

Promoting a Nation with Cultural Tourism

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Abstract

This paper connects the issue of promoting a nation with cultural tourism and shows that a nation's promotion is possible only through cultivating a humanitarian behavior, not just through the commercialization of cultural heritage. Cultural tourism incorporates both a nation's economy as well as its typical mode of humanity that deals with the visitors from other countries in a cultured way and it inspires them to come to the nation time and again to realize themselves as true human beings, narrowing the gap between themselves and other human beings across the world.

Keywords: Tourism, cultural music, folk hymns, capitalism, nation

Introduction

A nation consists of two types of properties: hardware and software properties. Its geography and physical properties can be taken as hardware component and its philosophical and cultural properties or variations can be understood as software component. On the basis of these two aspects, the development of a nation goes physically and culturally. Of course, a healthy nation has the signs of both a clean and well- systematized physical environment and a cultured social environment. Just as to refresh and purify our physical environment we need to maintain a healthy environment, we need to clean our social environment with the strength of character, healthy minds and good behavior. Now, in the context of promoting a nation with tourism, we need to ask ourselves whether tourism is to promote our nation only by increasing the amount of money. Giving more priority to money and less priority to cultural strength may lead a nation to the hell of corruptions that eventually may destroy the identity of a civilized and cultured nation by losing the essential software, the culture of humanity.

Tourism and its end

The issue of tourism development needs to draw our attention to what it does to humanity. In this regard, it is relevant to pick up the view of Jeffrey Blustein (2008) to see how he inspires us to be responsible for human beings while getting involved in socio-cultural activities. According to him, "Justice requires that we treat people as ends in themselves" (p. 34). His sense of civilization emphasizes humanity. If we like to follow the idea of Blustein while promoting a nation with tourism, we need to adopt the ways of developing tourism without any dehumanizing activities. Of course, tourism should increase the dignity of human beings.

Tourism and national identity

The making of a nation emphasizes the basic myth of collective origin. Such foundational myth “produces the linkage between national identity and a pure, original people or ‘folk’ tradition” (Barker, 2008, p. 253). While developing tourism, we need to attract the tourists to our original or traditional as well as creative works of art and culture that can extend our identity. Attraction needs to be made not merely with an intention to earn money but with a manner that would show and represent our typical qualities of behavior following the norms of *atithi devo bhava* (regarding the guests as gods) and serve them accordingly. Such quality behavior will certainly establish our virtuous image in the world, inspiring other people towards the ideals of humanity. Tourism of a nation can grow well with the establishment of the ideal behavior of its people in the minds of tourists. This would naturally extend and raise the identity of a nation in its own cultural mode of humanity.

Cultural music and tourism

Music

As music is deeply associated with all human cultures, our study on the life of a particular people essentially demands the investigation of how music is used in a particular context of cultural ceremonies as well as the general events of life. We know very well that music, well-organized with words, produces effective expression of life in its fullness. Music refers to certain sounds - vocal or instrumental or both-combined to produce a pleasant or harmonious expression of feeling or impression (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996, p. 953). This is what music refers to in its pure terms. In its wider sense, “Music began with singing” (Sachs, 1943, p. 2). Music (*sangeet*) suggests an organization of many things. Music is well defined in Sanskrit literature, that is, "*samyak prakarena yad geeyate tat sangeetam*" (the act of singing well is called music). Singing well includes the use of sounds, rhythm, correct pronunciation of words, gestures and facial expression while singing (Mathema, 2066, p. 1). Darnal (2061) sees in music the organization of the three: song, dance and musical instrument (p.1). He has thus further widened the definition of music. In other words, music can be felt or seen in sound and body movement. So it is oral, aural and visual at the same time.

However, Sharma Bhatta (2066) takes us beyond this *aahat nad* (that is hearable through the normal mechanism of our ears) into deeper and subtle sound that can be felt in meditation. This subtle sound is called *anaahat nad*. He argues that *aahat nad* is the outer form of the *anaahat nad*. The former is temporary: as soon as it is produced, it starts passing away. However, the latter exists permanently in the innermost part of the human software. From this point of view, outer hearable sound has its origin in the *anaahat nad* that can be felt only with the strength of devotional meditation.

Folk music

Particular folk culture or folk life has its own musical associations and organizations. Folk music, as a part of community life, represents its folk spirit in its own way. In other words, it does not represent just the feelings of an individual but the collective spirit of certain community, caste, class and locality. Folk music, in its extended sense, can hold the spirit of a nation as a whole. Understanding a community, caste, class, locality and a nation needs to feel the folk music of that community, caste, class, locality and nation.

