

The Potential for Religious Tourism in the Panchakoshi Area of Dailekh

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Abstract

Religious tourism has been gaining increasing attention as a potential contributor to the local economy. This study explores the potential for religious tourism in the Panchakoshi area of Dailekh district, Nepal. The study exploits mixed research design, including surveys, interviews, and focus groups, to examine the current situation of religious tourism in the area, identify its potential strengths and weaknesses, and explore strategies for promoting its growth. This study is based on primary data collected in 2024 using purposive sampling methods. A total no of 57 respondents were surveyed from three local municipalities in the Panchakoshi area, and priests and monks from the pilgrimage sites. Religious tourism preserves valuable natural, architectural, religious, and cultural heritages that are unknown to outside societies. The potential of inaccessible places is closely linked to dimensional social aspects such as art, culture, and architecture. The opportunities for associated residents through a rational combination of nature, human skills, and social capital, with an accumulation of several entices the visitors so that the rational management of the tourist sites, cultural heritages, and places of interest could foster pilgrimage tourism and contribute to state development. The findings suggest the significant potential as a religious tourism destination. However, the area faces inadequate infrastructure, limited marketing and promotion, and a lack of coordination among stakeholders. This includes investments in infrastructure, improved marketing and promotion, and greater collaboration among stakeholders. Overall, the study highlights the potential of religious tourism as a tool for promoting economic development and cultural preservation in the Panchakoshi area and beyond.

Key Words: cultural, potentiality, religious, tourism

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Introduction:

Religious and spiritual practices have been prevalent since ancient times, and people have always shown a great interest in exploring the sacred destinations of different religions.

Nepal, being a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, has a rich cultural and religious heritage. It is home to numerous pilgrimage sites and attracts millions of tourists from everywhere in the world every year, which is well-known for its various religious practices. Nepal is also a popular destination for pilgrims. In 2023, a total of 1,014,885 tourists visited Nepal. The government's budget for the current fiscal year aims to attract 1.6 million foreign tourists (Paudel et al., 2024).

Tourism is the traveling of individuals for leisure, occupational, or professional reasons foreign nations or locales (Uriely, 2001). Nepal is ironic in tradition, religion, culture, and religious tourism opportunities that promote tourism and attract visitors who are interested in supporting the local economy while understanding and experiencing the culture of off-the-beaten-path areas. These are the main attractions for tourists around the world (Woli, 2022). The country's development contribution is consolidated by the increasing stage financing, which is largely attributed to tourism (Sharpley, 2014). Tourism refers to the act of traveling to different places for various purposes, such as leisure, occupational, professional, or educational reasons. It is a booming industry that has a positive impact on the economy, society, and culture of a place. Religious tourism, also known as faith tourism, is a type of tourism that involves traveling to sacred destinations or religious monuments for spiritual purposes (Pearce & Lee, 2005).

Religious tourism is the oldest form of tourism and a global trend in the history of religion (Iliev, 2020). It helps to sustain people's means of subsistence and maintain their culture (Oli, 2023). People who travel abroad for religious purposes to other sacred locations are referred to as engaging in religious tourism. It is a type of tourism where individuals or groups can travel for spiritually-related purposes (Rashid, 2018). Religious tourism, known as special interest tourism, is a significant sector of the travel and tourist industry and is typically associated with adherents of specific faiths who travel to places that are revered, has been the trailblazing kind of travel, almost since the beginning of human history (Shinde, 2015).

The Panchakoshi area in Dailekh district, Nepal, is a well-known pilgrimage site that has historical and religious significance. It is believed that visiting the five pilgrimage sites of Panchakoshi, namely Shristhan, Kotila, Navisthan, Duleshor, and Paduka, can wash away one's sins. These sites have potential for the improvement of religious tourism in the area, which can bring numerous socio-economic benefits to the district (Andolfatto, 2020). Religious tourism not only promotes cultural and religious diversity but also fosters harmony among communities. Therefore, it is crucial to develop and promote religious tourism in the Dailekh district, particularly in the Panchakoshi area, as it can act as a catalyst for the overall development of the district. Moreover, besides its religious and historical significance, the Dailekh district offers unique insights into the village life of Western Nepal, making it an attractive destination for cultural tourism as well (Bishwakarma & Basnet, 2018).

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Panchakoshi area, as it can act as a catalyst for the overall development of the district. Moreover, besides its religious and historical significance, the Dailekh district offers unique insights into the village life of Western Nepal, making it an attractive destination for cultural tourism as well (Bishwakarma & Basnet, 2018).

