

"Tourism for Peace" 2010
Reviving Shangri-La

Submitted to
Honorable Prime Minister
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Concept Paper by Megh Ale

Introduction:

Tourism for Peace - *reviving Shangri-La* concept is to promote Peace and stability in the country through tourism and simultaneously it will help the sustainable development in the region. It will also help to promote and conserve the social, natural, environmental and cultural heritage of the country. There is no doubt Nepal is still a peaceful and beautiful country, this message has to reach to every one in the world and “Tourism for Peace” *reviving Shangri-La* will carry right message, in fact this will be an exemplary and new experiment for many nations to follow and promote peace in the world.

Back Ground:

Nepal had 10 years of political Tsunami, which affected the entire country socially, economically and physically. Over 13,500 lives were lost, thousands of people were displaced, and economy of the country was almost collapsed. *We never had terrorism problem in our country but it was political one, as we all know there was not a single fatality in tourist and it proves that.* Back in 2002 after the Royal massacre and when the political turmoil was escalating in the country the media did not keep quite either. In the front cover page on Time magazine was written Good Bye Shangri-La about Nepal. Since then, the tourism industry became one of the most effected industries during these periods. All those propaganda from the media and travel advisories from different countries’ foreign offices the tourism business was suffered so much. Because of that many hotels, restaurants, travel, trekking and rafting companies were forced to close down. Thousands of skilled people were forced to leave the country; the situation became a total brain drain for the nation. After the peace treaty with the Maoist Party, now it has given some breathing space but still no where near what it used to be. We cannot give up the hope and the hope comes with the challenges. The cloud of uncertainty is still over our head but we all must realize that we cannot sit around and do nothing about it. This is the time to revive the Shangri-La that people may have forgotten.

Concept:

Tourism can bring peace in the country; Tourism has to be considered as low hanging fruits of the country, small investment, and quick return and engages more people then any other businesses. Now the tourism is the biggest industry in the world, billions of dollars are already invested in this industry. In UN analysis in average, one tourist can engage 9 people but in Nepal, one tourist can generate 11 jobs -the tourism expert Karna Shakya. It is very true when we count from travel agencies, airlines crews and ground handlers, taxi and transportations, hotels, restaurants, guides and potters, handicrafts they buy and farmers who produce all the food and herbs as well as all the finance and banking institutions are involved. In that case if we have a million tourists then there will be 11 million jobs, if we have 11 million jobs then there will be no one to hold the guns of the Army or rebels, no people will be displaced from their homes and brain drain will stop to certain extent. Naya Nepal has become the buzz word of the time for many politicians and people of the country. This cannot be just a cheap talk but we all have to act on it and the concept “**Tourism for Peace**” -***reviving Shangri-La*** can be a good contribution from tourism side to develop Naya Nepal. This is time to do some thing positive, this is the time to review ourselves what mistakes have we made in the past and learn form it so we can assure to ourselves, our community and our youngsters that we are moving to the right direction. We have come this far, the peace process has taken a momentum and now we all have to push this to movement so we will have long term peace in our country, we cannot afford another mistake. Ultimately this event will promote PEACE in the country and in the world. Nepal can be an example for rest of the world to follow, promoting PEACE through tourism. More quality tourists come, the Peace will sustain in the country. The Peace is the key to the further development of the country.

It might be relevant to say that here, Nepal is much safer country than many countries in the world such as UK, USA, Spain, France and Turkey, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka etc. where are lot more threat of Terrorism / Al-kaida, not only that our country is more peaceful.

A Revolution on sustainable village tourism: Adopt your village Program:

The nation has to have its long term Vision and Mission; it has to realize that the tourism has to be the priority of the nation. Once we will have sustainable peace in the country, if there is no infrastructure to cope with the flow of tourism, it will cause big problem too. It is wise to be prepared for the future. If we are not prepared then there is the danger of destroying of our culture, tradition and values as well as nature and environment with mass and cheap tourism. Just look at the economy boom in our neighboring countries and what we have to offer for them. To cope with that situation the nation must have a good plan with a long term vision. Adopt your village could be a good solution to begin with as it will be a small investment, model of sustainable village tourism and will help to the local economy and ultimately will help to preserve the endogenous culture of the country will contribute to Naya Nepal.