Folk music is the music of folk life. In other words, it is the music that represents the feelings of folk life. As the history of folk life is very long and vast, its music too has a very long history and vast body. The music of folk life started with the beginning of the life itself. Folk music came into existence before human language. This is proved by the fact that in folk music we find non-verbal elements still working to enable us to feel the subtle truths of human life. Govinda Acharya's (2002) definition of folk music reinforces its ancientness, "Folk music is the first creative expression of human civilization" (p. 5). In this regard, it is relevant to see how Ethnomusicology observes music.

Defining ethnomusicology, Jeff Todd Titon (1997) asserts that it is "the study of music that stresses the importance of music in and as culture" (p. 250). He sees the function of music within society and what reveals music is the important aspects and indicators of a culture. Ethnomusicology is concerned with music and analyses it in relation to social or cultural context. It regards music as a social phenomenon and drills down to see how music is used in a particular social event and cultural ceremony. In other words, it makes an attempt to see the function of music within society. Of course, as a social phenomenon, music can express the cultural aspects of a particular community or people and ethnomusicology enables us to see music carrying the cultural sensibilities of a people that use it. With the expressive power of music, we can feel the pulsation and subtle truths of a society.

Contribution of cultural songs to the elevation of a nation

From religious and ritual perspectives, cultural songs are expected to culture the minds and behavior of people. Having belief in supernatural power and being involved in religious and ritual activities enables people to dissolve their egos and inspires them to be kind, polite, generous and respectful to each other. Having belief in the assumption that all humans and non-human beings on earth are the offspring of the same God, leads to a sense of equality among all beings. Cultural songs are effective in establishing such ideas and feelings in the minds of people with the help of the type of music that is tempered with the noble thoughts and benevolent feelings of humanity. When the people of a country become saturated with the sensibility of humanity, it will be prosperous in all sectors including tourism.

Folk hymns

Titon (1997) sees folk hymn as “a song praising God and sung in a folk group” (p. 455). Similarly, Irving Lowens has defined it as a “secular folk-tune that happens to be sung to a religious text” (as cited in Titon, 1997, 456). These definitions of a folk hymn do not discord with those which we find in Nepali folk literature. In Bandhu’s (2058) words, “ The song which people sing in a religious ceremony is called *bhajan*. It describes the virtues and the strength of the concerned gods and goddesses of the ceremony “(p. 153). In this regard, Acharya (2002) has defined the deities that Nepali *bhajan* refer to within his definition of *bhajan*: “*Bhajan* is the expression of praise and recollection of local deities and the ones which are mentioned in the Hindu myths” (p. 58). Considering over these ideas about *bhajan*, we can now have a concluding notion of a folk hymn that it is a religious song that represents the sincere feelings of a devotee for gods and goddesses.

There are some notable features of Nepali folk hymns. The first feature to be noted about them is that they are to be sung at night, starting from around eight p.m. and ending with next morning. Secondly, it has a certain course or process to be completed, starting from *aarati bhajan* in the evening, singing *Ramayan* at around midnight and producing the *bhajan* about Krishna (*bhimmalu bhajan*) in the next morning. In the temporal spaces between them, other types of *bhajan* can be sung. Thus, it has a course to cover the whole night. Thirdly, it has special solemn tunes which suggest that *bhajan* is not meant for superficial entertainment. Moreover, in short-tuned (*chudke*) *bhajan*, one of the devotees may feel himself being powerful as Hanuman and may do some difficult work. Next, it is usually men who sing *bhajan* whereas in *keertan*, women participate very easily.

Keertan is a short non- narrative religious song in which people repeat only a few lines to adore certain gods and goddesses. In some regions of Nepal, people regard both *keertan* and *bhajan* as the same religious songs. However, in Lumbini zone, people take them as different religious songs. In this region, people sing *keertan* in a special way that is never matched with the manner of *bhajan*. They repeat only a few lines for some minutes and the tempo is usually faster than that of *bhajan*. It does not have a narrative course to complete. People use many musical instruments while singing *keertan*. They use harmonium, flute, tambourine, cymbals, tomtom, conch-shell, timer, and so on.

In this way, it is clear that Nepali folk hymn has its own content and manner that may provide the foreigners with newness in the part of both entertainment as well as the world knowledge. Like folk hymn there are other cultural or ritual songs like wedding songs in which the tourists would feel something special and different with which they are sure to remember Nepal for a long time in their life, which also ensures their frequent visits to the country in future that further strengthens the relations of humanity.

Emphasis on cultured tourism

It is possible for us to grow our tourism to its ideal scale by growing ourselves with a cultured tourism. However, this way of developing a cultured tourism stands in contrast to the present reality of how the hosts project themselves while dealing with their guests. Cultural tourism enters the field of culture and lives on cultural heritage. Its association with culture should not be motivated merely by materialistic desire of fulfilling the economic need. In this regard, the priority should be given to the projection of our culture and national life in a way to attract and win the hearts of the guests through our cultured behavior so that they would remember us not as the money-minded people but as the true hosts that create for them a friendly, sincere and homely environment that would ascertain their repeated visits to our nation. It is often the case that they would project their greed for money without any trace of a cultured dealing with their guests in regard to their cultural heritage. To their extreme effort, they become ready even to sell themselves. The tendency of commercializing of cultural heritage is well exemplified in *Dreams of Peach Blossoms* by Abhi Subedi.

