

Sustainable and Value Based Tourism in Nepal – Travel Writer’s Perspective

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Abstract:-

This Research Paper deals exclusively with the pros and cons of Sustainable Tourism in present-day Nepal, easily one of the world’s most outstanding mountain tourism destinations. The challenges that this new form of Tourism throws and ways and means of popularizing the Sustainable Tourism experience of Nepal to a worldwide clientele has been covered in this Research Paper. A sincere attempt has been made to unravel Nepal as a marvelous Eco-Friendly & Sustainable destination. Issues like promotions, balancing Casino and Sustainable Tourism, conservation of Nepal’s fragile ecological diversity, the role of youths in tourism etc... have been dealt with methodically. The intention has all along been to create a synthesis out of the Tourism phenomenon. The Research Paper highlights and justifies the need for Sustainable Tourism in Nepal and attempts to satiate the burning desire of modern day traveler for an experience that has the effect of transformation and making them processed human beings.

Keywords: Eco-Tourism, Nepal, Sustainable, Mountain, Conservation, Flora & Fauna, Ecology.

INTRODUCTION

Nepal – A country of amazing extremes, with a total land area of 147,181 Sq.Kms. is bordered by China in the North and by India in the South, West and East. The landmass is divided into three geographical zones – the high Himalayas, the mid Himalayas or Mountainous Region with long terraced slopes leading to fertile valleys and the flat sub-tropical Terai region. The high Himalayan region extends in the North from West to East at an altitude of 4000 meters to 8848 meters. The world famous peaks of Mt.Everest (8848 m), Kanchenjunga (8586 m), Makalu (7463 m), Dhaulagiri (8167 m), Annapurna (8091 m) and many more dominate the formidable range of eternal snows. The mid Himalayas consist of

mountain ranges varying in height from 1525 meters to 4877 meters. Below these ranges lies the Churia range at 610 meters to 1524 meters. Fertile valleys of various widths and altitudes lie between these mountain and hill ranges. The southern belt stretches East-West with a width 26 to 32 Kms. and a maximum elevation of about 305 meters. Several major rivers, tributaries and streams flow south originating from the glaciers, snow fed lakes and high Himalayas of the North. The major rivers are the Seti, Karnali, Gandaki and the Koshi.

Nepal experiences four seasons – Spring (March – May), Summer (June – August), Autumn (September – November) and Winter (December – February). Rainfall is widespread during the southwest monsoon period from June-August with the eastern part receiving maximum rainfall. In the winter season, the western part receives a larger share of rainfall. The period from October to May is generally dry in most parts of the country. Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal is full of shrines, temples, palaces, palace squares and ageless sculptures that are now an integral part of Kathmandu city. Amazingly, Kathmandu city is the only city in the world with as many as seven World Heritage Sites (Cultural) located within a distance of 20 Kms. radius. Being in Kathmandu is like walking through the pages of history. It is a stupendous city in its own right. In Nepal, Tourism is the most important industry after agriculture and contributes substantially to the upliftment of the quality of life of her people. As a socio-economic activity, tourism touches the life of every Nepali citizen in one way or the other and it is in the fitness of things that Nepal, as a nation should resolve to revitalize her Tourism industry through Sustainable & Value Based Tourism.

Relevance of Sustainable Tourism in Nepal:

Tourists worldwide demand higher quality products, services and real life experiences during their holidays and while they do not necessarily seek luxury, they do crave for pleasant surroundings usually at a reasonable price. The essential ingredient of this new type of tourism package is not transport and accommodation but the organization of recreation, which alone can enrich the tourism experience by allowing greater integration with the holiday destination. In other

words, Value Based Tourism, where the key factors are quality products, excellence in service (human relations), fully involve all the citizens in tourism and obtain the maximum yield from it to benefit the country, its people, business partners and visitors. Though the idea sounds very simple, it is in fact a lot complex to make it practically viable at the grassroots level. A lot of research and meticulous planning is required. Not only that, the entire marketing strategy as well as professionals engaged in marketing Value Based Tourism products need to be perfectly oriented and trained since herein they do not necessarily sell features but the actual benefits accrued from the tourism phenomenon.

