

## Opportunity and Challenges of Pashupatinath's Pilgrimage Tourism

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### Abstract

*Pilgrimage in Hindu tradition is called tirthayatra. Tirthayatra is awarded different meanings depending on the sect, region and tradition. Scholars have described various typological schemes for tirthayatra that derive from Sanskrit texts such as Skanda Purana. Pilgrimage could be defined as 'A journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding'. To the Hindu it is the holy land of the Pashupati Nath. Many Great philosophers-saints like Vayas, Valmiki, Viswamitra, Pulah, Pulasta, Koushik, Kapil, Yajnavalka, Suka, Sanakadi and Raja Janak found endless spiritual inspiration while penancing by the sacred bank of Koshi, Krishna Gandaki, Bagmati and Sarada rivers or in the pristine Himalaya mountain. All these great thinkers attained perfection in their spirituality here. Pashupati Nath is the holiest of all the shrines devoted to lord Shiva, the guardian deity of Nepal. This study was based on field survey and secondary sources of information. The study based on both descriptive and analytical as well both qualitative and quantitative information was used. Questionnaire, in-depth interview and FGD applied with Pashupatikshetrabikas Kosha, Mool Bhatta of Pashupatinath, export of pilgrimage tourism sectors and related persons were also conducted in the field visiting site. 100 Respondents were randomly selected from pashupatinath. Sources of income, source of employee, destination after Char Dham, center for pilgrimage and hot pot destination of Hinduism are the major opportunities of pilgrimage tourism of Pashupatinath as well as Mela management, pollution, waste management, beggar's management, drinking water and toilet use are the major challenge of pashupatinath.*

**Key words:** Opportunity, challenges, Tirthayatra, pilgrimage, Pashupatinath

### Introduction

Pilgrimage in Hindu tradition is called *tirthayatra*. *Tirthayatra* is awarded different meanings depending on the sect, region and tradition. Scholars have described various typological schemes for *tirthayatra* that derive from Sanskrit texts such as Skanda Purana (Bharati 1963; Saraswai 1983). 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 In this study *tirthayatra*,

*darshanyatra* and *darshan* were the terms used by informants to capture the practice of pilgrimage. Pilgrims usually held that *yatra* was the journey, *yatri* or *tirthayatri* the travelling pilgrim and *tirthayatra* the whole pilgrimage (Morinis, 1984).

Travel to pilgrimage centers has become more frequent due to increased accessibility and availability of transport (Bhardwaj, 1973; Singh, 2012). Pilgrimage as a form of travel provides opportunities for people to visit sacred places and is a feature common to almost all societies. The key elements of pilgrimage are motivation, destination and journey. In a traditional religious pilgrimage, the pilgrim, driven by a strong religious or spiritual motivation accomplishes on foot, a long journey that is reinforced by a sense of renunciation of worldly matters. Once at the sacred site (temples or sacred objects), the pilgrim generally performs rituals in fulfilling the purpose for which such travel is taken, 'seeing and being seen' by the God (or the sacred) being one of the important acts. Though pilgrimage is primarily an individually motivated journey informed by personal faith, it also is a mass movement when viewed in terms of magnitude and frequency of such travel (Stoddard, 1997).

Hindu tradition, or more appropriately *Sanatana Dharma* ('the eternal religion'), has a strong and ancient tradition of pilgrimage, known as *Tirtha-yatra* ('tour of the sacred fords'), which formerly connoted pilgrimage involving *Snan* holy baths in water bodies as a symbolic purification ritual and *Darshan* of chief deity (Bharadwaj, 1973).

Pilgrimage travel to pilgrimage centres is reported to have phenomenally increased in the past few decades due to increased accessibility and improvement in transport infrastructure. A large proportion of such journeys are motivated by 'religious needs' but exhibit touristic aspects (Rinschede, 1997) whereas many tourist journeys have an explicit spiritual component (Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). The scholarly discussion on discerning similarities and differences between the two forms of travel, pilgrimage and tourism, that has dominated the literature (Cohen, 1992), seem to be inadequate in explaining the nature of such travel. The recent interest in describing such contemporary travel to sacred sites (Nolan & Nolan, 1989; Vokunic, 1996) has led to proliferation of composite terms such as religious tourism, pilgrimage tourism, etc. The history of modern tourism is not that old as of pilgrimage tourism. The pilgrimage to the sacred and holy places like Pashupatinath, Lumbini, Jerusalem, and Mecca induced modern tourism in the society. Nepal has become a decent destination for pilgrimage tourism with her large number of Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimage sites, shrines and temples (Ghimire, 2004).

