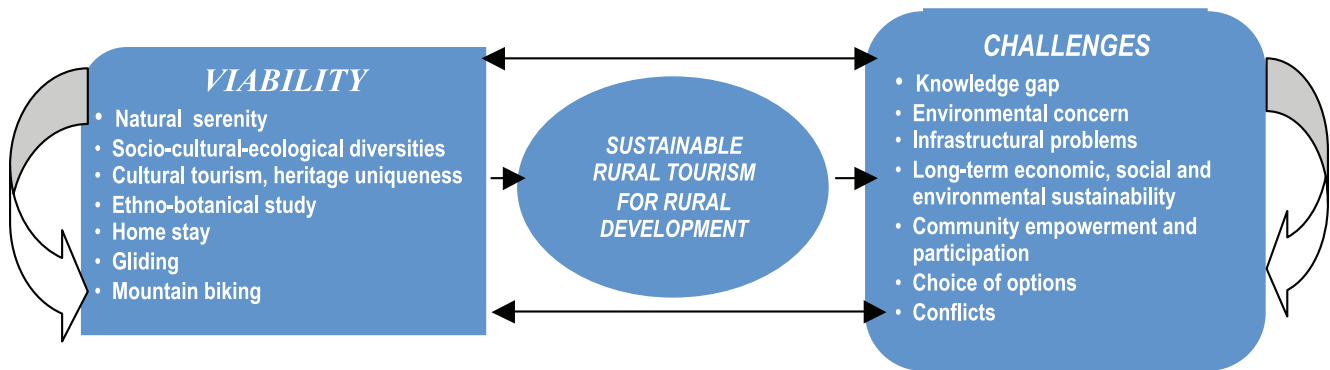
### **Methodology and Conceptual Model**

The study site is Panchase region of *Chitre* Village Development Committee (VDC) of Parbat district of western Nepal. Chitre VDC of Parbat district of western Nepal is a core part of the Panchase region, where the rural tourism started since the last few years ago as an integral part of rural development program for the alleviation of poverty in rural Nepal. Although rural tourism is comparatively new and it is just getting started in Panchase region, it is an innovative area for research study. Panchase is not only viable, environmentally sustainable but it also provides countless benefits to the rural communities in that region. The region is a trekking route from Pokhara to Annapurna and Dhaulagiri mountain region. Panchase development region covers 15 VDCs including Chitre Village Development Committee (VDC) of Parbat district. Of the 15 VDCs, Chitre VDC has been chosen as the study site. Pedestal on probability sampling, of the total 435 households (CBS, 2011) of Chitre VDC, 76 households (17.47% of total households) were selected randomly for the study. The unit of analysis was at households' level. This VDC was chosen for study because it is an emerging rural tourism destination and has naturally and culturally gorgeous potentialities of rural tourism but backward in development owing to the sluggish utilization of rural tourism opportunities. The instruments of primary data collection were Questionnaire, Direct Observation, Interview and Focus Group Discussion. The focus group discussion was made with concerned people--tourism stakeholders, community members, farmers, women and people

from *Dalit* community. Six key informants viz. school teachers, local leaders and tourists from various destination of the world were chosen. The data collection task was accomplished during August 3-16, 2015.

Drawing on the viability and challenges of rural tourism, the conceptual model of the study converses on diverse potentialities of rural tourism embedded with the challenges it is confronting with for a sustainable rural tourism development meant for an enduring rural development.

**Figure 1: Conceptual model of the study**



Jenkins and Parrot (1997) state ( as cited in Mitchell and Hall, 2005) some major issues, such as lack of understanding and knowledge on demand factors, incapability of product presentation, and constraints in marketing, cooperation and networking in rural tourism development. McClinchey & Carmichael (2010) also have documented the issues of tourism development in rural areas. While, Simpson (2008) identifies the problems that are generated within a community to threaten its stability and harmony in addition to other factors that menace socio-cultural, environmental and economic sustainability. Rural tourism is envisaged for sustainable development in rural areas with different viabilities such as natural serenity, panoramic natural beauty, mountain biking,

gliding, bizarre local customs and traditions, religions, heritage uniqueness and socio-cultural-ecological diversities. However, challenges and issues are also prevalent in materializing rural tourism through existing conventional tourism organizations such as security concern, environmental concern, infrastructural problems, long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability, community empowerment and participation, choice of options and conflicts. The major issues and challenges in developing tourism in rural areas are pedestal on two factors. One is inherent rural characteristics and the other

one is inception and infrastructural/sustainability problems. Components of rural settings such as social, economic, geographic and community engender the intrinsic challenges. Stoian and Stoicea (2011) refer to some key challenges: First, preserve and conserve resources through setting limits on their usage. Second, develop a balanced tourism activity, both temporally and spatially. Third, equitable sharing of local revenue derived from tourism. And fourth, convince local tourism actors on the economic viability to invest in rural tourism.