Benefits of Sustainable Tourism in Nepal:

A list of benefits that would accrue from Sustainable Tourism in Nepal is mentioned below –

(1) The greatest benefit from Sustainable and Value Based Tourism in Nepal would be the people of Nepal, the common man on the street and particularly the youths on whom the future of Nepal lies. Innovative Sustainable Tourism products like Snow Leopard Treks, Ethnological Tours, Flora & Fauna Tours or for that matter Wet Land Bird Watching Tours means that the best people to don the mantle of Sustainable Tourism professionals would be the indigenous local people themselves. Since they are the people who know their surroundings, recruitment would take place from amongst the local populace, which would go a long way in redressing the acute unemployment problems that the youths of Nepal are faced with today.

(2) Nepal's share in the world tourism market in terms of revenue earnings could increase substantially since Value Based Tourism products are experience oriented and the duration of visit is definitely longer than the run-of-the-mill packages. For example, the soothing effect of Yoga cannot be realized by a mere one session of activity. It has to go on at least for a week and it is only then that the person starts experiencing the benefits. Thus, Value Based Tourism would make visitors to extend their stay in Nepal, which means more visitor spending and more hard currency earned by Nepal.

(3) Nepal is a landlocked country where Adventure Tourism has flourished but this rise in popularity of Adventure Tourism has placed undue pressure on the natural and cultural environment in a lot of strategic tourist zones like the Annapurna region where environmental degradation has occurred. Through Sustainable & Value Based Tourism, the National Parks and Conservation areas can be brought under the ambit of tourism by including the local people to take part in the tourism phenomenon. Such areas provide a unique setting

where natural resources like the flora and fauna are best utilized for recreational purposes without any damages to the environment with the corresponding revenues earned through tourism being re-spent on National Parks and conservation area management.

(4) Another relevance of Sustainable Tourism in Nepal is the fact that this kind of tourism generally attract persons who are tolerant and even interested in experiencing small scale local or vernacular accommodation (Tharu tribal settlement for example) that are built of indigenous materials, thus keeping the ecological and cultural balance of the region in tact.

(5) Eco-Tourism and Green Tourism does figure prominently in the World Tourism Organization, UNDP and PATA's priority list of agendas and they are committed towards developing such concepts through monetary benefits, research, planning, training and orientation which Nepal could exploit for the furtherance of Sustainable and Value Based Tourism.

(6) Countries like Japan and Germany are important sources of tourist generating countries for Nepal. Also, Nepal figures in the priority list of countries for German economic co-operation. According to Dr. Woolf Donner, former President of the German-Nepal Friendship Association – *"Nepal is one of the countries chosen for German economic co-operation. Nepal's commitment towards spreading the concept of Sustainable and Value Based Tourism thus, would go a long way in seeking financial aid and assistance from friendly nations at very liberal terms and conditions"*.

(7) Last but not the least, there will be better awareness of Nepal as a destination for the discerning international traveler.

Balancing Casino Culture With Sustainable & Value Based Tourism:

Significantly enough, Nepal is best known for its casinos and holds a special charm for the honeymooners. Every year during the peak tourist season (March, October and November), people flock to the Kathmandu valley from all over the world. Nepal is a favorite destination for Indians and Indians also form the largest visitors in terms of numbers to the valley.

Some of the outstanding hospitality properties in the valley like the Soaltee, Yak & Yeti, Annapurna and Everest each year comes up with scintillating packages to pamper the honeymooners and leisure tourists and to say the least are treated royally with an exciting range of services and incentives. To trace back the history of Casino / Pleasure Tourism in Kathmandu valley, one has to go back to the

60's decade when the so called "Hippies" or the "Flower Children" as they are popularly referred to, made a beeline for Nepal to satiate their huge appetites for fun, pleasure and recreation. Add to it the fact that the Soaltee, which was launched by the Oberoi group – a magnificent property by any standard, threw open the concept of Casinos in the high Himalayas and it was an instant hit with the visitors that gave them a sense of de-ja-vu.