This study aims to explore the potentiality and observe the socio-cultural and economic benefits of developing religious tourism as well as rural tourism. It is primarily focused on analyzing and identifying the potential of religious tourism and prospects in the study area.

Literature review

People who travel abroad for religious purposes to other sacred locations are referred to as engaging in religious tourism. In this type of tourism, individuals or groups can travel for spiritually-related purposes. Theobald, (2013), stated the movement of people for a variety of reasons, either within or outside of their own country, is known as tourism. Loulanskia & Loulanski, (2011), explores traveling to destinations of religious significance, leaving the country largely for financial gain, and traveling for enjoyment and education are all considered forms of tourism. It examines the ideas of sustainable tourism and ecotourism concerning natural resources and cultural heritage.

The context of Nepal various studies carried out by the government and private organizations at various opinions in while have demonstrated that the country's tourist sector has not been able to reach its full potential (Pulido-Fernández et al., 2015). The main causes are a lack of sound occupational strategy, technology deployment, and good governance. The research has also highlighted how the tourism sector will profit immensely from the application of technology, which will enhance general governance and business conditions (Bethapudi, 2013). In the travel industry, technology can be a valuable tool for processing, distributing, and storing information. Utilizing an analytical model scan can enhance forecasts, product and service promotion, and the overall occupational development (Buhalis, 2000). New technology can be used for monitoring, good governance, security checks, destination management, and service quality. Religious tourism is widely used to characterize travel when travelers motivations are either entirely or partially religious. Religious tourists usually travel to holy sites, sites of pilgrimage, or sites of religious heritage (Tempat et al., 2020).

These locations serve as symbols for the many cultures and customs of the cities or areas in which they are found, which have been characterized as breathtaking, serene and peaceful areas that promote introspection and meditation while fostering reverence for religious beliefs (Svendsen et al., 2016). The realization of the interdependence of humans and the environment can also be aided by visiting religious sites that are connected to nature, cultures, and architectural styles. For individuals who identify as religious or who are not, the formation and preservation of religious culture has profound implications (Shinde, 2015). Furthermore, archaeology of religious sites frequently emphasizes ritual performance above comprehensive comprehension. Tourism-related products, like pure natural places, distinctive man-made environments, and cultural heritage, are highly appreciated. The goal of religious tourism is to make religious places an enduring destination for many recognized adventure travelers (Willson et al., 2013). The natural places, distinctive man-made environments, and cultural heritage are prized as tourism assets. The area of religious tourism is to provide a sustainable travel sector that appeals to a newly recognized demographic of

adventure seekers (Kartal et al., 2015). A particular factor in several historical, geographical, social, and cultural aspects is religious tourism.

Travelers for pleasure focused on finding the truth throughout the 17th century, but the steam locomotive's development in the following century brought about a significant shift in the travel industry (Anisimov et al., 2016). With more leisure time available, cultural tourism became popular, and the demand led to the birth of travel agencies, the first of which was founded by Thomas Cook in 1841 (Polat & Arslan, 2019). The ancient pilgrimage sites are still popular today, drawing large numbers of pilgrims, and travelers frequently encounter pilgrims while on vacation. The ancient pilgrimage sites are still popular today, drawing large numbers of pilgrims, and travelers frequently see pilgrims on vacation (Reader, 2007). There is a widespread search for authenticity at various depths and levels of involvement, as seen by the promotion of religious tourism today, which is perceived as both devotional and cultural (Iliev, 2020). The finding of pilgrimages over demonstrates the enduring influence and prestige of religious institutions, beliefs, and ideologies on society at large (Coleman & Bowman, 2019). The resurgence of pilgrimages is evidence that religious organizations, beliefs, and values still hold sway over society and daily conduct. The pilgrim tourist of modern times, the modern individual seeks transcendental ideals to overcome the fragments and discontinuities of modern civilization (Ammerman, 2020).

Research Methodology

In this study mixed method research utilized as sources of information. A set of twenty questions was designed to collect data from households in there Four municipalities including Dullu Municipality and Chamunda, Naranyan, Bhairbi Rural Municipality. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling method to respond to the questions. Additionally, approximately 57 individuals were selected for interviews and discussions. Furthermore, questions were prepared to gather information from the priest of Panchakoshi temple, and individuals including the priest and monk of the temple were interviewed and discussed.