## Results

The history of the development of tourism in Nepal can be divided into three phases--tourism prior to 1950, tourism subsequent to 1950 and the tourism

after 1990. There was no institutional and formal development of tourism before 1950s. But there were different practices of tourism even before 1950s. The ancient history of Nepal is the history of Kathmandu valley and the ancient history of tourism is also related to the Kathmandu valley. During the Licchavi period, most of the foreigners visited Nepal as pilgrims. In Malla Regime there was a significant development in art and culture, and the rulers of Nepal were interested in welcoming travelers who entered into the kingdom of Nepal as pilgrims. But, after the unification of Nepal in 1768, the rulers of Nepal did not make any attempt to build up tourism in Nepal. The policy of the government of that time was not to let tourists enter into Nepal, except in some special cases. European Capuchin missionaries staying in Kathmandu valley were expelled from Kathmandu by Shah Kings. In the Rana regime of 104 years the policy of the government was not favorable for tourism development. Only privileged persons viz. diplomats, high profile business persons, travelers etc were allowed to visit Nepal either for political purposes or the religious purposes. Only during the great Hindu festival of *Shivaratri*, permission was given to Indian pilgrims to visit Pashupatinath temple as pilgrims. The restrictions on tourists to enter Nepal during the Rana regime of 104 years adversely affected tourism in Nepal. Consequently, there was a dearth of foreign exchange from tourism for the development of infrastructure in the country.

The second stage of Tourism started after 1951 especially after the political change of 1951. Nepal opened its access for foreigners. It was the conquest of Mt. Everest on May 1953 by Tensing Norgay Sherpa and Sir Edmund Hillary that attracted the world towards Nepal. Different

countries established diplomatic ties with Nepal. The Tourism of 1950 is called Diplomatic Tourism where diplomats spread the information about Nepal. Swiss geologist Tony Hagen and Edmund Hillary from New Zealand were among the most significant tourism promoters of Nepal. A new era started in 1957 when *Nepal Tourism Development Board* was established. The tourism of 1960 is called Hippie Tourism because a lot of American hippies came to Nepal as tourists to go into hiding to avoid compulsory conscription in U.S. military (Nepal Tourism Master Plan Moctta 2007). In 1972, *Nepal Tourism Master Plan* was drafted with technical assistance from the government of Federal Republic of Germany. Since then, tourism started to be considered as an industry and different efforts were made for its development. As a result, there was a 41 fold increase in tourists visiting Nepal. The 1970 decade is also called as Trekking and wildlife Tourism decade. Similarly 1980 is called Cultural Tourism decade (Satyal, 2000).

The third stage of Tourism started after the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 which paved the way for the emergence of *rural tourism*. Liberalized tourism policy was promulgated in 1995 that focused on the more vibrant role of private sector, local stakeholders and recognized the importance of village based rural tourism. The establishment of Nepal tourism board and civil aviation authority of Nepal in 1999 commensurate with the policy measures envisioned for the overall development of tourism which gave emphasis to tourism market development such as trekking, ecotourism, adventure tourism and rural tourism which is based on community participation in tourism development process. Rural tourism development process and promotion efforts came

forward increasingly in Visit Nepal Year 1998. This program was one especial program towards promoting of the international and domestic tourism. This initiative was supportive for tourism development in rural areas. This attempt made aware of tourism and impacts among the people living in village communities (VNY,1998). The government identified the village tourism concept as not only most effective tool for poverty alleviation across the country but also as a means for intensive and integrative rural development.