With the passage of time, Casino outlets were also opened by the other 5 Star properties, all of which meant that Kathmandu became the center stage for indulging in electrifying fun and leisure where one could play the Baccarat, the Roulette and Blackjacks all night long.

In fact even today, Nepal is perceived as a moderately prized Casino destination by the prospective international traveler. Awareness about other aspects of Nepal as a destination is low. In order to bring about a harmony, Casino Tourism should be comprehensively merged with Sustainable Tourism, which will enable Nepal to make the most out of its rare natural and cultural resources. Switzerland has done it long back and Nepal too can take a leaf out of the great Swiss example.

A one-dimensional approach towards projecting a destination for a considerable period of time has its own pitfalls and there is a constant threat of the concerned destination being sold out and giving way to newer tourist destinations and thereby loosing its market share. Also, it is a fact that the lifestyle and the entire concept of recreation is increasingly taking a different turn worldwide. Twenty years back it was high society lifestyle and luxury. Today it is environment, socio-cultural issues and concepts like Green Tourism, Nature Based Holidays, Yoga, Ethnological Tours, and Community Tours etc... which people in the advanced countries are interested in. The trend is increasingly towards organized recreation, which is nature based with components of real experiences and more activity oriented. Visitors today seek transformation and a transcending experience. This is only to be expected and not at all surprising since science has unraveled before mankind the simple truths of human life like never before. What is more, technology and satellites have facilitated the dissemination of the facts of science to the common man.

One has also to take into consideration the fact that Tourism is an all encompassing activity and it has to involve the common man and make him aware of what Tourism is all about. What are the benefits of Tourism in terms of financial, social and educational aspects? In order to reach out to the common man, Sustainable & Value Based Tourism is the only way out for a developing country like Nepal. Any country, which already has a strong Tourism identity, has to spread the gospel of

Tourism to the villages where there is more authentic innocence, rather than the cities, which in an Asian perspective is rather Dickensian. Nepal with some of the world's highest villages along with the fact that there are as many as 40 ethnic groups and 70 spoken languages in itself deserves some merit and attention from a purely Tourism point of view.

It is a very complex world that we live in and probably about time that we explore great human possibilities in some of the highest villages of the world where technology hasn't yet arrived. But, to achieve this, there has to be a fine balance between the two kinds of Tourism – Casino Tourism and Sustainable Tourism. One simply can't overhaul the other.

Sir Edmund Hillary's Observations on Mount Everest – The World's Highest Junkyard:

Perhaps after the capital city of Kathmandu, Mount Everest is Nepal's second most popular tourist landmark. From a distance, Mount Everest looks pristine, rising out of the Himalayas like a monument to nature's power. It is only up close that the evidence of man's neglect can be seen. The South Col holds the key for mountaineers determined to climb Mount Everest. It is the launching pad from which all the expeditions make their way up to the summit. Considered the most hostile place on planet earth, it is 26,000 feet above sea level, lashed by 100 to 140 mph winds and frozen by temperatures running below minus 40 to 100 degree Celsius.

Over the years, it has come to enjoy the dubious distinction of having become the world's highest graveyard. Strewn with garbage and dead bodies of unfortunate climbers, mountaineers dread having to camp there today. Santosh Yadav, the Indian woman mountaineer who enjoys the distinction of having climbed the Everest a number of times has this to say – *"I spent the night resting my head against a rock which was jutting into the tent. Imagine my horror when I woke up in the morning to find that it was not a rock but a dead body"*.

Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climbed Everest in the year 1953. Then it seemed to be a feat. Today anyone could do it. It is quite common to find 300 people from 15 teams simultaneously camped at the Everest Base Camp. The figures of climbers are rising. Two people climbed the summit in 1970, ten in 1980, but with the advancement of technology, as many as 72 had conquered the Everest in the year 1990.