The cultural category and scheme of Hindu Himalayan pilgrimage is permeated by concepts of supernatural agents and notions of causality that have a constitutive role and pragmatic function. Pilgrims' beliefs in ritual efficacy, the benefits and merits of hardship and effort during the journey, fulfilment of vows. Further, pilgrims identify a place of pilgrimage through reference to supernatural agents. A *tirtha* was seen as *Bhagawans* (God's or "the lord's") place (*dharm*) and supernatural agent(s) were believed to reside at the *tirtha* (Mt. *Kailash* and *Pashupati Kshetra* are the home of Shiva). Places of pilgrimage were considered appropriate for practising virtuous religious conduct *Hindu dharma* and ritual action (*Snan, Dhyan, Darshan, puja, Havan, Japan, Tarpan, Namanand Daan*). A *tirtha* was thought to be pure and sacred (*pavitra*) and to be able

to purify the pilgrims' souls, *Atma*. Hence, pilgrims valued a *tirtha* for its alleged soteriological power, accordingly a *tirtha* was: "a place for *mukti*" or "a way to *mukti*." (Nordin, 2009).

In Nepal's context religion that has the potential to achieve maximum development benefits, particularly sustainable and responsible tourism that generates employment and other local benefits. Religious tourism in Nepal, as a subset of cultural tourism, would include Hindu and Buddhist pilgrimages, cultural events and festivals, spiritual learning and refreshment, including yoga, meditation and spiritual teachings (Pradhan, 2015).

"*Yajnanamjapayajnosmistabaranam Himalayaha*" (Bhagavad Gita, 1986) 10-25" I am the Himalaya among the Mountain"-Lord Krishna in Bhagad Gita signified the sanctity of Nepal as one of the holist places on earth. The Himalaya or the abode of snow is referred to as the home of Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati. Goddess Parvati presented as the daughter of the Himalaya, the majestic mountain range in the world. The Himalaya has a particular importance to the followers of Hinduism since time immemorial. The Mythological period covering the *Satya Treta* and *Dwapar Yugas* or age also contains numerous references regarding the temples shrines and holy places of the country (SkandaPuran, 2009).

Many sages and seers preferred the serene environment and quiet natural atmosphere of Nepal as the best place for their meditation. To the Hindu it is the holy land of the Pashupati Nath. Many Grant philosophers-saints like *Vayas*, *Valmiki*, *Viswamitra*, *Pulah*, *Pulasta*, *Koushik*, *Kapil*, *Yajnavalka*, *Suka*, *Sanakadi* and *Raja Janak* found endless spiritual inspiration while penancing by the sacred bank of Koshi, Krishna Gandaki, Bagmati and Sarada rivers or in the pristine Himalaya mountain. All these great thinkers attained perfection in their spirituality here. Pashupati Nath is the holiest of all the shrines devoted to lord Shiva, the guardian deity of Nepal, or the preserver of the universe. The holy temple of lord Pashupati Nath was beautified and decorated by the different Kings of Nepal. A countless number of pilgrims pay homage to lord pashupatinath on the occasion of the annual festival of Maha Shivaratri when thousands of shiv as devotees pour in to the holy sites from as far away as India (Satyal, 2004).

Though, there are above mentioned empirical evidence in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such evidence using more recent study exist in the context of Nepalese pilgrimage tourism. But there has not been any specific study about the opportunity and challenges of pilgrimage tourism of Pashupatinath, to examine the opportunity of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupatinath, to analyze the challenges of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupatinath, So that, this study is differ from other studies as well as relevant and recent issues of pilgrimage tourism sector of Nepal. Therefore the extensive study is desired new research, in order to establish pilgrimage tourism as one of the most prominent & prosperous factor for nation building.

In these perspectives, this study will be confined to answer the following issues: What are the opportunities of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupatinath, What are challenges of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupatinath. The main objective of the study is to examine the extent of opportunity and challenges of pilgrimage tourism of Pashupatinath. The specific objectives are as follows: To

assess the opportunity of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupatinath, To analyze the challenges of pilgrimage tourism in Pashupatinath.