Village tourism, sustainable tourism and eco tourism all these are the buzz words of these days in practical have we practiced much??? How can we set this up: We have close to 400 trekking companies, 60 rafting companies, over 350 travel agents and hundreds of restaurants and close to 400 2 Star hotels. All these big tourism and guide associations. WE have Tourism ministry, Nepal Tourism Board, Dept. of National Park and Wildlife and many multi national INGOs. It is a serious business for every one who is involved in it. Tourism has developed many places such as Annapurna and Everest Regions, along the national parks in lowland. Nepal has got so much to offer but we have not been able to spread tourism dollars in rest of the country. Adopt your village could be the way forward to spread the tourism to our rural villages with a very minimum investment.

- **Adopt your village (A model of sustainable village tourism)**
- **Adventure Sports Tourism:** Himalaya Eco Challenge, Everest Marathon, Mt. Biking race, Paragliding championship, triathlon, Himalayan White Water Challenge etc.
- **Nature and Adventure tourism:** Mountaineering, trekking, rafting and jungle safaris.
- **Culture tourism and Religious tourism:** Nepal's cultural heritage can be displayed through out the year. For Hindus and Budhist, Pashupati and Baudhanath and Lumbini etc. These all has to be worked out in more details one the concept is accepted.

Other additional programs can be:

- Adventure Sports competitions and activities will be held in various regions such as Everest Marathon, International Paragliding Championship, Bagmati Eco Challenge, Mountain Bike Championships, Himalayan Whitewater Challenge etc
- The Paddle for Peace, Mountain bike race will start from Shwayambhu Nath World Harritage site and finishes at Lumbini at Buddha's birthplace.
- A model of Sustainable and Eco Tourism to be displayed.
- A new concept of "adopt your village" to be implemented.
- New destination to be opened and promoted specially in west Nepal.
- Some of the Himalayan Peaks will be declared as pristine mountains and some of the Rivers will be declared as Himalayan River Heritage sites and gift to the living Earth.
- Tourism Ministry and NTB to Co ordinate with Ministry of Education and Sports Council to bring other sports events on the same year.

Need to see the Visit Nepal – 98 concepts prepare by Mr. Karna Shakya, lot of those can be replicated or improvised so we do not need to re-invent the wheel again. It can be utilized as a work sheet for references. We need to find the total review of the event so we do not repeat the same mistakes. Please find the notes from Karna Shakya's concept paper:

Need to look at:

1. Tourism it the most valuable means for national economy
2. Billions of dollars have already invested in tourism industry
3. Nepal's image emerged in tourism market during 70s is fading.
4. Major tourism destination in Nepal is environmentally degrading.
5. Infrastructures are not provisioned and geared up for tourism.

6. Potential divers of tourism products are remained unidentified.
7. Anomalies in tourism development are not addressed.
8. To sustain the Peace in the country through Tourism.

Organizations:

For the project implementation Nepal Tourism Board to take the lead role under the chairmanship of Tourism Minister with official representation from different ministries and municipalities as well as all the concerned tourism organizations.

The sub committee to be set up:

- Promotion and publicity: All the diplomats from Nepal to be engaged,
- Product Development
- Coordinating and infrastructure Development.