The most disturbing fact is that with the increase in the number of successful climbers, there has also been a corresponding rise in mortality figures. Today the number of deaths per annum has crossed the 150 mark. The reason for this sharp increase

according to Sir Edmund Hillary I is that one can conquer Everest with the state of the art equipments which includes Titanium bottles, packed power bars and Gatorade for nourishment. The climbers wear six layers of space age thermal clothing, designed to give protection from temperatures upto minus 30 to 40 degree Celsius. What is more, each climber has a hand held radio set for the progress of the expedition through satellites and computers. The climbers can call home and even send E-mails from the summit.

A majority of the climbers tend to blame the weather for the high number of casualties, but apparently this is not the case. According to Sir Edmund Hillary, “A storm does not strike out of the blue. There is sufficient warning, which if heeded, can prevent tragedy”. In today’s age of instant communication, such information is not hard to come by.

Another fact worth noting is that summit climb must be made as early as possible since the weather in this region tends to deteriorate by afternoon. Today, summit attempts take place even in the afternoon. According to Sonam Gyaltgen – “Fischer and his climbers reached the summit after 2 P.M. and Rob Hall and his climbers reached their summit after 3 P.M. when the winds had reached hurricane velocity and a wintry storm was howling in all its fury. As part of the Sustainable Tourism agenda, it is imperative to clean up the mess so that one of the world’s greatest natural wonders can be restored to its pristine glory. For many years, mountaineers worldwide have been clamoring that Government of Nepal pass a law making it mandatory for expeditions to bring down the bodies of dead climbers. The Everest experience also has lessons with regard to mankind’s forays into virgin territories like the Antarctica and the unexplored realms of outer space, which are also getting cluttered with debris of our civilization.

Below, I quote the observation of Sir Edmund Hillary, a few month’s prior to his passing away in January 11, 2008, on the sorry state of affairs on Mount Everest–

“ Those of us who climbed Everest in the early days were the lucky ones. We had to defeat the problems ourselves. When we stood on the summit we had only our good friends for company. These conditions can only be renewed by limiting the number of expeditions on the mountain at any one time. Governments must put safety ahead of financial profit. Only then will the challenge and joy of climbing Mount Everest return.

A golden rule, which is being flouted, is one of gradual acclimatization. But with climbers not having much time at their disposal, they want to reach the summit in the shortest possible time. From a test of endurance, discipline and skill, the

climb has been transformed into a battle of modern technology”.

He further goes on to quote that – “*I can hardly imagine myself climbing Everest in the present scenario. I remember vividly the time spent on South Col and my climb to the summit on May 29, 1965. It was 9 A.M. when I stood on the summit. I took a long wheeling look from the highest point on earth. There was Makalu, Lhotse, Nuptse and Kanchenjunga looming large on the horizon and many other peaks far below us. I gazed north towards the Tibetan plateau and south towards the plains of India. The view was unforgettable. Of all the emotions, which surged through me, the most dominant one was of humility and sadness. Having climbed the highest peak hereafter there would be nothing higher to climb since all roads would necessarily lead downwards”.*

During his last years, Sir Edmund Hillary was dead against the annual increase in the number of expeditions and the commercialization of the climb, which has had sad consequences for many of those wishing to reach the summit. During his lifetime, Sir Edmund Hillary was vehemently drawing the attention of the environmentalists and pointing out one critical area of neglect, which is care for ones environment. Now with Everest already becoming a junkyard as well as a graveyard, a lot of combined effort and co-operation will be needed to clean up the mess. And once cleaned, a restricted and environment friendly climb up the summit is the only way out to preserve one of the world’s greatest natural wonders. And this where a Sustainable Tourism policy will prove to be a step in the right direction.