The present temple of Pashupatinath was constructed in 1692 AD after it was badly damaged by the white ants. However, most of the structural complex around the present Pashupatinath temple had been erected around 1640 AD during the regime of King Pratap Malla who resided at Pashupati for some years by way of atoning for his sins. Before king Pratap Malla, the temple of Pashupati had been restored and repaired several times and among them special mention may be made of queen Ganga Rani – wife of king Shiva Simha Malla (1584-1614) who not only repaired the temple, but also donated gold and other ornaments to the treasure of lord Pashupatinath. Most of the kings of Malla and Shah Dynasties, have donated wealth and other gifts to the treasure of lord Pashupatinath. During the Shah dynasty the entire decorative surface of Pashupatinath temple have been constructed (MOTCA, 2010).

Built in 17th century, this Pagoda styled temple stands as an important religious symbol for Hindus in Nepal. Pashupatinath temple's origin starts several centuries prior to the construction of this structure. Many legends surround this place and most of them are quite interesting to listen. This temple is one of the seven UNESCO heritage sites of Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. Surrounded by bustling arrays of markets, this temple overlooks the glittering stretch of Bagmati River. In the words of every religious visitor, this site is the emblem of spiritual energy (Tandan, 2046).

Pasupati Nath region covers all about 281 hectares. There are near about 235 temples of different sizes and architectural styles. Along with many religious temples there are several guest houses, inns, other types of sheltering places many stone inscription and idols from the second and third centuries. The famous doubled roofed pagoda temple of gold gilt brass dedicated to God Pasupatinath is superb architecture. This is the one of the holiest temple of all over worlds Hindus (Tandan, 2046).

### **Methods and Materials**

This study was based on field survey and secondary sources of information. The study based on was both descriptive and analytical as well both qualitative and quantitative information was used. Questionnaire, in-depth interview and FGD applied with Pashupatikshetrabikas Kosha, Mool Bhatta of Pashupatinath, export of pilgrimage tourism sectors and related persons were also conducted in the field visiting site. 100 Respondents were randomly selected from pashupatinath. Both secondary and primary data were used for the fulfillment of the proposed of the study. The secondary data was acquired from the desk review of the published and unpublished hard copies and electronic (Internet, E-education) materials and documents of various organizations. The primary data was collected through a field survey.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Opportunity of Pashupatinath pilgrimage**

Table 1 shows that source of income, fully agree pilgrims are 50 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty five percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 10 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 5 percent of pilgrims are disagree with source of income in pashupatinath.

**Table 1 Source of income**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	50	50
Agree	35	35
Undecided	10	10
Disagree	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 2 shows that source of employee, fully agree pilgrims are 40 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 20 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 10 percent of pilgrims are disagree with source of employee in pashupatinath.

**Table 2 Source of employee**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	40	40
Agree	30	30
Undecided	20	20
Disagree	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 3 shows that destination after Char Dham, fully agree pilgrims are 45 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty five percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 15 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 5 percent of pilgrims are disagree with destination after Char Dham in pashupatinath.

**Table 3 Destination after Char Dham**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	45	45
Agree	35	35
Undecided	15	15
Disagree	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 4 shows that hot pot destination of Hinduism, fully agree pilgrims are 50 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Forty five percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 5 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 0 percent of pilgrims are disagree with hot pot destination of Hinduism in pashupatinath.

**Table 4 Hot pot destination of Hinduism**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	50	50
Agree	45	45
Undecided	5	5
Disagree	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 5 shows that head of twelve Jyotirlinga, fully agree pilgrims are 30 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty five percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 10 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 25 percent of pilgrims are disagree with head of twelve Jyotirlinga in pashupatinath.

**Table 5 Head of Twelve Jyotir Linga**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	30	30
Agree	35	35
Undecided	10	10
Disagree	25	25
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 6 shows that center for pilgrimage tourism, fully agree pilgrims are 40 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty five percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 15 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 10 percent of pilgrims are disagree with center for pilgrimage tourism in pashupatinath.

**Table 6 Center for pilgrimage tourism**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	40	40
Agree	35	35
Undecided	15	15
Disagree	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

### **Challenges of Pashupatinaths pilgrimage tourism**

Table 7 present that challenges of pollution fully agree pilgrims are 40 percent visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 10 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 20 percent of pilgrims are disagree.

**Table 7 Challenges of pollution**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	40	40
Agree	30	30
Undecided	10	10
Disagree	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 8 shows that challenges of waste management, fully agree pilgrims are 30 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Forty percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 20 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 10 percent of pilgrims are disagree with challenges of waste management in pashupatinath.