Actions:

- Prepare detail working plan.
- Setup

Publicity:

Product Development:

1. Identify and develop environmentally friendly endemic, soft adventure and ecotourism product.
2. Improve tourism facilities including securities majors.
3. Develop special tour packages such as butterfly fly and bird watching, monkey watch fossil hunting, rhododendron and wild flowers tours, jungle safari and blue ship hunting.
4. Develop culture and anthropological tours Bihar and Bahis, monasteries old colonial places in collaboration with TOURGAN and NATA.
5. Develop endemic and value based package tours with existing aforestation, rice plantation, cleanup campaign on rivers, participate in BRF
6. Develop pilgrimage packages for Lumbini festival in collaboration with Lumbini Trust and also develop Janakpur and other Tarai festivals during winter.
7. Help to organize craft, pottery, jewelry, thanka, Maithili art, traditional doll, cotemporary art, garment show and exhibition in collaboration with various handicraft associations.
8. Develop ecotourism, and other culture packages in Annapurna conservation area in collaboration with NTNC and local community there.
9. Develop National Parks tours and treks with collaboration with Dept of National Park and Wildlife.
10. Similarly develop festival tour program in various culturally rich areas collaboration with local community based, religious and social groups.
11. Collection inventory of local religious festivals and culture events to be offered for tourism propose involving local community.
12. Organize monthly events in different areas starting inauguration in Kathmandu.
13. Provide incentives to international tourist to visit Nepal.
14. Arrange international as well as domestic airlines to give a discount or other attractive gift voucher such as free hotel accommodation packages during the visit.
15. Provide discount for hotels, travel and tours, trekking and rafting etc. during the event year. In all activities and accommodations during the event year.
16. Establish welcome counter or hospitality desk at major entry points during the event year.
17. Check regularly to maintain the quality and standard in hotels and other hospitality industry.
18. Coordinate transport companies to operate tourist mobility from airport to Hotel and within the country.

Environment and infrastructure Development:

1. Activate and support municipality to get rid of street dogs and cows from the street.
2. Strictly control to debar open movement raw meat and barbarous display of animal organ at butchers' shop.
3. Arrange immediate hygienic disposal of dead pets and animals lying in street. Popularize a community service phone number to inform concern authority.

4. Arrange emergency van to take brutal of the dead animals.
5. Penalize the management of the cinema hall, trading houses and manufacturing industries that pollute city core areas.
6. Discourage traffic and restrict car parking in historic and tourism sites.
7. Improve parking area management in city core areas.
8. Help to enforce emission pollution control program.
9. Make mandatory for vehicle dealers to open their own company's garage to maintain their sold cars.
10. Restrict free bus and truck parking in ring road and national highways.
11. Encounter private transport in ring road areas.
12. Allow vehicles from foreign country to entry in to country only after emission check up.
13. Encourage private companies to collect garbage from shops and houses.
14. Encourage big business houses to build pay-toilets at heritage sites.
15. Promote organic farming, may be country have to have a vision to make the entire country an organic country with in next 15 years.
16. Extend communication centers in rural areas so the visitors would have easy access to communicate.
17. Install public phone at all police check post.
18. Encourage concern agencies and business houses to plant trees and make little parks in public areas or places.
19. Request Road Dept. To develop recreation or resting places with petrol pump, toilet, eat-outs in highways and main roads.

Coordinating Agencies:

1. Municipalities
2. Ministry of housing and planning
3. Ministry of road and transport
4. Ministry of foreign affairs.
5. Ministry of Home
6. NTCN and ICIMODE
7. Lumbini Development Trust
8. Dept. of Archeology
9. All the tourism Associations
10. Dept. of National Park and Wildlife.

Adventure Activities:

Mountaineering, Treks, rafting and kayaking, canyoning, caving, mountain biking, paragliding, ultra lights,

Nature: jungle safaris and jungle treks, nature treks, bird watching, wild life treks, exploring the different national parks of Nepal, fishing and hunting.

Culture: Kathmandu Valley and its ancient culture, Lumbini, all the indigenous people and their villages to be included, such as Tamang, Gurung, Tharu, Maithali, Magars, Newars, Rai and Limbu etc.

In total, Nepal will be displayed as a showcase of promoting peace through tourism "Tourism for Peace" and ultimately will help to Revive Shangri-La and this can be the new concept for rest of the world to follow, a very new experiment.