Banskota (1998) cited few rural tourism spots viz. Chitre, Ghalegaun, Gandruk and some other places of Gorkha district. Community based rural tourism program emerged across Nepal especially in and around national parks and rivers. As poverty is greater and more pervasive in rural areas, while compared to urban areas, and it is varied across regions, money incurred through rural tourism may be beneficial to fortify rural people's economic status. SNV (2003) has stated that rural tourism provides significant potential to use nature-based tourism as a low-cost, eco-friendly alternative to support socio-economic growth and fight poverty. Some of the objectives of rural tourism are to achieve maximum human welfare and happiness through sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas, to reduce growing poverty, inequality and regional imbalance, to generate employment and income for the villagers, to establish and sustain cottage and small scale industries etc. Embedded with rural tourism, ecotourism has been termed as nature tourism, considered as one of the important parts of rural tourism which is both need based and right based concept. More particularly it is need based approach because rural area needs to have more jobs created and revenue to be generated.

## **Panchase Region as a Rural Tourism Site**

The Panchase area adjoins three districts Kaski, Parbat and Syangja in Western Development Region of Nepal. It has been included in the Master Plan on village tourism. According to Panchase Tourism Master Plan (2004), rural tourism in Panchase region is one of the most important strategies for poverty reduction. The area includes 15 VDCs of the three districts of the western Development region. Panchase, a place not far from Pokhara epitomizes natural beauty combined with cultural heritage. The place is famous for its biodiversity, historical and religious heritage and sight-seeing. This region is rich in biodiversity. There is large forest cover including community forests managed by local communities and also the national forest. According to IUCN/UNDP (2013) there are 12 different kinds of trees, 589 species of flowers, 150 different species of herbs, 56 species of wild mushrooms and 98 species of ferns in this region. The local people consider the Forest and the mountain peak a sacred landscape and it has special religious significance for both Hindus and Buddhists.

As a part of Panchase Tourism Master Plan, the study site Chitre Village Development Committee (VDC) is located in Parbat district. The total population of Parbat district is 146,590. The total population of male is 65,301 and female population is 81,289. Chitre VDC is nestled in the southwest foothill of Panchase highland ridge located at average 1500 to 1700 meters height. The total number of households in Chitre is 435 with a total population of 1,740. Male population is 767 and female population is 973 (National Population and Housing Census 2011, CBS). The VDC is located on the tri-junction of Kaski, Syangja and Parbat districts. Villages nestled around the ridge

of Chitre VDC include Ramja Deurali, Arthar, Tilahar of Parbat district, Salyan, Bhadaure Tamagi of Kaski and Arukharka, Bengefadake VDCs of Syangja district.

Chitre is famous for its biodiversity, historical and religious heritage and sight-seeing. Hence, it is developing into a rural tourism destination. Locals have started providing *home-stay* services to tourists and tourism activities are increasing. The period after 1990's political change witnessed fast development of transportation and migration to Pokhara boosted by the rise in the economic level of the people owing to foreign army jobs. Other factors contributing the migration are foreign employment and the policy of United Kingdom on retirement of British Gurkhas. Lately, ex-Indian armies, elderly people, and economically weak Brahmins, and Dalits were found residing in the village. Most of the people have either house or relatives living in Pokhara. The population of the village is expected to decrease more in the coming years because foreign employment and remittance is slowly increasing the quality of life of the people resulting in fast migration to the urban areas for the quality education to their children and health services for the elderly people.

### **Viability of Rural Tourism Activities and Locations in Chitre VDC**

Field observation, key informants interviews as well as Focus Group Discussions with local people facilitated in exploring the viability of rural tourism activities in Chitre area. Cultural trekking, mountain bike riding, hiking of rocks, ethno-botany study, watching birds, gliding, fair celebration etc are the popular rural tourism viable activities at different locations and sites of Chitre village.

**Table 1: Viability of tourism activities and locations in Chitre**

SN	Name	Areas
1	Cultural Trekking-	Lamsalthar, Pakhagaun, Majgaun, Nepane
2	Mountain Biking-	Along the new track roads through jungle and village
3	Hiking-	Tilahar, Chaurelthar, Patachautarae, Barahathan
4	Ethno-botanical Study-	Highland Odare, Parkedanda
5	Bird Watching-	Lake/jungle
7	Gliding-	Chuli, Kusiley, Bhumethan
8	Fairs celebration-	Bala Chaturdasi mela, Tote Parba (Shrawnan/Chaitra) in Gurung settlements, local sports competition, Patachautara, Devi Mela in Dashain, Barahapuja (Shrawan), Panchabali mela closer to VDC office
9	Home Stay/ Camping-	Pakhagaun, Majhgauni, Patachautara, / Barahathan Napregaun

