

PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN PASHUPAT-KSHETRA

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Abstract

Pilgrimage tourism is a holistic phenomenon which provides religious and secular foundations for the development of tourism sites. This paper aims to analyse the development of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupat-Kshetra, a holiest place of Nepal situated in the Kathmandu valley. Pashupat-Kshetra is the place of Lord Shiva and an important pilgrimage site especially for the Saivism community. Shaivism is considered as the most ancient religion of Aryans and Hindus. Lord Shiva is known as the owner of the open field and the husband of the animal or Pashupat. Overtime, Pashupat became special name of Pashupati as a symbolic name of Lord Shiva. This paper has used mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches. Relevant information were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected from field survey through counting of tourist flow, observation, tourist interactions and key informant survey. Secondary data were collected from published and unpublished documents including Shivapuran and e-resources. The findings show that thousands of pilgrims come to visit Pashupat-Kshetra from different countries. They not only visit for Shiva Lingadarsan at different fairs and festivals, but also visit it other temples around the Pashupat-Kshetra. They also observe idols of gods and goddesses, art and architecture, festivals, regular and occasional worship, Pradakshina etc. as well to study scriptures of Eastern philosophy. However, pilgrims face a lot of problems due to lack of different types of service facilities that support to tourism carrying capacity.

Keywords: *Pilgrimage tourism, fairs and festivals, Pashupat-Kshetra, Shiva Linga, holy place*

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Introduction

Tourism is widely recognized as the world's largest industry. The United Nations World Tourism Organization ([UNWTO], 2020) defined as travel for recreational, leisure, or business purposes. People travel for different motives, such as adventure, business, cultural, cruise, leisure, medical, religious, pilgrimage and sports. Pilgrimage was the first tourism mobility to come into existence thousands of years ago. It is a holistic phenomenon with religious and secular foundations that encompasses sites that can emerge from both religious and secular contexts (Collins-Kreiner, 2020; Abdullaev & Gulyamova, 2021). Pilgrimage tourism is essentially the process of visiting pilgrimage sites or search of moral or spiritual significance in holy places. It is a journey undertaken for a religious motive as well as for peace, spiritual and mental relief (Vijaya, 2016; Hole, Khedkar & Pawar, 2019). Stoddard (1994) defines pilgrimage as a journey to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion. It includes movement, which is expressed as a journey in the first, motivation, which must be religious in the second and destination, which considered as a sacred place in the last (pp. 17-36). Although some pilgrims have wandered continuously with no fixed destination, pilgrims more commonly seek a specific place that has been sanctified by association with a divinity or other holy personage (Turner & Turner, 1978).

Pilgrimage is a concept that encompasses as part of market before the 1990s. Its roots, however, spread back to concepts and theories developed primarily by sociologists and anthropologists in the tourism literature of the 1970s and the 1980s. Their focused was based on the visitor experience and the psychosocial dynamics that drive different kinds of tourism, including pilgrimage (Cohen, 1998; Jackson & Hudman, 1995; Mac Cannell, 1973; Turner & Turner, 1978). Over time, the definition of pilgrimage has come to accommodate both traditional religious and modern secular journeys, as researchers began to discuss the modern ideas of pilgrimage in the context of spiritual rather than religious motivations and actions. Tourists are seeking a variety of experiences, including enlightenment, knowledge, improved spiritual and physical well-being and challenge (Rinschede, 1992; Barber 1993; Collins-Kreiner, 2020; Abdullaev & Gulyamova, 2021).

Pilgrimage is also called *tirthayatra* in Hindu tradition. It would involve a journey around the four most sacred sites in India and Nepal (*Chardhamas*), covering the auspicious clockwise direction. However, it has awarded different meanings depending on the time and space. It is derived from Sanskrit texts such as *Skanda Puranaas* a typology of *tirthayatra* (Bharati 1963; Saraswati 1983). Pilgrims usually held that *yatra* or *tirthatan* was the journey, *yatri* or *tirthayatri* the travelling pilgrim and *tirthayatra* indicates the whole processes of pilgrimage (Morinis, 1984). Consequently, a *tirtha* is a channel to a

supernatural agent or domain; it may be at a river or lake or some other place associated with water, or it may consist of a sacred mountain, cave or temple or even internally as a psycho physical point, chakra, in the body. Pilgrimages marked particular phases of the life cycle of the individual and often occur at points in the year identified as auspicious by astrological calculations (Rinschede, 1992; Barber 1993; Digance, 2006; Hole, Khedkar & Pawar, 2019; Rinschede, 1992; Barber 1993).