What Nepal Expects from Today’s World Traveler:

Never has a term like “Eco-Friendly” been so misused and seldom has such a valuable approach been taken over and watered down in such a way by business and politics. Hopefully Nepal is only too aware of such pitfalls and malpractices. It was felt for a long time that given the stupendous array of natural and cultural tourism products that Nepal possesses, they were grossly underutilized and the outside world were quite ignorant about many of Nepal’s hidden tourism treasures due mainly to lack of international media coverage and inadequate product development. For a long time trekking and mountaineering activities were very popular, so much so that both these activities were unrestricted as a result of which there was massive ecological imbalance particularly in the Annapurna region. Also it is a fact that tourism in Nepal was not evenly spread out and that resulted in regional disparities of income.

All these factors taken together, realistically justifies the introduction of Sustainable & Value Based Tourism in Nepal. Now, to the question of what Nepal expects from today's world traveler, to put it in simple words – it is basically to look at the concept of Sustainable Tourism as an ongoing balancing act between the interests of tourism and ecology. Of course, there is no particular solution, only the acceptance of a dialogue between two worlds that speak different languages.

Being a small and mountainous country tucked away in the high Himalayas, Nepal doesn't have "*Ecological Watchdogs*" that exist in developed countries. Instead there are a few general principles of Eco-Tourism, which is fairly well known to the discerning world traveler and needs no further elaboration, (e.g. Keep physical and cultural impacts minimum, avoid purchasing products made from endangered animals etc...) and it is expected of today's world traveler to observe all these basic principles.

It is but natural to expect that there will be tourist impact both physical and cultural, particularly in the fragile sensitive areas of Nepal. It will be a question of how best Nepal can shape this impact into a better quality of life for everyone.

As far as the cultural impact is concerned, Nepal believes in the ideology that culture does not live in a vacuum. Nepal's culture is century's old and held in high esteem while modern civilization also has much to offer to rural Nepal – all that is great and inspiring. It is expected of today's world traveler to absorb the simplicity and ruggedness of the Nepalese way of life as also it's rich ethnic diversity and contribute his bit towards creating a perfect synergy that thrives on the mixing of cultures. Already a variety of innovative tourist activities like workshops on local crafts, local music, ethnology tours, cave culture tours, Everest Clean-up Campaigns, the classical Ox cart rides through intriguing Nepalese villages etc... have been launched to create that synergy. According to the predictions of Francesco Franqualli, a renowned scientific tourism expert, the 21st century is likely to witness a more than proportionate increase in tourism of the unconventional type. This trend will especially concern the developing countries and Nepal falls in that bracket. While such evolution poses challenges for Nepal, in the sense that it needs to safeguard the environment, it also presents an opportunity to develop accommodation and other facilities which are in sync with their local setting through the use of vernacular or indigenous building materials and the employment of personnel familiar with the working of such materials.

The search for authenticity on the part of the discerning world traveler can be sought in Nepal's rich repertoire of handicraft items that will nicely compliment the entire Sustainable Tourism

experience. The world famous Tibetan Thangka paintings as well as the quintessential Gurkha knives, Tibetan carpets and aromatic Nepalese incense sticks along with ethnic jewellery can be great take-away-home souvenirs. For the indigenous people, selling such handicraft and handloom items have been a family tradition and over the years this segment has more or less evolved into family run enterprises. Nepal's 3000-year-old living culture is aptly reflected in its handicraft and handloom products. The Eco-Friendly tourists by spending on such indigenously manufactured items will be sending a very strong message to the toiling craftsmen who hope to carry on their rich traditions that has been passed on from generation to generation, to the 21st century and beyond.

Public Relations Strategy for the Promotion of Sustainable Tourism

PR has always played a dynamic role in Tourism. PR in Tourism is all about developing and maintaining awareness about a product, so that the prospective tourists are encouraged to buy it.