*Source: Field survey, 2015*

Respondents reported that tourists frequently pass through their village and some of them contribute pen, copy to the village children. Researcher observed the village children bidding *namaste* to every passer by through the village. Being nestled with Panchase highland ridge and lying very close to Pokhara and Kusma Annapurna area, the viabilities of different sites is escalating for rural tourism development. The area is enriched with unblemished culture and architecture. Moreover, the area has the finest climate and rich biodiversity. Most of the foreign tourists coming to Chitre are from Europe and United States of America. Even internal tourists visit this region. Local respondents claimed that there are high prospects to earn good



amount from the tourists compared to other businesses. They also claimed that the number of tourist has increased after the opening of trail road to Chitre. Most of the tourists travel through the classical route to Panchase Hill- Panchase Tal to Chitre. Basic infrastructural development in the area has been supported by Panchase tourism development committee.

### Occupational Status of the Sampled Household Heads

Preponderance of the studied household are engaged in agriculture (63.15%), very fewer number of people are engaged in various business (11.84%), whereas laborers, job holders and students numbers are 7.89%, 14.47% and 2.63% respectively.

**Table 2: Occupational status of household Heads**

S. N.	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Students	2	2.63
2	Labour	6	7.89
3	Agriculture	48	63.15
4	Business (inc. tourism)	9	11.84
5	Job (government)	11	14.47
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>100.00</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2015*

Among the people engaged in business only few people manage small scale home-stay and provide firewood, cold drinks and edible items for camping tourist occasionally. Local people have done late and too little to promote this village as an exceptional tourist destination despite high potentialities of rural tourism in the region. Nevertheless, there prevail high prospects of rural tourism business in this rurally located village.

### Ethnic/Caste Diversities and Involvement in Rural Tourism

Majority of the advantaged (45%) people from Gurung and Brahmin community who are more or less involved with rural tourism business have more emphasized on tourism development, investment on education and awareness of conservation of local resources. Relatively advantaged group (12%) falls on the lower middle class families and has no association with tourism business. They have been adopting agriculture, animal husbandry and small scale business, ex- army and jobs in government school.

The majority disadvantage groups (43%) are the *Dalits*. For them rural tourism is a secluded dream. They are the sufferers of caste based discriminations also. Nowadays, owing to foreign migration as laborers they maintain their expenditure through remittances from India, Malaysia and Gulf countries. Table 3 illustrates the scenario more explicitly.

**Table 3: Population by ethnic/caste diversities and involvement in Rural Tourism**

S.N.	Ethnicities	Frequency	Percentage
1	Advantage group	34	45
2	Relatively advantage group	9	12
3	Disadvantaged group	33	43
<b>Total</b>		<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2015*

Tourism in rural areas is a highly competitive business across the world and depends on motivating factors of tourism. Rimmington and

Kozar (2000) argue that tourists want the level of satisfaction to the extent of their expenditure. Their experiences directly or indirectly motivate to revisit and encourages new visitors to visits the destination for to get satisfaction from cultural and environmental diversities, village life, local food and local handicrafts. However, in Chitre VDC disadvantage group people are not getting benefits of tourism. They are the victims of different kinds of social, cultural and economic impediments. Orthodox customs are also the major problem in rural areas. Here majority populace are preoccupied with agriculture but it is an irony that they have food deficiency thus agro tourism can bring some rays of hope in the lives of the rural people by diverting the tourists to those areas where there is range of agricultural activities, services and amenities provided by the farmers and rural people in order to generate extra income for their business. Visitors have the opportunity to work in the fields alongside real farmers and wade knee-deep in the rivers and rivulets. Agro-tourism may become the specific rural tourism focusing on agricultural diversities. Variety of products like mushroom, honey, different organic farming practices for vegetables production, medical plant cultivation, agriculture related fairs and festivals, horse riding, bird watching, visiting different nurseries, herbal farming, botanical garden, plugging with pair of bullock, *Ropai Jatra*, *Hatt bazaars*, if publicized, may potentially attract both internal and international visitors in this region.