Similarly, key questions were designed to capture data from other individuals in the district. To achieve the research objectives, both primary and secondary data were employed in the study area.

Results and Discussion

The Panchakoshi pilgrimage site, one of the Shaktipeeth shrines, is one of Dailekh's most visited attractions. According to legend, Sati's feet fell off her burned body. Both residents and visitors hold the shrine in great regard. Included in the Panchakoshi site are Shristhan, Kotila, Navisthan, Duleshor, and Paduka.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents about Religious Tourism

Religious Tourism	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	53	92.98
No	4	7.01
Total	57	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 presents data regarding the respondents' familiarity with religious tourism. The results show that 92.98 percent of the respondents are familiar with religious tourism. 7.01 percent respondents were not familiar about religious tourism. Based on these findings, it can be inferred that the people are aware of religious tourism. Therefore, it is imperative to develop religious tourism in the Panchakoshi area.

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents about Age Group

Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percent
18 - 30	9	15.79
31 – 40	5	8.78
41 – 50	13	22.8
51 – 60	19	33.33
> 61	11	19.3
Total	57	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 2 shows that 57 respondents, where 15.79 percent respondents were 18 - 30 age group, 8.78 percent respondents were 31 - 40 age group, 22.8 percent respondents were 41 -50, 33.33 percent respondents were 51 - 60 age group and 19.3 percent respondents were above 61 age group the sample for the study.

Table 3

Educational Status of Respondents

Level of education	No. of Respondents	Percent
Literate	57	100.00
Illiterate	-	-
Read and write	21	36.84
Basic level (1 to 8)	16	28.07
SLC/SEE	11	19.3
+ 2	5	8.78
Bachelor	4	7.01
Master and Above	-	-
Total	57	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows that 100.00 percent respondents were literate of sampling population in the study area. Out of respondents 36.84 percent only read and write, 28.07 percent respondents had gained basic level (1 - 8). 19.3 percent respondents were gained SLC/SEE. Similarly, 8.78 percent of the respondents had gained + 2 and 7.01 percent respondents had gained bachelor level education.

Table 4

Views of Priests Towards the Religious Tourism

Religious Tourism	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	5	100
No	0	0
Total	5	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The provided information pertaining to religious tourism of the temple's priests is presented in Table 4. It can be observed that the said priests, alongside the monks, possess a commendable understanding of the subject matter.

Religious Tourism is Income Source of People

Religious Tourism is the major income source of country. It is important to develop religious tourism for the economic development Dailekh district. Panchakoshi area will support in the income of people if we develop this area as religious tourist destination.

The distribution of respondents as income sources of religious tourism at Panchakoshi area:

Table 5

Distribution of Respondents as Income Sources of Religious Tourism

Income Sources	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	49	85.97
No	8	14.03
Total	57	100.00

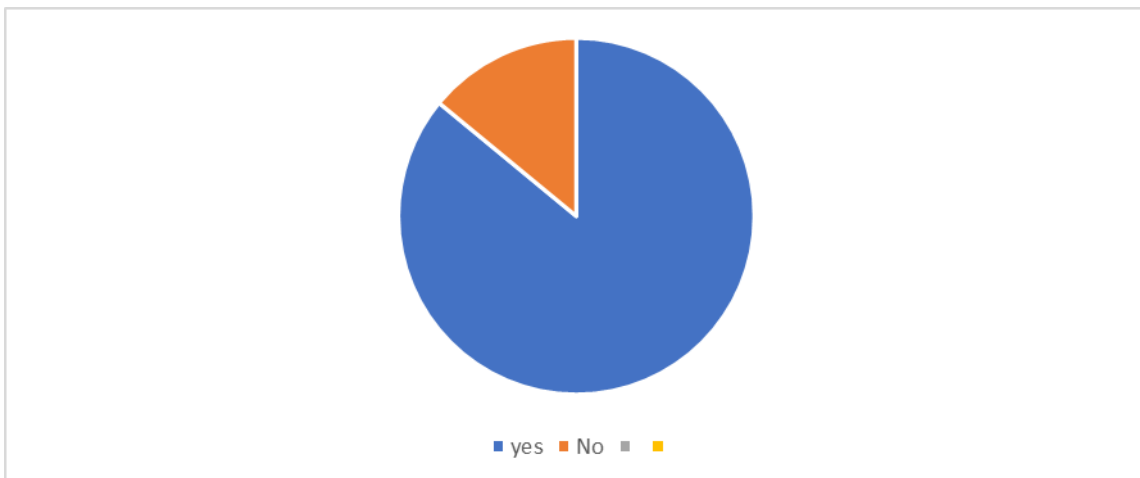
Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 shows that 85.97 percent respondents told that when tourism developed, people get job opportunity directly or indirectly. On the other hand 14.03 percent people told that they had not any idea about it.