**Table 8 Challenges of waste management**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	30	30
Agree	40	40
Undecided	20	20
Disagree	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 9 shows that challenges of Bheti management, fully agree pilgrims are 50 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Ten percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 25 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 15 percent of pilgrims are disagree with challenges of Bheti management in pashupatinath.

**Table 9 Challenges of Bheti Management**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	50	50
Agree	10	10
Undecided	25	25
Disagree	15	15
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 10 shows that challenges of line management, fully agree pilgrims are 45 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Fifteen percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 10 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 30 percent of pilgrims are disagree with challenges of line management in pashupatinath.

**Table 10 Challenges of Line Management**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	45	45
Agree	15	15
Undecided	10	10
Disagree	30	30
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 11 shows that challenges of Mela management, fully agree pilgrims are 35 percent who visited in Pashupatinath, 25 percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 30 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 10 percent of pilgrims are disagree with challenges of mela management in pashupatinath.

**Table 11 Challenges of Mela management**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Fully agree	35	35
Agree	25	25
Undecided	30	30
Disagree	10	10
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 12 presents that situation of drinking water, excellent impression of pilgrims are only 5 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Twenty percent have good impression as well as 50 percent of pilgrim's impression is not good, same the way 25 percent of pilgrims have bad impression with situation of drinking water in pashupatinath.

**Table 12 Situation of drinking water**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Excellent	5	5
Good	20	20
Not good	50	50
Bad	25	25
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 13 presents that situation of toilet use, excellent impression of pilgrims are only 5 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Ten percent have good impression as well as 60 percent of pilgrim's



impression is not good, same the way 25 percent of pilgrims have bad impression with situation of toilet use in pashupatinath.

**Table 13 Situation of Toilet use**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Excellent	5	5
Good	10	10
Not good	60	60
Bad	25	25
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 14 presents that situation of beggars, excellent impression of pilgrims are 0 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Only 10 percent have good impression as well as 50 percent of pilgrim's impression is not good, same the way 40 percent of pilgrims have bad impression with situation of beggars in pashupatinath.

**Table 14 Situation of beggars**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Excellent	0	0
Good	10	10
Not good	50	50
Bad	40	40
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 15 presents that situation of flower sellers, excellent impression of pilgrims are only 10 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Fourty percent have good impression as well as 30 percent of pilgrim's impression is not good, same the way 20 percent of pilgrims have bad impression with situation of flower sellers in pashupatinath.

**Table 15 Situation of flower sellers**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Excellent	10	10
Good	40	40
Not good	30	30
Bad	20	20
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 16 presents that situation of Pujaries, excellent impression of pilgrims are 50 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Fifty percent have good impression as well as 0 percent of pilgrim's impression is not good, same the way 0 percent of pilgrims have bad impression with situation of Pujaries in pashupatinath.

**Table 16 Situation of Pujaries**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Excellent	50	50
Good	50	50
Not good	0	0
Bad	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

Table 17 presents that situation of Bhandaries, excellent impression of pilgrims are 30 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Sixty percent have good impression as well as 10 percent of pilgrim's impression is not good, same the way 0 percent of pilgrims have bad impression with situation of Bhandaries in pashupatinath.

**Table 17 Situation of Bhandaries**

Impression of pilgrims	Number	Percent
Excellent	30	30
Good	60	60
Not good	10	10
Bad	0	0
Total	100	100

Source: Field survey, 2019

## Conclusions

Pilgrimage in Hindu tradition is called *tirhayatra*. *Tirhayatra* is awarded different meanings depending on the sect, region and tradition. Opportunity of income, fully agree pilgrims are 50 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty five percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 10 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 5 percent of pilgrims are disagree. Opportunity of employee, fully agree pilgrims are 40 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 20 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 10 percent of pilgrims are disagree. Head of twelve Jyotirlinga, fully agree pilgrims are 30 percent who visited in Pashupatinath. Thirty five percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 10 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 25 percent of pilgrims are disagree. Challenge of pollution fully agree pilgrims are 40 percent 30 percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 10 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 20 percent of pilgrims are disagree. Challenges of Mela management, fully agree pilgrims are 35 percent who visited in Pashupatinath, 25 percent of pilgrims are agree as well as 30 percent of pilgrims are undecided, same the way 10 percent of pilgrims are disagree.

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