### **Educational Status of the sampled Household Heads**

There is vital nexus between education and tourism development. Of the 76 households selected for the study, majority of the household heads (38 %) are literate-that is they can read and write. Literate people have sound knowledge on the tourism in

comparison to the illiterate people. Very modest percentage (10%) of the population has got higher education.

**Table 4: Educational level of household heads**

S.N.	Education level	Frequency	Percentage
1	Illiterate	15	19
2	Literate	29	38
3	SLC	23	30
4	Higher	10	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source: Field survey, 2015*

Major bulks (19%) of household heads are illiterate-- especially the old people, women and *Dalits*. Owing to this the rural tourism is facing the problem of the lack of management skills among the people involved in tourism business. Most of the people have little knowledge or experience on rural tourism. This problem gets manifold amplified in remote places where most of the tourism businesses are handled by less educated.

### **Roles of Agencies in Rural Tourism Development**

From the responses collected from sampled respondents, it is construed that local agencies are playing a key role to develop rural tourism in Chitre region. Of all, 46 percent of respondents claimed of the active role of local agencies in promoting rural tourism development efforts. Likewise, 28 percent people regards government's role responsible for tourism development but they claimed that so far the role played by government is not adequate for rural tourism development.

**Table 5: Agencies in rural tourism development**

S.N.	Role	Frequency	Percentage
1	Government	21	28
2	Local agencies	35	46
3	I/NGOs	5	7
4	Above all	15	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2015

It was alleged that government and other stakeholders such as Panchase Tourism Master Plan are not taking adequate interests in constructing sufficient air or road transport, local rough road, rugged hills and trails which are the main obstructions for the development of rural tourism in this region. Local bodies like Village Development Committee (VDC) and District Development Committee (DDC) also have to play active role to facilitate the community with a mechanism for constant monitoring of the impact of sustainable tourism.

### Major Tourist Attractions of the Region

Chitre village is eye-catching serene site for rural tourism. Beautiful natural landscapes, greeneries, local cultures etc are the major attractions. 46 percentages of respondents regards natural beauties, cultural diversities and etiquettes as the major sources of magnetism for rural tourism in their village. Likewise, ecotourism and religious tourism was regarded as the major tourist attractions by 34 percent of respondents.

**Table 6: Tourist attractions of the region**

SN.	Role	Frequency	Percentage
1	Peaceful tranquil environment	15	20
2	Natural beauty and cultural diversities	35	46
3	Eco-tourism / religious tourism	26	34
	<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field survey, 2015

However, the respondents claimed that rural tourism brings both positive and negative impact. They also argued that the pressure on the natural resource base is very high in rural area. Many species of flora and fauna may be threatened and disturbed in their habitat. There is the threat of cultural pollution also—local cultures may be infected by the deformities of foreign cultures introduced by tourists. The respondents also argued that those who are directly involved with obtaining the benefits of rural tourism should take serious steps to minimize the environmental damages.

### Discussions

The characteristics and stricture that affect the tourist and host communities attitude was determined in order to come across the mechanism via which a person behaves before, during and after the trip that helped in comprehending the social dimensions of development of rural tourism. The role of tourism in the social development of the host communities and the social impacts of tourism development are the vital issues for the discipline of *Sociology of Leisure Tourism*. Respondents (85%) agreed that rural tourism facilitate the villagers better appreciate their community. Likewise, 60 percent respondents concur that tourism development would increase protection of natural areas; whereas 40 percent diverged. All total (100%) sampled respondents agreed that environmentally destructive activities should be discouraged and existing rules of managing the resources in the area are inadequate. Similarly, 30 percent of the respondents testified that decisions about how much and what kind of tourism they ought to be best left to the local residents. Cent percent of respondents claimed that the major obstruction to rural tourism is the lack of adequate knowledge on tourism business, lack of

information on tourism related infrastructure and geographical barriers. Other factors such as low participation of women and *Dalits*, low economic return in comparison to foreign employment and language barriers are also crucial. Nevertheless, respondents are contented to see and chat with foreign tourists.

### **Challenges of Rural Tourism in Chitre**

The responses of the sampled household heads helped in figuring out challenges related to rural tourism development in Chitre. The challenges construed are as follow.