Similarly, all the 5 priest of temple responds that religious tourism is the main income source for their livelihood.

Figure 1

Distribution of Respondents as Income Sources of Religious Tourism



Source: field Survey, 2024

Figure 1 indicates that 85.97 percent of respondents believe that the development of tourism provides direct or indirect job opportunities. Conversely, 14.03 percent of respondents stated that they were unaware of this connection.

Current Condition of Religious Tourism

Panchakoshi area is important places for the religious tourist. Pilgrimage and others religious people visits and worship there. These five Pilgrimage places is connected with off road now. People visits from different district at this places. Tthe current condition of religious tourism at Panchakoshi area of Dailekh.

Table 6

Distribution of Respondents for the Current Condition of Religious Tourism

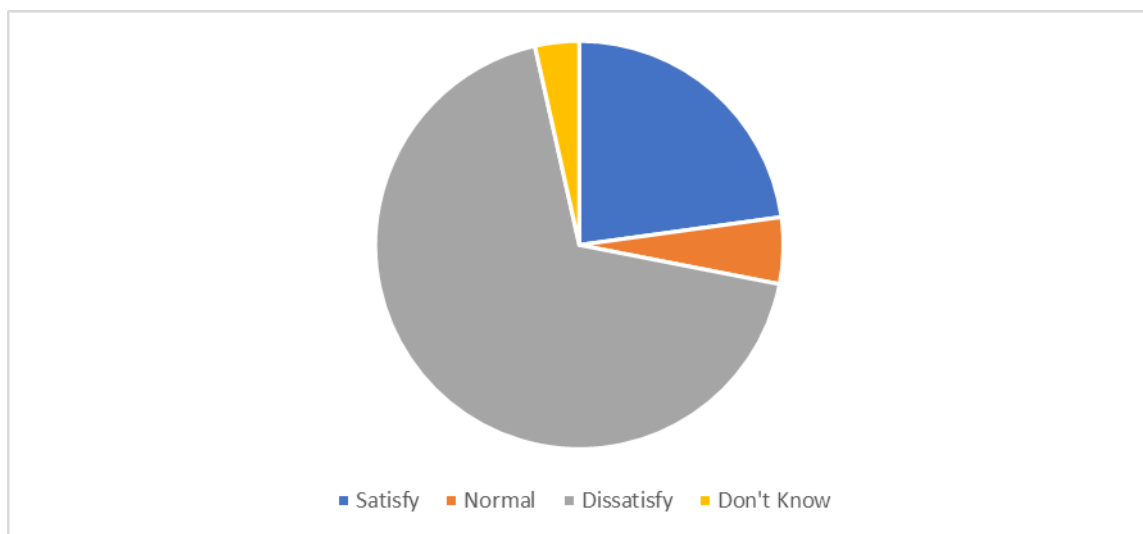
Current Condition	No. of Respondents	Percent
Satisfy	13	22.80
Normal	3	5.27
Dissatisfy	39	68.43
Don't know	2	3.50
Total	57	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 shows that the highest percentage of respondents 22.80 percent have satisfy, 68.43 percent have dissatisfy, 5.27 percent have normal, 3.50 percent don't know. From this table we know that present condition of tourism is not progressive

Figure 2

Distribution of Respondents for the Current Condition of Religious Tourism



Source: Field Survey,2024

Figure 2 shows that the highest percentage of respondents 22.80 percent have satisfy, 68.43 percent have dissatisfy, 5.27 percent have normal, 3.50 percent don't know.

Current Condition of Religious Tourism

Panchakoshi area of Dailekh is famous for the prospective of religious tourism. People belief that, if they visit and worship Five pilgrimage places of Panchakoshi all the sins will be end and people will fulfill whatever they wish. Now the conditions of Panchakoshi area isn't developed properly. Off road motor able road is available. There is the lack of proper lodging. There not enough facility of Dharamshala of all places. Below is the data analysis of current conditions of religious tourism at Panchakoshi area.