Apart from involving movement across physical and cultural landscapes toward a sacred goal, pilgrimages frequently involve ritual movements at the site itself. Pilgrimage sites tend to have a material focus, even though the nature of that focus varies according to the assumptions of the religion. Numerous factors determine the location of sacred sites. Shrines memorialize some great miracle or divine appearance from the past but may also appropriate the places that are holy to a rival faith. Therefore, pilgrimage centers are frequently situated in striking and remote geographical areas (Vukonic, 2002; Shackley, 2001; Simone-Charteris & Boyd, 2010; Olsen, 2012; Tobón & Tobón, 2013; Egresi et al., 2014; Raj & Griffin, 2015; Hole, Khedkar & Pawar, 2019).

In Hinduism, ritual bathing is often taken place at the confluences of rivers, which are imbued with sacred meaning. The Ganges is regarded as the holiest Hindu river because it is believed to issue from the very locks of Shiva's hair. The pilgrim tourism comprised by a religious motivation. However, only religious motives are not associated with pilgrims sites but also includes a wider phenomenon of cultural, traditional, spiritual, and landscape patterns to decide set of trips (Abbate & Nuovo, 2013; Drule et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2013; Kaewumpai, 2018; Kim & Kim, 2018; Olsen, 2013; Terzidou et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2016).

The holy places of pilgrimage attract visitors from widely dispersed cultural backgrounds and geographic locations, often enabling them to commemorate the origins of their particular faith, like Lord Shiva at Pashupatinath-Keshtra. Among the many names of *Rudra* or *Shiva*, Pashupati is the main name of *Shiva*. He was considered as the protector of mankind, plants, and animals from various diseases, and by his actions he was known as *Pashupat* or Pashupati (Koirala, 1994, p. 16). It is known as a holy place as well as sanctuary place for pilgrimage tourism of Hindus. However, the existing literatures have not covered a spatial aspect of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupatinath temple or Pashupat-Kshetra. It is mainly due to the significance of pilgrimage tourism has been changing over the times. In this context, this paper attempts to seek unrevealed questions what are the motivational factors that supports to the development of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupatinath-Kshetraat during various fairs and festivals. The focus is also intended to cover facilities in relation to pilgrimage carrying capacity.

Method and Materials

Data Collection Methods and Tools

This paper is based on both Primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data were collected from field observation, counting of visitors' flow using survey sheets, available service facilities using checklist and pilgrims' perception through questionnaires. Focus group discussions and key informants survey methods were also applied to collect ancillary data. Secondary data were obtained reviewing published and unpublished documents including books, *Shiva Puran*, reports and electronic materials through the search of internet websites. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches have used for the data generation, compilation and analysis. A Likert scale is a close-ended, forced-choice scale used to measure pilgrims' perceptions and it was ranges from 1 to 4. For example, a scale might have four choices that start at one end with very good and end at the other with poor with less extreme choices in the middle two points (good and fair).

Study Area

This study area lies around the Pashupati temple of Bagmati Province of Nepal. This area is located on the banks of the Bagmati River in the eastern part of Kathmandu, in the capital city of Nepal and known as one of the World Heritage sites. It covers about 281 hectares area. The Pashupat-Kshetra comprises hundreds of temples (near about 235). It represents a kaleidoscope of several idols of gods and goddesses, their art, and architecture, festivals, regular and occasional worship, *Pradakshina* etc. Along with many religious shrines, there are also several guest houses, inns, other types of service facilities that support to accommodation for pilgrimages over centuries. The architecture design of the Lord Pasupatinath temple is looking just like a double-roofed pagoda style with gold gilt brass-quoted. Among the many names of *Rudra* or *Shiva*, Pashupati is the main name of *Shiva* (Koirala, 1994, p. 16).

