

A Study of Eco-Tourism potential in Maharashtra

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Abstract— Today in Indian economy tourism is one of the key sectors generating revenue and employment. Many regions in India have economical potential of tourism development and Maharashtra is one of them. Maharashtra is one of the vibrant and fast developing global destination due to its varied biodiversity which is an asset for tourism. Its rich and with varied biodiversity ranging from forests, grasslands, forts, beaches, sanctuaries, wetland and hill stations.

In present scenario, Maharashtra has a large untapped tourism potential, with attractive tourist destinations. Western Ghats, in Maharashtra is full of bio diversity. Eco-tourism is still in its early stages of growth in Maharashtra, but it has the potential to be the fastest expanding part of the tourism industry.

In India, ecotourism is a relatively recent concept. We can conserve the diversity of pristine, undisturbed natural places by doing so. It also contributes to the well-being of the local community by preserving its natural beauty.

Maharashtra is rich in natural beauty and its unique culture. So, there is need of tourism development which will not damage the ecological balance. Which gives rise to explore the eco-tourism potential of Maharashtra, hence this paper will be focused on conceptual study of eco-tourism in Maharashtra. The study will be carried out through integrated techniques, tools and literature. Further study can be extended on the principals of ecotourism and effects of ecotourism development on surrounding.

Keywords— Maharashtra, eco- tourism, potential.

I. INTRODUCTION

The geographical location of Maharashtra plays a vital role by Konkan coastal line on western side and dense forest of Vidarbha on northern side. It is home of various water reservoirs, wildlife sanctuaries, national park, dense forest and hill station. All these geographical conditions provide a unique biodiversity. On other hand it reflects unique culture. As a result, Maharashtra has become major thrust for economic growth by attracting tourist from various levels.

Now a days tourism of Maharashtra is rapidly growing, at the same time it is badly affecting the environment of that area by increasing number of recreation facilities and accommodation units. It results in wiping out the wildlife and unique plant by harming the ecosystem. So, there is a need to adopt sustainable tourism development. This gives rise to Eco- tourism, in which biodiversity is the major resource.

A. Importance of Ecotourism

Eco tourism is nature-based sustainable tourism development. It builds a link between culture, the environment, and tourism while also aiding the local economy. Ecotourism is defined by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) as environmentally friendly travel and visits to largely untouched natural regions in order to conserve the ecosystem.

Enjoy nature (together with any associated cultural characteristics, both past and present) in order to support conservation, having a low negative impact; and allows for active socioeconomic participation of local residents.[7] population The United Nations World Tourist Organization (UNWTO) is the world's leading organization for tourism development. The stated goal of studying, admiring, and enjoying the surroundings, as well as its natural plants and animals, as well as existing cultural characteristics (past and present) that can be found in these regions, is defined as "tourism that involves travel to relatively untouched natural regions with minimal human intervention." [3]

In tourism industry, ecotourism is fast growing segment. At regular level annual rate of growing tourism is 4%, but with the help of ecotourism the same annual rate can range between 10% to 30%. At the same time, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council, nature tourism accounts for around 7% of international tourism sales. [6]. All these facts lead to encourage the eco-tourism.

B. Need of Eco-tourism

Maharashtra of eco-tourism Development could increase the tourist arrivals and the business opportunities in the region by reducing the exploitation of natural beauty. It can also help to preserve the virginity of region.

II. OBJECTIVES

1. To study concept of eco-tourism in Maharashtra through literature.
2. To study the principal of eco-tourism.
3. To study the effect of ecotourism development on surrounding.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Eco-tourism is the need of hours. In this connection the following literature has been reviewed.

1) **Dr. Vandana M. Joshi** had thrown light on the relation between biodiversity and Ecotourism in Maharashtra. She had discussed various aspects through secondary data collection are as following.

- Importance of Biodiversity
- Ecosystem and biodiversity of Maharashtra
- Unique ecosystem found in Maharashtra
- Splendors of biodiversity in Maharashtra
- Attractions of biodiversity of Maharashtra
- Eco sensitive areas of Maharashtra
- Conservation approaches.
- "Eco-tourism Policy" formulated by Government of Maharashtra.