Table 7

Priest Views for the Current Condition of Religious Tourism

Current Condition	No. of Respondents	Percent
Satisfy	0	0
Normal	2	40
Dissatisfy	3	60
Don't know	0	0
Total	5	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 7 shows that the highest percentage of respondents 60 percent have dissatisfy, 40 percent have normal. From this table we come to know that present condition of tourism is tolerant the related municipality and stakeholders.

Table 8

Priests Views About the facilities of Religious Tourism

Current Condition	No. of Respondents	Percent
Satisfy	0	0
Normal	0	0
Dissatisfy	5	100
Total	5	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 8 shows that 100 percent priest responds that they are dissatisfy about the current condition and facilities of religious tourism at Panchakoshi area.

Possibility of Religious Tourism at Panchakoshi Area

Panchakoshi area of Dailekh is the important places for the prospects of religious tourism development, which is gifted by nature with its own costumes, social

cultural values and with its religious tolerance (Bishwakarma & Basnet, 2018). Having its unique features it has great prospects in the field of religious development. Continuous burning of Jwala from ancient time is the main attraction of Panchakoshi. In this regards, it has great possibility of religious tourism in the study area.

Table 9

Priest Views on the Possibility of Religious Tourism at Panchakoshi Area

Possibility Tourism	No. of Respondents	Percent
Excellent	5	100
Good	0	0
Normal	0	0
Total	5	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 9 shows that 100 percent priest responds that there is high possibility of religious development at Panchakoshi area of Dailekh district.

Religious Tourism Helps Other Tourism

The phenomenon of religious tourism is known to contribute significantly to the development of other forms of tourism (Olsen, 2003). For instance, when tourists visit the Panchkoshi area, they not only engage in religious activities but also have the opportunity to partake in activities such as trekking, swimming, and bungee jumping. This exemplifies the interconnectedness of religious tourism and other sectors within the broader tourism industry (Kim et al., 2020). In Dailekh, there exists further potential for tourism development. To support this claim, an analysis of the perspectives of religious leaders was conducted, revealing the positive impact of religious tourism on other forms of tourism (Maharjan et al., 2022).

Table 10

Priest Views does Religious Tourism Helps Other Tourism

Religious Tourism Helps Other Tourism	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	5	100
No	0	0
Total	5	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 8 shows that 100 percent priest responds that religious tourism helps to other tourism development. So that religious tourism is an important sector of tourism development in the study area. It also attract the other tourism.

Religious Places of Panchakoshi Area

Dailekh as a district with significant historical and religious importance due to its association with the ancient Khasa (Malla) kingdom of Nepal and the founder of Belaspure king,

Shanker Burma. The region contains several historical monuments such as Paties, Pauwa, Chautara, Maulo, and Devalaya, which still exist (Bishwakarma & Basnet, 2018). Additionally, Dailekh is known for being a holy place where Sati Devi's body fell step by step, which was taken by Mahadev, and is considered one of the five holy places, including Kotila, Srasthan, Navisthan, Paduka, and Dhulesor.

The way suggests that religious tourism could be an effective tool for poverty reduction and economic development in developing countries like Nepal, but requires specific schemes of management, appropriate plans, accurate policies, and strategic approaches (Sutihar, 2016). To achieve sustainability in religious tourism, the conservation and development of ancient religious places, ancient temple statues, and Panchakoshi area as holy places should be prioritized.

Moreover, the archaeological remains and inscriptions found in Dailekh reveal its cultural significance and connection to the ancient Khasa (Malla) kingdom of Nepal. Many old temples of religious importance also exist in this region, making Dailekh of archaeological, spiritual, and historical importance, as well as natural. It is relatively untouched, and it is abundant with precious medicinal herbs and forests filled with rhododendron trees (Badal, 2022).

Kotila

Kotila is a holy place located 2.5 miles away from Dailekh Bazar in Narayan Municipality, 1 Dailekh, and can be accessed via an off-road near Chupra Bazar. It is one of the five pilgrimage sites and is named after the dropping body of Sati Devi's Kothi, which was called Kotesor Mahadev. According to legend, a great sage Dronacharya performed a hundred Lakh's burnt offering, which is why it was named Kotila. Kotila is home to the declining trees of IndraJau, a tree species said to have germinated from the Kotihome of Lord Indra (Bhattarai & Baral, 2008). It is a famous pilgrimage site of national and international significance and is situated on the hilltop sides of Sidhhikhola and Chamghat river. It appears like an island as it is surrounded by two rivers.