Result and Discussion

Development of Pilgrimage Tourism in Pashupat-Kshetra

Pashupat-Kshetra is a place of pilgrimage for Hindus. It seems that all Hindus have been traveling to this area since ancient times for religious purposes. This place is the center of various temples, shrines and holy places that are scattered around the river Bagmati. The importance of Pashupat-Kshetra is also explained as the main place of Lord Shiva in ancient scriptures, Puranas and Swasthani fasting stories.

Shaivism is considered the most ancient religion. Shiva is the ancient god of Aryans and Hindus. As he was the owner of the open field, he was considered the husband of

the animal and over time it is believed that Pashupati became his special name (Koirala, 1994, p. 25). The pilgrims have considered that Shiva as the protector of animals, the knower of great medicine, the guardian of society, the conqueror of enemies and the deity of auspiciousness. Every year, thousands of Hindu devotees come to see Lord Shiva at Pashupatinath temple, the *Aardhya Dev* of Nepal, believing that they will get relief by pleasing *Rudra*. The devotees emanate now to stay in Pashupatinath temple for *Shiva Ling Darshan* (an object of Phallicism or Phallus and other fairs and festivals (Koirala, 1994). However, Kotler, Bowen and Baloglu (2021) explain the concepts and product designing model for the development of pilgrimage tourism. It is mainly due to tourist is like a consumer. He has highlighted the following issues of product development at core level: core product, facilitating products, and supporting products. The above mentioned products located in Pashupat-Kshetra are as follows:

- i. Core products: Pashupatinath Temple is considered as a holy place of pilgrimage tourism, where *Aardhyadev Pashupat* is located. Pashupatinath Temple, Guheshwari Temple, Shlehmantak Forest, Mrigasthali, Bagmati River etc.
- ii. Product facilities: Accessibility of road, air, *Dharamshalas*, hotels, restaurants, accommodation and eating joints available at and on the way to these sites.
- iii. Supporting products: Natural scenic attractions, *Dhams* dedicated to Lord Shiva, local customs, and traditions.

The United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has listed the Pashupatinath Temple as one of the top 10 cultural heritage sites in the world. It has also played an important role in the development of pilgrimage tourism in Nepal. As thousands of Hindus from different countries come to visit Lord Shiva, the rapid development of Pashupatinath temple pilgrimage tourism has proved its relevance. Therefore, this region has become a major pilgrimage destination for most of the tourists from Nepal and India.

Supporting products: It provides religious and secular foundations for pilgrimage tourism in different fairs and festivals. The devotee emanate now to stay Pashupat-Kshetra, they required various service facilities. These facilities are associated with any service offered to tourists, such as, accommodation, transportation, tour guiding, vending, water sports, and food and beverage at different fairs and festivals. They are discussed as follows:

Mahashivaratri

Mahashivaratri is very significant for people who are on the spiritual path. It is also considered that individuals who are in intimate situations and also for the motivated in the world. This motivation is the outcome of the ancient eastern civilization and religious epics. Individuals who live in intimate situations observe Mahashivaratri as an epitome of Shiva’s wedding anniversary in the Pashupat-Kshetra. In this occasion, thousands of Hindu pilgrims come to visit Pashupat-Kshetra from different parts of Nepal and neighboring countries not only *Shiva Ling Darshan* at Pashupatinath temple, but also the spiritual awakening and the power of the earth’s orbital path. It is believed that Lord Shiva performing a cosmic dances and spreads the light of spiritual energy and power on the night of Mahashivaratri. Thus, the religious saints, spiritual Yogis, ascetics and devotees of Lord Shiva have stayed awake all night in Pashupat-Kshetra. It has also increased the importance of pilgrimage tourism in this area.

Tourists' perception towards service facilities available in the Pashupat-Kshetra is presented in A Likert scale is used to measure pilgrims' perceptions, which ranges from 1 to 4 (very good, good, fair and very poor in Table 1).