By resorting to PR, the mandarins of Nepal's tourism industry can influence and attract the target markets that help a lot in developing successful business. The hallmark of PR in Nepal's Tourism industry is raising the profile of the Destination Nepal. The watchword is consistency for a considerable period of time. One has also to remember that PR is essentially publicity secured free of charge as opposed to advertisement which is paid public message.

The mandarins of Nepal's burgeoning tourism industry have to recognize that a PR campaign can result in media coverage, which is viewed much more positively than advertisement. Also it is a fact that information disseminated through PR activities appears impartial whereas advertisement is often treated with suspicion.

Sustainable Tourism being a relatively new tourism product in Nepal, there is a degree of risk involved and the threat perceptions too are more often than not present, which makes the task of engineering successful promotions of new tourism products difficult. However, through PR campaigns, a destination like Nepal can in fact make the most of the strengths and opportunities that has been identified and a practical way of minimizing the weaknesses and threats.

While undertaking the challenging task of promoting the Sustainable Tourism phenomenon in Nepal, a few basic features should be borne in mind –

- (1) Honesty.
- (2) Right use of imagination. Cheap tricks to get attention can be unproductive.
- (3) Consistent approach.
- (4) Effective communication.

- (5) Distinctiveness of the product by stressing the benefits rather than the features.

Traveler Writers as PR Agents:

The mandarins of Nepal's Tourism industry would do well to invite renowned Travel Writers to visit Nepal as part of FAM tours. This is one of the most effective ways of securing publicity, literally free of cost. However, Travel Writers from financially sound major newspapers and Travel publications do not accept government hospitality. So, it is expected of the private sector players like hotels & resorts, travel agents and tour operators to take this initiative of inviting Travel Writers to come on FAM tours to Nepal.

A Niche Marketing Strategy:

In a recent AFTA Convention, Claude Sarbello, an internationally acclaimed Tourism consultant had remarked thus – *“The Baby Boomers, the people born in between 1946 and 1956 would retire at the age of 62 and would have the largest impact on the tourism industry between 2008 and 2017”*. Sarbello was speaking of western societies. The Asian society, however, has already reached this stage. Thus, Nepal being a favorite haunt of Indians since they are the largest visitors to Nepal and the fact that the western nations are already well inclined towards Nepal as their preferred destination, the future of Nepal's tourism industry viz-a-viz Sustainable Tourism lies with the 45 plus and 65 plus age group visitors on a long term basis.

The incentives to tackle the market are many. They are easily accessible; they have seen the world; they have brought up children and put them on their feet and what is more they don't have an unrealistic level of TV – hyped expectations. They know what they want; they know how much they can afford to pay and their time is their own. They are not likely to cancel their bookings at the last minute because their bosses summon them; they are their own bosses. And they are not likely to get sick since they have handled their own health problems successfully for a long time.

In South Asia and in the western world, millions of uncounted people join the ranks of senior citizens every year. Thus, Nepal has a great opportunity to target this lucrative market because of the fact that it is the people in this category who would best appreciate the concept of Sustainable Tourism. Whether or not Nepal reaches out towards this burgeoning market remains to be seen.

Youths and Sustainable Tourism:

Tourism has always been a fascinating industry for the youths all over the world. In more ways than one, the entire world of Travel & Tourism is a young man's industry. The youth brigade all over the world are lured into this industry for the sheer

sense of excitement, fun, glitz and glamour associated with this happening industry.

In Sustainable Tourism, which is Eco-friendly and Nature-based, youths play a pivotal role since they are the ones who are concerned about the earth's future, for in a rapidly changing world, what will be left for them to hold onto if the environment they live in are not protected from man's own destructive pursuits. In case of Nepal, the large-scale destruction of one of the most serene Mountain Tourism destination in the world – the Annapurna Region, due to unrestricted trekking is too well known. Or for that matter the degradation of some of the high altitude peaks of Nepal, inclusive of Mount Everest, which continues to challenge mankind's spirit of adventure.

Needless to say, the younger generations are the future of this earth and Nepal is no exception. Only with the young people involved, will the environmentally sensitive Sustainable Tourism have a future in Nepal.