Shree Sip Giri is the priest of Kotila temple, which is known as the gateway of Panchakoshi pilgrimage of Dailekh. Upon entering the temple, visitors can observe a statue of Shiva Linga and a bell dating back to 1977. The temple is made of stone and wood, with an ancient Silet roof. Inside the temple, there is a statue of Shiva Linga, and in front of the temple, there are various statues of Mahadev, Human Statue, Kamdhenu Cow statue, statue of Ganesh, etc. Several ancient bells from different times, including 1986, 2013, and 2031, have been discovered at the temple. The scattered Shilapatta around the temple suggests that the temple of Kotila was established during Katturi resign. People from different places visit Kotila to worship every day, particularly pilgrims from within and outside the district, including Surkhet, Bardiya, Achham, Doti, Kalikot, Jumla, Jajarkot, etc (Dhakal, 2024). Every year, on the occasion of Maha Sivaratri, masses of people gather from different places of the district to celebrate Lord Shiva, known as the God of destruction. In B.S. 2072 Baishak 1 to 30, a one-month Koti Home was organized at Kotila.

Srasthan

Srasthan is a holy pilgrimage site located at Bhairabi Rural Municipality, Dailekh, situated approximately three miles away from the district Centre. It is regarded as one of the important pilgrimage places among the five Panchakoshi places and has gained significance due to its

association with Sati Devi's head. The area is known for the perpetual burning of the Kal Jwala flame, and it is believed that the Mahadev can fulfill one's wishes. The temple houses a unique shrine dedicated to Kalbhairab, which is accessible only to the priest, and features a continuously burning Jwala. Other significant temples and sites around Siristhan include Jwala Home, Batuk Bhairab temple, Shibaling, and the Rudrawoti River (Dhakal, 2024).

A significant religious fair is celebrated on the occasion of Sivaratri, during which devotees gather to worship. People believe that offering flowers, Dubo-pati, and Achhita to the Mahadev can fulfill their innermost desires and wishes. Those who have no children also visit and worship the Mahadev, hoping to be blessed with offspring. The name "Siristhan" is linked to the Mahadev and has become a cultural destination for worshipers (GoKP, 2020). The belief that success is attained by those who have heard about Siristhan before starting any task has led to its widespread popularity. Laxminath Yogi serves as the priest of the Shristhan temple, which is open for worship every Tuesday and Saturday.

Navisthan

Navisthan, situated at the border of Bhairabi Rural Municipality and Dullu Municipality, is considered to be one of the significant places among the Panchakoshi. It is located four miles west from the district center. According to ancient beliefs, Navisthan is the place where the naval of Sati Devi's dropping body fell. The Jwala, a continuously burning flame, has been present there since ancient times (Dhakal, 2024). Sign of petrol has been found around the bank of the river in the vicinity of the temple. The temple complex includes two temples, Indra Jwala and Badi Jwala, both of which have a petroleum flame continuously burning at their doors. The river adjacent to the temple complex appears to have a yellow color, and two Dakshina Bhimuk Satals made of brick, wood, mud, and Jhingati roofing, namely Kothar and Dharmadhuni, are located on the side of the temple (Ghimire, 2020).

The Navisthan temple is constructed of brick and wood and has a Jhingati roof, while its steeple is made of Pittal. The temple gate is adorned with the statue of Ganesh Lord, and the temple's brass door was replaced in B.S. 1997. The only statue present inside the temple is the Jwala, which continues to burn. The temple complex is also adorned with statues of Ganesh and Bhairab Lord (Wood et al., 2017). Inside the Gathi Ghar Math, one can find statues of Surya, Bishnu, Indra, and Devi's. The broken fragments of Shikhar Sali Dewal are visible in the temple's vicinity. People gather to worship mainly during the month of Magh called Sivaratri. According to the priest Ganesh Nath Yogi, an ancient Swami tree, which is around 700 years old and rare in the world, stands on the side of Navistha and is considered a symbol of the Panchakoshi pilgrimage (Regmi et al., 2023). The Nath community Yogi serves as a priest in the temple, where Veda education is imparted to 25 students. In summary, Navisthan is an essential religious center in the Dailekh district, with many historical and cultural significances (Khatiwada, 2014).

Paduka

Padukasthan is a significant religious site located in Dullu Municipality in the Dailekh district of Karnali Province. It is regarded as one of the five holy places of Dailekh, known as

Panchkoshi. The name "Padukasthan" is derived from the decayed feet of Lord Shiva's wife, Satidevi, with "Paduka" meaning feet and "sthan" meaning the place (Badal, 2021). Additionally, Lord Vishnu's feet inscription has also been found here, leading to the name "Bishnu Padukasthan."