#### **a) Lack of local capacity to manage rural tourism**

It was deduced that there is the dearth of local capacity and resources to manage rural tourism in Chitre. Locals argued that capacity building trainings like language and communication skills, rural tourism management and hospitality trainings are lacking in rural tourism development efforts in Chitre. Currently, there is the stark lack of trained human resources on rural tourism in the village.

#### **b) Out migration**

Field observation helped in deducing that about 55 percent of households in Chitre are empty due to abroad migration for foreign jobs, out migration to Pokhara, Kathmandu and Chitwan. This village is not far from Pokhara and Kusma hence it is aggravating the local people to migrate to Pokhara for a better life. This trend is creating challenge in rural tourism development.

#### **c) Inappropriate institutional modality development**

There is no clear-cut institutional framework at micro and meso level for the management of rural

tourism in Chitre. Involvement of stakeholders of tourism and preparation of institutional framework for the sustainable rural development is a great challenge as tourism development cannot go forward without the combine effort of government, private sector, community and non-government organizations.

#### **d) Conservation of nature and environment degradation**

The natural stocks of the area are diminishing ghastly due to the construction of motor road. Haphazard road construction is not only degrading the environment but it is also increasing the risks of landslide and flooding in the area. Moreover, when there is road access, illegal cutting and commercialization of timber and forest product will automatically increase. Likewise, when there will be the increase in number of tourists visiting the region, flora and fauna will dwindle as the number of home-stay houses might increase to meet the demand of accommodation for tourists. There may be hazards related to cultural pollution due to tourist overflow. Waste management may be a major problem. In broad-spectrum nature conservation and environmental degradation may be a major threat in near future.

#### **e) Development of tourism infrastructure**

The core negative factor seen in tourism development in Chitre is the problem related to rural tourism infrastructure. The cost of running rural tourism in such places is considerably high which further deteriorates the prospects of rural tourism development. The area needs further tourism infrastructure like nice viewpoints, renovation of shrines and temples, tourist shelters and rest houses on the way to Panchase highland ridge, waste management system, road marking and drainage (during rainy season). Tourism

resource map of village is necessary for further tourism development of the area. As the village is close to Annapurna Conservation area, it must have the facility equivalent to the facilities available in Annapurna area, because it will certainly have to compete with Annapurna conservation area for tourists. The tourist overflow from the Annapurna area will certainly boost tourists haul in Chitre because Annapurna area is always over crowded in tourism season. Hence, Chitre should be developed as an alternative area of Annapurna region.

#### f) **Sharing risks and benefits from tourism**

The respondents squabbled that the relevance of rural tourism management will only be meaningful if the benefits of the tourism are accessible to the poorest people and women. It will be meaningful only if tourism benefits reach to the hands of poor Dalits. To share benefits, they should be involved in tourism management as these people possess the skills of carpentry, local art and skills of handicrafts that can be used for rural tourism. They can prepare souvenirs such as baskets, handmade gloves, knife, *Khukuri*, wood carving arts for the tourists. The programs such as vegetable farming, bee keeping, and goat rearing can increase their household income. The stakeholders should be also able to bear the risks of rural tourism which may transpire in the form of natural degradation, cultural pollution and duplicity.

#### g) **Socio-cultural and gender issues**

It was deduced from field observation that women's status in Gurung community was relatively higher than in the households of Brahmin, Chhetri and Dalit communities. The women from Gurung community were frontward and leading the community through *Ama Samuha* (Mothers group). They are involved with cultural

performance in the village. Their *Ama Samuha* has physical assets like cooking utensils, furniture as table chair, blankets etc that are used in the community functions like *puja* and other communal rites. When an organized group of tourists reaches Chitre, the womenfolk descend down the village and welcome tourist with garlands, *tika*, and traditional Gurung musical bands. While music and dances are performed and traditional farewell songs are also sung when guests depart. Guests are accommodated into different households having the facility of home-stay. Guests are presented to different cultural programs such as *Dohari* song, *Ghantu* dance and *Krishna Charitra* dance.