This paper had described Adoption of ecotourism leads to sustainable tourism development. It conserves biodiversity and local culture. It also generates income source for local communities in rural and remote areas by means of various tourism related services. It also prioritizes the preservation of flora and fauna by offering the bare minimum of travel conveniences. It emphasizes the importance of establishing tourist promotion methods based on environmental quality, social equity, community empowerment, cultural integrity, and economic efficiency, as well as training and awareness programs for all stakeholders. It emphasizes that Maharashtra's biodiversity will benefit society and the environment, as well as contribute to the region's economic development and the conservation of indigenous species.

2) **Amol S. Shinde and Rahul S. Pardeshi** highlighted that in Maharashtra's growing urbanization has a negative impact on biodiversity, hence some new rules and regulations are needed to protect these endangered species of flora and wildlife. All of these efforts are faced in the development of ecotourism.

This paper concluded that through ecotourism in Maharashtra can give rise to conservation of biodiversity by providing employment and reducing the migration of Youth. There is need to formulate policies on environment caring basis for adoption of ecotourism development which will reduce the negative impact on biodiversity by tourism.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current ecotourism study is based on secondary data. The information was gathered from government of India and Maharashtra research papers, journals, policies, reports, and plan documents. Some information was gathered from the websites of the Government of India and the Government of Maharashtra, as well as the MTDC and the Ministry of Environment.

A. Ecotourism potential in Maharashtra

Maharashtra lies in the western portion of India, and its terrain is important for the development of ecotourism. UNESCO has designated the Kaas site in Maharashtra's western ghats as a world historic site. It comprises popular destinations such as Kalsubai, India's highest hill, on the west Konkan coastal line of 50-80 kilometers, and the Deccan plateau on the east. The greatest river basins are formed by Godawari, Krishna which meets Bay of Bengal.

There are 35 Wild Life Sanctuaries, 4 tiger reserves and 6 National Parks which makes Maharashtra rich in diversity, which should be protected.

Unique ecosystems are also found in Maharashtra, some are listed below

- Kaas plateau: Is a listed World heritage site known for its unique flora and fauna.
- Gadchiroli: A unique forest preservation site.
- Lonar: It's a geological site of salt water ecosystem from Vidarbha region.
- Sahyadri: they are western ghat mountain ranges. Its hot spot biodiversity.

Maharashtra's climate, topography, flora and wildlife, and ecology make it an ideal location for eco-tourism development.

B. Principal's Ecotourism

The principals of eco-tourism are enlisted below

- Through eco-tourism we travel to natural destinations
- It lowers the impact on biodiversity
- It raises environmental consciousness
- It provides direct financial benefits for conservation
- It gives local people financial benefits and power
- It respects local culture
- It conserves nature

C. Effects of ecotourism development on surrounding

- Local people gain from ecotourism because it creates jobs.
- It encourages the preservation of natural resources while also enhancing the cultural integrity of the community.
- It encourages the protection of animals and, as a result, natural environments.
- Assisting passengers with a pleasant attitude and knowledge.
- It guarantees that natural resources are adequately conserved and managed so that they can be preserved for future generations.

V. CONCLUSION

Maharashtra has great potential for eco-tourism development due to its geological location, unique culture and rich bio-diversity. Through Eco-tourism we conserve the endemic species, provide employment to the local people. It provides opportunity to tourist to visit places close to nature and rich in culture, tourist enjoy wild life tour, food and beverage and accommodation facilities. It develops a relation between tourism and conservation.

Eco tourism reduces the carbon foot print provides the comfort to protect flora and fauna. The formulation of ecotourism policies increases the involvement of local people in form of guide, story taller and other tourist related facilities. Through ecotourism we can maintain harmony between environment quality, economic efficiency, social equality and cultural integrity. All above aspect will benefit to increase the tourist annual rate in Maharashtra by generating a considerable revenue in Indian economy.

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