In the past, this site was known as Shirsthan and Nabhisthan, where a flame over water used to exist. However, at present, a flame house is located in this area. Unfortunately, a flood in 2028 BS destroyed the flame and many other historical ruins, including inscriptions, statues, and pillars on the river bank. It is believed by some that this place has a source of kerosene. According to Yogi Naraharinath's research, more than 108 values existed in this area. It is also a famous historical monument located nine miles away from the district center (Badal, 2022). It is said that petroleum products have been coming out of the ground for a long time. Initially, there was a natural flame, but it disappeared due to the flood of the Paduka river, which was filled with soil. According to the priest of Paduka temple, Jibannath Yogi, there used to be a total of 160 temples in the Paduka area. Still, due to the flood, only four temples remain. Various statues of Shiva, Shivaling, Ganesha, Lakshminarayan, Bhairav, Machindranath, and Gorakhnath, are scattered throughout this area, many of which are unfulfilled and vandalized. Additionally, there is an auto flame on the Naval of the flame house, and a worn hospice is located nearby.

Padukasthan also contains a large library for the study of the early Khas empire. Stone inscriptions from Shak Sambat 1136 and 1162 and Deval pillars of Khas king Sawn Karki Sauka Kakaryani can be found here. Pilgrims and saints visit this temple regularly for worship (Bishwakarma, 2024). Various rituals are performed throughout the year, including the lighting of a holy flame lamp on the first Tuesday of Jestha month and Bijayadashmi bhairaj, the offering of rice pudding (khir) to Lord Shiva during Shrawan month, and the lighting of a holy flame to produce holy smoke on the day of Ghatasthapan, the first day of Dashain. In every year at Maaghe Purnima, a new chariot is replaced.

This site is especially significant for Shivaratri; it was vandalized in 2043 BS but was rebuilt in 2045 with the support of the former Dailekh DDC. The Paduka Guthi Management Committee has been formed and is functional for the development of the Paduka area. The celebration of the temple religiously takes place on Magh Purnima, and religious pilgrimages are made to Paduka temple during the months of Chaitra and Baishak (Shahi, 2019). It is said that visiting Paduka can help recover people's mental health issues. People from various districts, including Kalikot, Jumla, Achham, Doti, Surkhet, Bardiya, and Bake, visit this site.

Dhuleshwor

Dhuleshwor is a religious site that holds great significance. It is one of the five holy places of Dailekh, known as Panchkoshi, and is located at Badalamji village of Dullu Municipality, approximately seven miles away from the district centre. The temple at Dhuleshwor is considered the most important among the Panchkoshi, which includes Padukasthan, Shirsthan, Nabhisthan, and Kotila, the latter of which is not considered a part of Panchkoshi according to the Ancient Holy Flame and Vaishvanara myths as it is a Shakti Peeth. According to ritual belief, the dust that comes from underground during holy worship is labeled "Dhuleshwor," meaning Lord Shiva's incarnation as dust. The temple houses a Shivling at its center, with Shiva's Ox (Nandishwor) and a lion on

either side (GoKP, 2020). The premises also house statues of Kal Bhairav, Baal Bhairav, and Batuk Bhairav, and the Masta god is worshipped with milk during Bada Dashain and Chaite Dashain.

Dhuleshwor temple's history dates back more than a thousand years, and it is believed to be the location where Lord Shiva's wife Sati's body was converted to dust. Saint Nadiban discovered it and began to worship alone while hiding until he was arrested and taken to Kathmandu. The power of Nadiban's meditation was realized by the then-king of Kathmandu, who discovered the worship site. Nadiban's offspring became saints and priests at this temple, and their graves are located on the grounds. The temple has faced destruction, and many idols were lost during the Nepalese Civil War (Sharma et al., 2022). However, the Dhuleshor Area Development Committee has been formed to develop the area systematically, and they are preparing plans to develop it as a religious education pit. They also organize occasional myth reading and religious fairs on the occasion of Haritalika Teej. It is said that Dhuleshwor temple is the main gain of Panchakoshi pilgrimage, and it attracts numerous visitors who seek Tirtha and Barta.