Table 1: Pilgrims' perception towards service facilities

Feelings of Pilgrims	Number of Pilgrims	Percent
Very good	90	45
Good	80	40
Fair	10	5
Very poor	20	10
Total	200	100

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 1 shows the pilgrims' perception towards available service facilities during *Mahashivaratri* festival at Pashupat-Kshetra. The result reveals that 45 percent respondents reported that there were very good service facilities. It is followed by the 40 percent for the good, 5 percent for fair and 10 percent for very poor conditions of service facilities.

Haritalika Teej

The term *Haritalika* is derived from a combination of two words: '*harat*' which means abduction and '*aalika*' which means a female friend. This is in accordance with the legend which states that this was the day that Goddess *Pārbati*'s friends abducted her and took her into a dense forest to avoid getting her married off to Lord Vishnu.

Haritalika Teej Vrat has enormous position for Hindu women. It is believed that if an unmarried girl observes this fast religiously, she can get her soul mate, just as Goddess *Pārbati* got Lord Shiva. The main objective of *Haritalika Teej* is to seek conjugal pleasure along with progeny (www.ganeshaspeaks.com). It is celebrated during *Shukla Paksha tritiya* (3rd day) of the lunar Vedic calendar month of *Bhadrapada*. The record of *Pashupati-Kshetra Bikash Kosh* (PKBK) shows that more than 600,000 Nepalese women were visited Pashupatinath temple for wishing similar conjugal life on the occasion of *Haritalika Teej* in 2018. Women were celebrating this festival with wearing attractive dress and ornaments for singing and dancing. Meantime, all the doors were opened to make easy access for follower of Lord Shiva *Darshan*. At that moment, 40 percent respondent reported that there was a good service facility during *Haritalika Teej* festival. About , 30 percent devotees reported very good, 20 percent for fair and 10 percent for very poor.

Bala Chaturdasi

Bala Chaaturdshi is celebrated on *Marga Krishna Chaturdasi* or late November or early December in English calendar. It is also known as *Satbijchharne Ausi* at *Sleshmantak* forest of *Pashupat-Kshetra*. It is situated to the opposite side across the Bagmati River by the Pashupatinath Temple. Individuals come to stay here from various places of Nepal and Hindus from other neighboring countries at Pashupatinath temple for dropping of sacred seeds. They light a traditional lamp (*diyo*) by reciting mantras. They keep themselves awake all night to ensure that the lamp keeps burning. They song mantras, sing *Bhajans* and dance through night paying honor to Lord Shiva. The next day they go to the holy Bagmati River for ritual bathing for purification. The devotees pass dropping the *satbij*, the mixture of seven sacred seeds in temples and the 108 *Shiva Linga* of Pashupatinath Temple. It passes through *Kailash* forest and return back to the Pashupatinath temple. In this occasion, 40 percent respondents reported that there are very good service facilities. It is followed by the good in the second (25%), 15 percent for fair and 20 percent for very poor service facilities.

Mondays in the Month of Shravan and Bol Bam

Mondays in the month of *Shravan* is considered highly auspicious for praying to Lord Shiva in the Hindu calendar. It is the day when the entire cosmos is charged with divinity and magical powers. It is believed that the worship of Shiva during *Shravan* month is 108 times more powerful than worshipping during normal days. Thus, *Shravan* is also known as the best month to win the grace of the almighty. *Pushpadant* has very well explained the glory of Lord Shiva in *Shiv Mahima Stotra*. It can be said that in spite of being an eternal God, Lord Shiva has come to acquire the role of a creator,

preserver and destroyer of this mundane world. Shiva is the cause of every living being's existence. This study reveals some interesting facts related to the Holy *Shravan* month in Pashupat-Kshetra (*Bol Bam darshan*). People come to visit from various places of Nepal and Hindus from other neighboring countries at Pashupatinath temple during this festival. At that time, 50 percent respondents reported that there were very good service facilities. They claimed that there was free access to devotee for *Bol Bam Darshan*. It is followed by the good in the second (35%), 10 percent for fair and 5 percent for very poor service facilities. However, only 10 percent respondent reported that there were very good service facilities in the month of ShravanMonday (fasting related issue and feeling). The 40 percent respondent stands for fair, 30 percent for very poor and 20 percent for good service facilities of Shravan's Sombar Darshan.