Owing to liberal gender norms in Gurung community, Gurung women were quite forward and speak confidently like their male counterparts, but the women from Brahmin, Chhetri and Dalit communities are diffident in comparison to their male counterparts and were shy while talking to the outsiders. Hence it has not been always easy in practice to secure Brahmin, Chhetri and Dalit women's participation in rural tourism because of social, cultural, economic and many other gender norms. Chitre has a *patriarchal* society based on Hindu ideologies and practices that exert a strong degree of control over all aspects of women's lives, including economic, social, emotional and religious. In addition to these regional cultural influences, the gendered aspects of global paradigms of modernism and professionalism are also evident here that is influencing decision making, reinforcing the dominant gender ideologies of the region. The identity and status of women is largely defined by a patriarchal system, whereby law, religion, land rights and social customs are controlled *for and by* men. As majority Brahmin and Chhetri people's sentiments are based on dominant Hindu system,

women's identity is formed through marriage ties and adherence to duty and obedience are held as high virtues. Following the organizing principles of the superiority of men, woman is ranked according to her relationship with men and given lower status because of her inferior ritual purity and this has been maneuvering women's involvement in rural tourism. Religion, caste/ethnicity, culture, law, tradition, history and social attitudes are in addition creating severe limits on women's participation. Hence, women empowerment of the non Gurung communities is one of the major barriers to rural tourism development in Chitre. Nevertheless, women can play vital role in tourism management because most of the male members do not live in the village and overall cooking and hospitality management comes in the hand of women.

### **Finale**

Pedestal on *Sociology of leisure* of how the humans organize their free time including a broad range of activities, such as tourism, rural tourism can be a means for development in rural areas which are already rich in natural and cultural resources. It can help share natural and cultural heritage for both tourists and local inhabitants. Linkages between rural areas and urban areas are crucial to create more possibilities for distribution of the benefits of rural tourism. Contribution of tourism for the development of national economy is significantly high but people of rural areas of Nepal have yet not been able to generate much benefit from it. Education has unfathomable links with rural tourism development. Deficiency of knowledge on rural tourism has resulted in the failure to properly utilize the available resources. Rural people have little knowledge or experience on rural tourism. Despite this, Chitre has a great potentiality for tourism development which is

in public life. These factors have both shaped culture's world view and governed individual self-image of women, resulting in a situation under which a trifling number of women are involved in active decision-making at home and in the matters of tourism. Because of women's socialization at home, lack of control over productive resource and comparatively lower levels of literacy, here women have related to the rural tourism management process largely through the mediation of men.

expected to be supplementary income to the people who depend on agriculture and petty business for livelihood. It can be the best strategy to tackle poverty. It has the potentiality to impede the speedy process of youth's migration abroad for jobs. Additionally, this can bring awareness in the value of cultural and natural resources of the area as well as improvement in the basic infrastructure of the region. This study results substantiate that without the conservation of natural resources, there are no possibilities to promote rural tourism in the countryside. Hence, precise policies should be drafted to conserve the religious, ecological and cultural places of rural areas. Efforts should be made for the development of minor forest products such as aromatic and medicinal herbs, ferns, orchids that are in high demand. Nevertheless, in many cases communities are at a disadvantage in that they lack the skills, experience and knowledge of tourism processes necessary to play an active role in managing the available natural resources. It would be useful for future researches to reveal examples of collaborative arrangements initiated to overcome these disadvantages. Particularly pertinent would be examples of arrangements that secure a strong role for communities in actually managing responsible tourism to their areas rather than merely playing the role of beneficiaries.

Focus ought to be made on the tourism related

infrastructure (viewpoints, Gurung cultural house, route marking, rest houses, community lodge, home stay etc) in the region. The households themselves should create a group for organic farming, agro tourism, home stays, resorts or the production of high value cash crops, so that more employment is created in one hand that will discourage the charm of foreign job as well the protection of environment that will make feasible rural tourism. For this government and non-government organizations, private sector, local bodies and indigenous institutions should toil collectively. A responsible rural tourism approach calls for active participation by locals (inc. women and disadvantaged groups), ensuring that communities are empowered through knowledge of their choices and options regarding

management of natural and cultural resources in tourism development. They can then decide what options to pursue and how they wish to pursue them. Only when people take the initiative to transform systems themselves (for which they need psychological empowerment) and ascertain more equitable structures (a sign of social and political empowerment), only then active participation will occur. But it is imperative to realize that the inclusion of local communities as more vibrant participants in rural tourism development will in all probability result in increasing conflicts between them and other stakeholders, including the urban tourism, NGOs, government at local and national levels. Finding effective ways of resolving such conflicts will be critical to the long-term success of such ventures.

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