

Problems and Prospects of Rural Tourism
in
Western Development Region,
with special Reference to Gulmi District

A Thesis
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Submitted by
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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

I hereby certify the Thesis entitled “**Problems and Prospects of Rural Tourism in Western Development Region with special Reference to Gulmi District**” by Ms. Puspa Ghimire(Aryal) submitted to the Central Department of Rural Development, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal in Partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Rural Development is carried out under my guidance and supervision. No part of this Thesis has been submitted for any Degree and I recommend this for the final evaluation.

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Supervisor

Date.....

APPROVAL LETTER

This is to certify that the project report entitled “**Problems and Prospects of Rural Tourism in Western Development Region with special Reference to Gulmi District**” written and submitted by Ms. Puspa Ghimire (Aryal) has been examined. It has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Rural Development.

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ABSTRACT

In the scenario of low productivity in agricultural and industrial sector, tourism can be a high productive sector to compensate the unemployment and disguised unemployment prevailing in the country as well as Gulmi district. It has comparative advantages than other industries such as, it has low opportunity cost, it takes low gestation period to give returns, can involve the lower strata of the people of all ecological zones, involves women and ethnic groups and bears direct relation to all dimensions of life like culture, environment, nature, behavior of people etc.

The history of Tourism in Nepal is became very old, again the rural population has not been able to benefit from the tourism industry yet-only around 10 percent revenue stay in areas itself. Also there are only limited areas like Kathmandu, Chitwan and Pokhara where tourism has been occupied, so it is necessary to conduct additional micro level studies of alternative areas like Gulmi.

Western Development Region is highly potential for tourism as it is a storage area of nature and living culture. The region has been a role model for rural tourism development in the country. Gulmi under which is also rich in cultural heritage, beautiful natural scenery, colorful fairs and festivals, views of breathtaking Himalayas, pristine natural beauty, hospitable people and ancient religious and historical monuments make this district one of the most wonderful tourist destinations, is crying for its proper attention.

The district is full of high and low hills, plain, base, gorge etc., made by river flows. On the whole it is a rural/remote area but there is some social and physical development in recent years which is slowly urbanizing the settlements. Most of the settlements are of small sizes and there are limited big settlements. The district's main economy is depends on agricultural sector which is slightly decreasing. In the data of 2038, there were 98 percent people depending on this sector, which slightly decreased to 91.03 percent in 2048. In the total economic structure the production/industrial sector could not show any countable earnings, only 1.76 percent in 2048. There is only some traditional, cottage and small industries, but the third sector (professional/Technical, Administrative, Sales and Services) was increasing from 1 percent in 2028 to 6.71 percent employment in 2048, this is a positive sign. Per-capita income of Gulmi district is very low (NRs. 7163 in 1996), lower than the national average and far below to the neighboring districts. Purchasing power and income index was also lowest (US\$ 1107 and 0.16). It is Agricultural labour who are engaged in agriculture throughout the year are landless or having very few lands. Only five percent people have agricultural production sufficient throughout the year.

However Gulmi is the store house of vast tourism products as it is covered with rural settlements, mixed forest and rich bio-diversities. There are altogether around 20 temples, previous palaces and Caves in the district. There are very famous places like Ruru Chhetra and Resunga which will be beneficial to attract the domestic tourists first and then market it for foreign tourist, we can develop tourist packages like cave tourism linkages of Dhurkot and Argakhachi, similarly religious linkages or tourism circuits with other districts like Lumbini-Tansen-Ridi-Resunga-Sorgadwari etc. we can declare conservation areas to high altitude areas like Banjhkateri and Madane Ko lek and develop medical or herbal tourism. There is also a great possibility of Medical Tourism or yoga center in Resunga Forest. The best practices of community based rural tourism inside the country and in neighboring country like in Sikkim and Laddhak could be followed for this district. Different Tourist Models like Pilgrimage Tourism, Village/Urban Tourism, and Nature based tourism, Adventure tourism, Health Tourism, Floriculture Tourism could be developed in this district. Foot hills with amazing scenic beauty rivers with fresh water appropriate for white water rafting and small mountains with high potentials for adventure tourism like Trekking, Rock-climbing, Para Gliding, Mountain Biking and many more if developed properly and marketed strategically, there will definitely be a huge inflow of domestic as well as foreign tourists that would ultimately contribute in raising the standard of living of rural poor.

It is important to develop tourist level facilities in major areas, three constituencies could provide tourist services, and it is necessary to provide tourism awareness and hospitality services training. Rafting Agency and TAAN should cooperate for the promotion of the local areas. It is required to make functional to Ruru Resunga Tourism Development Committee. Accordingly we could link institutional agencies related to women empowerment and tourism development.

On the other hand, there are some problems to develop tourism in this region like; most of the roads dusty and are in temporary condition; monopoly in transportation; weak infrastructure; lack of access to airlines; lack of initiation on the part of tourism; lack of coordinated efforts; tourism has not been accorded; historical facts are not publicized; lack of institutional tourism agencies; Kaligandaki project has hampered the rafting potentialities of Badigad river; lack of awareness; migration; depletion of forest; lack of manpower; degradation of environment and biodiversities gender inequality, poor condition and literacy etc.

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