Aarati

Aarati is performed daily at around 6:00 P.M. in the evening in Pashupatinath temple. It is also known as *Sandhya Jagaune* (evening) at the bank of Bagmati River, which flows in the further side of Pashupatinath temple. *Aarti* is a one of the most attractive rituals at Pashupatinath Temple in which light from wicks soaked in ghee to offer God. When the priests perform the *Aaratilamps*, then allows everyone to be a part of it and creates an environment of union of God and the devotees through pilgrimage tourism. The Likert scale result reveals that 50 percent respondents reported that fair in service facilities. It is followed by the good in the second (25%), and 25 percent for very poor service facilities.

Laksha Batti

Lighting a Laksha Batti is a Hindu tradition performed by the devotees wishing to get their wishes fulfilled by any deity of their choice. It is also known as *Lakh Batti* in *Devanagari*, literally meaning 100,000 lamps. The devotee can pledge to light *Lakh Batti* in Pashupatinath temple. The result indicates that 45 percent respondents reported that there are fair service facilities during the periods of *Laksha Batti*. It is followed by the very poor in the second (20%), and 15 percent for very good, 20 percent for good and 20 percent for very poor service facilities.

Jal Puspa Chadhaune is also important fair of Pashupatinath temple. For this purpose, hundreds of devotees were come to visit here for participating this occasion. The result reveals that 50 percent respondents reported that there are fair service facilities during the celebration of Jal Puspa Chadhaune. It is followed by the very poor in the second (20%), 20 percent for good and 10 percent for very good service facilities during *Jal Puspa Chadhaune* celebration in Pashupatinath. However, 60 percent respondents reported

that there are fair service facilities during the celebration of *Belpatra Chadhaune*. It is followed by the very poor in the second (25%), 10 percent for good and 5 percent for very good service facilities during *Belpatra Chadhaune* celebration in Pashupatinath.

Regular Darshan

Pashupatinath is a major pilgrimage site of all Hindus. It is a sacred site, sacred place and sacred space of world Hindus and famous for *Darshan*. There are different types of Darshan in Pashupatinath such as: simple, *Bol Bam*, *Saawan Sombar*, *Teej*, *Bala Chaturdashi*, *Mahashivaratri*, *Purnima* etc. Though the number of the pilgrims has immensely increased at Pashupatinath; the quality facilities and the management for those people have been too weak and unmanaged. In this regard, the Chief of *Pashupati Kshetra Bikash Kosh* reported that:

‘This has been too difficult to give quality service facility and manage the time during the months of *Shravan*, *Jestha*, *Falgun*, *Baishakh*, *Asaad* and the main festival times like *Mahashivaratri*, *Teej*, *Balachadurshi* and *Shravan Sombar*. The quality of facility and management for the huge queue of the pilgrims has been so difficult. We manage it with the support of the thousands of the security personnel and the Scout members. As the number of the visitors becomes above the carrying capacity; it is too difficult to manage the system, and we could not.’

He further told that the pilgrims have complained to lack of the quality services and facilities related to drinking water, toilet use, line management and others service facilities in Pashupatinath temple area. The earthquake of 2015 has also damaged the existing water supply system, toilets and sewerage facilities. The PKBK has made a plan for managing these services facilities. The plan has focused to manage visitors, worships, special worships, hymns, incense and regular visit in the temple.

Special Pooja

The pilgrims have also offered special Pooja in Pashupatinath temple. The result indicates that 40 percent respondents reported that there were good service facilities during special *Pooja*. It is followed by the very good conditions in the second (35), 15 percent for fair and 10 percent for very poor service facilities on the occasion of special *Pooja* in Pashupatinath temple.