Subedi draws references to Bhrikuti in his *Dreams of peach Blossoms* to show his critical attitude to superficial way of treating the cultural properties. Bhrikuti is recognized as our "national heroine for her contributions to the field of Buddhist culture in Tibet, and for her strong influence in strengthening Tibet-Nepal relations through the medium of Buddhist culture and arts" (Shakya, 1997,p. 44). Certainly, she was a heroic figure in many ways. She was capable of raising the identity of her motherland Nepal by showing the power of her tolerance, silence and sacrifice, the properties of Buddhist culture. The name of Bhrikuti encounters commercial exploitation. The commercialization of Bhrikuti's name highlights the lack of Nepalese people's genuine connection with their past. Carol Davis (2003) shows her deep concern about this condition of present day Nepal in this way: "These scenes of present-day Nepal demonstrate that authentic cultural memory is rapidly becoming a rare commodity as television bombards Nepalis with Western imagery ..." (p. 184). Instead of associating their minds with the genuine properties of the past to live a healthy life at present, Nepalese people are now in the tendency of selling the valuable images of those properties and, in a sense, mocking at themselves by putting them in the context of commercial advertisement as if they were merely the equivalents of the cheap products which are deliberately produced to deceive people to fulfill the motto that *money is above all things*.

In the name of modernization and economic development, our cultural life is confused and fragmented. Davis (2003) observes the problem this way: "It is the juxtaposition of past and present, the jostling, of scenes of contemporary Nepal with scenes of long ago, that so aptly reflects the tension of living with tradition while moving toward modernization" (pp. 184-185). We can see how, Bhrikuti's original heroism gets mocked at in the commercial tone of Guide and Hawker as it is represented in *The Dreams of Peach Blossoms* by Abhi Subedi (2001):

GUIDE. Come and enjoy the taste of momo at Bhrikuti Momo Centre.

HAWKER. And sekuwa at Kailashpati Sekuwa Corner located in the street.
(2001, p.184)

Similarly, on Freak Street, figurines of Buddha and ancient *lings*, the phallic representation of Shiva's creative powers, are sold off at bargain prices:

GUIDE I. Please come

This is very good palace, yes, a good palace

No toilet here

But field good, you know

Nobody sees

GUIDE II. you see, this is good phallus

This king worshipped linga

Queen also, you know. (p.66)

By creating such dialogue between these two guides on how our origin is being devalued and made frickle due to materialistic way of life, Subedi urges us to revive cultural memories and infuse society with cultural integrity that can raise the dignity of subdued currents of art and culture for creating a healthy future of Nepal. So, by selling our cultural memories, we are selling our own identity. It is for this reason that the poet laments over the loss and exploitation of cultural memory:

Yes, I've also seen

The Everest waiting on rugs

On the freak streets

This palace also

Wearing dust cover

Waiting for the touch of lovers bangles of the Bhrikutis

And all these girls whose lovers' arms were amputated

Legs cut

So that they may not create other monuments

Like these ones

We sell dreams

Wrapped in the rags of times

Culture is the story

Of the sky

That is torn many times with love and pain. (Subedi, pp. 77-78)

In the context of the marketing of history and heritage, it is very difficult to define what culture is. However, the poet defines it as the "story of the sky that is torn many times with love and pain." Due to the lack of people's genuine love for their own culture, the symbols of our identity are getting faded: Everest is waiting on rugs on the Freak Streets, the palace of Bhaktapur covered with dust is waiting for the touch of lovers. The rise of materialistic forces and the first priority that people have begun to give to it compels us to raise a question whether culture is far less important than money. The obvious and intellectually expected answer is 'No'. Money is merely the means to serve humanity. If humanity is compelled to worship money or put it above human beings' life and culture, then it is natural for material forces to dance like

monsters and consume tender qualities of human beings. Therefore, Subedi's concern is to make us aware of our origins to revive our life and save it from materialistic arrogance. Of course, anchoring Nepal to its original properties would enable us to promote cultural tourism.

Conclusion

Life without cultural organism has no immunity power to survive on its own. For a nation, to strengthen her cultural organism is to construct a healthy history that opens multiple possibilities of success in different directions including cultural tourism. Humanity flourishes with its cultural organism. However, the flood of capitalism or materialism has buried different cultural roots of human beings in the world. Instead of being aware of this tendency of the world, Nepal has been too open and easy to welcome such material forces, accepting them as if they were essential elements for the nation. Now it is high time we fulfilled the roles of original performers in our own cultural time and space to revive the original way of our life and spirit on which our identity rests and flourishes.

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