The nearby temples include the Bhairab, Masta, and Shiva temples, as well as the flame house and gaadi house. The flame house contains two stone inscriptions in Nepali that describe King Rajendra Bikram Shah, who founded the temple in 1748 BC, and Colonel Kulman Singh Basnet, who built the temple roof in 1778 BC (KC et al., 2019). Bathing at Banganga and Brahamkund at the base of Dhuleshwor is customary, while funerals are held at Baleshwor temple. Other worship sites include Dulange hill, Badalamji, and Naag Snake.

Prospects of Religious tourism in Dailekh

Dailekh district is located in the karnali provenance of Nepal. It is an area rich in cultural and religious heritage, making it a potential destination for religious tourism development (Acharya & Paudel, 2020). There are several prospects for religious tourism development in Dailekh, including:

- Ancient temples and religious sites: Dailekh has a rich history of ancient temples and religious sites that attract a large number of visitors every year. The district is home to several important Hindu temples, such as the Bheri Kali Temple, Shiva Temple, and Ganesh Temple, among others (Lecomte-Tilouine, 2009). These temples are known for their architectural beauty and religious significance and are popular pilgrimage sites for Hindus.
- Natural beauty and spiritual significance: Dailekh is known for its natural beauty, with the district surrounded by hills, rivers, and forests. These scenic surroundings are believed to have spiritual significance, with many pilgrims visiting to seek peace and solace in the lap of nature (Ranjit, 2022). The district also has several holy rivers and waterfalls that are considered sacred by Hindus and Buddhists alike.
- Cultural diversity and local handicrafts/souvenirs: Dailekh is home to people from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. The district has a rich cultural heritage, with many festivals and celebrations held throughout the year. This cultural diversity and the unique customs and traditions of the people make Dailekh an interesting destination for tourists interested in experiencing different cultures (Bishwakarma & Basnet, 2018). Dailekh is

known for its local handicrafts and souvenirs, such as the traditional Dhaka cloth, wooden crafts, and pottery. These handicrafts are popular among tourists looking for unique souvenirs to take back home.

In conclusion, Dailekh has immense potential for religious tourism development due to its rich cultural heritage, natural beauty, and historical significance. With proper infrastructure and promotion, the district can attract a large number of visitors and generate revenue for the local community.

Table 9

Distribution of Respondents for the Need of Training, Seminar and Meeting for the Religious Tourism Development.

Need of Training, Seminar, Meeting	No. of Respondents	Percent
Yes	14	70
No	4	20
Don't know	2	10
Total	20	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to table 9, among those who have knowledge about tourism, gave positive response during field survey which have been reported by 70 percent of the respondents. Likewise 20 percent of the respondents does not know and 10 percent respondents don't know about it.

Problems of Religious Tourism in Dailekh

Religious tourism faces both opportunities and challenges the context of Dailekh, offer the potential for pilgrimage tourism and local entrepreneurship, contributing to economic development and cultural preservation (Bishwakarma, 2024). As a significant religious heritage and tourism attracting tourists. However, these destinations encounter obstacles such as poor infrastructure, hassling, and limited community participation. In religious area, the need for better management of tourist sites and cultural heritages is emphasized (Bayih, 2018). To address these issues and enhance religious tourism, a recommender system has been proposed for other religious tourism, focusing on tourism products, services, security concerns, and religious tourism information content. This system aims to improve tourist experiences and safety in religious destinations, potentially serving as a model for other locations facing similar challenges. The interaction between tourism and religion raises various issues, including conflicts between the two sectors and the hybrid nature of many religious sites (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2008). Despite these challenges, religious tourism remains an important development option for remote and isolated areas, with destinations offering impressive religious heritage, centuries-old festivals, and welcoming locals. Gopalan & Narayan, (2010) states, addressing these problems requires collaborative efforts from all tourism stakeholders to enhance the sector's potential and mitigate development obstacles .

Conclusion

Religious tourism is becoming increasingly popular among serving multiple purposes such as transformation, empowerment, and income generation. It has evolved from a traditional

pilgrimage to include cultural motivations and has become an engine for economic development in host cities an engine for economic development in host cities. Religious tourism is a distinctive sector in the tourism industry, with unique characteristics that set it apart. It is widely considered the most noteworthy type of tourism, and is increasingly recognized as a means for local development. The district of Dailekh famous for its religious significance, is a prominent destination for religious tourism. Notably, the Panchakoshi sites in Dailekh hold great importance for the growth of religious tourism. Based on the study's findings, the Panchakoshi area of Dailekh exhibits considerable potential as a religious tourism destination.

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