Pilgrims Perception towards service Facilities in Pashupat-Kshetra

Tourism service facilities are essential components for the development of pilgrimage tourism. It includes basic utility services and infrastructures- washroom, water supply and sanitary system, shoes management, line management and pilgrimage security in connection with *Pashupati Kshetra Bikash Kosh*. They are also known as tourism facilities. However, everyone knows that tourism generates a significant secondary demand in other economic sectors, including transportation, catering, handicraft, and trade, but these facilities are not included in this paper. It is observed that the *Pashupati Kshetra Bikash Kosh* is a single authority to develop these utility service facilities. They are discussed as follows:

Table 2: Pilgrims' perceptions towards the utility services in Pashupat-Kshetra

Utility services	Likert Scale ranges 1-4 (in percentage), N= 200			
	Very Good	Good	Fair	Very Poor
Shoes Management	55	40	5	0
Security management	45	40	10	5
Drinking water supply	5	15	60	20
Restroom facility	5	10	40	45
Line management	30	35	20	15

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 2 shows the pilgrims perceptions (multiple responses) towards the utility services in Pashupat-Kshetra. These services include shoes management, security management, drinking water supply, restroom facility, and line management of 200 respondents. The Likert scale result reveals that 55 percent respondents reported that there were very good shoes management systems in Pashupat-Kshetra. It is followed by the good in the second (40%) and only 5 percent for fair service facilities for keeping sandals and shoes.

Regarding security management system in Pashupat-Kshetra, about 45 percent respondents reported that there were very good shoes management system in Pashupat-Kshetra. Forty percent of respondents ranked well and 10 percent ranked it as fair and 5 percent ranked it as very poor.

Table 2 shows that pilgrim's imprint up on the drinking water system in Pashupat-Kshetra. The result reveals that 60 percent of pilgrims reported that there were fair drinking water supply management systems. It is followed by the very poor in the second (20%) due to

the effect of earthquake, 2015, 15 percent for good and only 5 percent for the very good response in the drinking supply of drinking water.

Washroom and restroom service facility is also essential for the pilgrimage tourism. The result reveals that 45 percent pilgrims reported there were very poor washroom and restroom service facility in the Pashupat-Kshetra. It is followed by the fair in the second (40 %), 15percent good and 5 percent for the very good facility. In this context, one of the devotee told that 'we are waiting several hours for Lord *Shiva Darshan* in line, but there is a lack of restroom service facility near the queue'.

Line management is another aspect utility service. It facilitates to easy access to devotees for Lord *Shiva Darshan*. The result reveals that 60 percent pilgrims reported there were good line management services in Pashupat-Kshetra. It is followed by the fair in the second (20%), 15 percent for very poor. One of the key informants told that:

'different types of pilgrims requires different kinds of line management system in Pashupat-Keshtra- simple Darshan, special *Pooja, Bol Bam*, senior citizens, *Bhajan Mandali*, Pandit groups, Saadhu, staff of Pashupati Kshetra Bikas Kosh, special staff of police, army and other employee of Nepal and VIP guests of other countries. It is difficult to line management in the special festivals like *Mahashivaratri, Teej, Balachaturdashi, Yakaadashi, Purnimaa, Srawan Sombar* and months of peak seasons like *Shravan, Phalgun, Jestha* and *Ashad*. In these occasion, thousands of pilgrims were crowded due to the lack of tourism carrying capacity in Pashupat-Kshetra'.

Conclusion

Pashupat-Kshetra is a holy place of Hindus and Aryans where Lord Shiva lies in this place. In different festivals, thousands of Hindu pilgrims come here to visit Pashupat-Kshetra from different parts of Nepal and neighboring countries for Lord Shiva *Darshan*. However, they require different types of service facilities for celebrating festivals in the Pashupat-Kshetra. The basic utility services are supply of drinking water, restroom, washroom, line management, security services etc. The pilgrims' responses are very important to the growth and development of pilgrimage tourism. Their perceptions are varied based on service facilities on both time and space (season). It depends on the nature and flows of pilgrims. Thus, the tourism carrying capacity especially in available facilities is not sufficient during special festivals- *Mahashivaratri, Teej, and Balachaturdashi* and it is normal conditions in regular time. Provision of additional facilities is needed considering the increasing flow of pilgrims during the time of important festivals.

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