Eager Tourism enthusiasts and keen students of Tourism in Nepal should be given the best Tourism Education the world has to offer. One has to remember that Tourism is a highly organized subject of study these days. Tourism education in Nepal should in all earnest begin at the secondary school level going all the way up to Graduation, Post Graduation and to still higher levels of cutting edge research.

A Humble Suggestion:

The need of the hour for Nepal's Tourism industry and the academic think tank is to design a need based curriculum that can arm the students of Tourism in Nepal today to be efficient and professional in their workplace tomorrow.

The key objectives of the “need based” curriculum may be as follows –

- (1) To provide students with a high quality academic program that is pro-active to the future employment needs of the Tourism industry.
- (2) To provide students with relevant academic and information technology (IT) oriented knowledge to become more professional in the work place.
- (3) To build up awareness of the heritage – both natural and cultural about Nepal and why its preservation is important.
- (4) Understanding of diverse cultures, their values, traditions and customs to encourage mutual respect.
- (5) To arm the students with adequate knowledge to protect culture and natural sites from increasing threats in a rapidly changing world.

As far as Sustainable Tourism Education is concerned, a very reliable program could be the UNESCO sponsored “World Heritage Education”, that falls under the Associated School Projects. The UNESCO has set up a World Heritage Youth Forum wherein hundreds of students and teachers from different countries meet to share experiences and ideas on world heritage. What is more, for the students, it is a chance to meet people from other countries, learn about their heritage, discuss common concerns and be creative in the workshops.

UNESCO already has a very strong presence in Nepal and more and more Secondary Schools in Nepal should be brought under the ambit of this grand project with active support of the teachers and decision makers.

According to Ramesh Tripathi, a cherubic 16 year old from downtown Kathmandu who participated in the Associated Schools Project of UNESCO last year had this to say – “ *In our souls we must stress that the World Heritage belongs to us, not to say it, but to do it, not just today but for the next years and even centuries. This is our responsibility as a young generation*”. Indeed, words of wisdom from someone so young.

It is exactly this kind of education that more and more youths in Nepal should be exposed to. Nepal needs hundreds and thousands of Ramesh Tripathis to make the concept of Sustainable Tourism viable at the ground level.

The Future Ahead:

Sustainable & Value Based Tourism is undoubtedly going to be Nepal’s biggest incentive to visitors worldwide in the 21st century. A great deal of research, planning and product designing has to be done along with foresightedness. With the noble intention of taking tourism to the common man through a sustainable approach, the future indeed looks promising. If the Sustainable Tourism Approach is implemented meticulously, in the foreseeable future, Nepal could become a year round tourist destination with the entire country bustling with the discerning global tourists who are constantly in search of newer experiences. Nepal does have the tourism assets, which very few countries on planet earth can match. All that is needed is a sense of dynamism and the will to succeed. International collaboration does play a key role in Tourism development but one has to remember that such collaborations viz-a-viz financial assistance is to prepare the ground and provide infrastructure to Destination Nepal to build its Tourism industry and to facilitate fundamentals, i.e. to preserve, interpret, protect and comprehend those very elements that makes Nepal a place worth visiting. International collaborations should never be viewed as long-term facilitators.

Nepal must be mindful of the reality that it is living in an age of stiff competition. The fittest alone will survive, while those with lackadaisical attitude will simply have to face the challenges from emerging destinations. In order that Nepal might vie for a place in the global tourism arena as one of the most sought after tourist destination, concerted actions are necessary on bilateral as well as regional fronts by devising packages and programs that can be implemented practically at the grassroots level. Nepal in fact has reiterated in each and every available forum that Nepal and India and she and Sri Lanka can come up with innovative schedules by identifying the common tourist centers in their respective countries. It would not be out of place if a tourist to Candy in Sri Lanka or Sarnath in India were also offered to visit Lumbini in Nepal in the foreseeable future.