



Ecotourism as a field of Sustainable Rural Development: A case study of Bhor Tehsil (MS)**Mr. Arjun Doke,**

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ABSTRACT

Eco-tourism focuses on local cultures, wilderness adventures, volunteering, personal growth and learning new ways to live on our vulnerable planet. It is considered the fastest growing market in the tourism industry, according to the World Tourism Organization with an annual growth rate of 9.6% worldwide and representing 8% of the world Gross Domestic Product, 11.4% of all consumers spending. Tourism or ecotourism is inherent desire of human beings, which developed with the progress of human civilization. Every man on this planet earth is very fond of tourism, hence always attracted towards nature. The mountains, hills, valleys, oceans, rivers, lakes, islands, waterfalls, forests, wild animals, birds, butterflies etc. have become important attractions for the ecotourists. The improved standard of life and economic status of middle class society has brought ecotourism within their reach. At present there is pressing demand for planned, well-developed and perfectly managed ecotourism. India is truly famous for hospitality. "Atithi Deo Bhav", means the visitors or guests are equal to God in Indian culture due to which India become the top most place for ecotourism in the world. The diverse culture, rich bio diversity, conducive climate, greenery and the peaceful as well as spiritual mind of the Indian people have become the main attractions for ecotourism.

The pleasant weather, natural lakes, green hills, beautiful valleys are the main attractions for ecotourists in Bhor Tehsil of Pune district. Hence there is an urgent need to investigate the hidden potential of ecotourism management and sustainable development. Not only this, but it also become the potential area of employment to rural people and youth. Ecotourism development may become pivotal for socioeconomic transformation of villages with natural ecotourism sites.

Introduction:

‘Ecologically sustainable tourism in natural areas that interprets local environment and cultures, furthers the tourists’ understanding of them, fosters conservation and adds to the well-being of the local people.’(Richardson, 1993). The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as: “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people”. In 1980s, alternative forms of tourism have attracted the interest of governments, communities and scholars. These were given different names like nature tourism, soft tourism, responsible tourism, green tourism, ecotourism (Schaller, 1999). Among these, the term ecotourism has become prominent, although a consistent definition is by no means found. Most definitions do, however, incorporate concepts associated with sustainable development. Under Sustainable development, attempts were made to integrate economic development with ecological sustainability (Redclift, 1987). The researchers like Zurick (1992), Dearden (1991) and Hunter and Green (1995) accepted the definition of ecotourism given by World Commission on Environment and Development. According to them development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987) is known as ecotourism. Many research workers now agreed that ecotourism is a two-way link between tourism

and environmental conservation (Valentine, 1993; Cater, 1994). As the understanding of the close relationships between tourism and environmental conservation increased, the researchers are now calling on ecotourism industry to incorporate economic development as a fundamental element of conservation (West and Brechin, 1991).

Ecotourism involves travel for the discovery of learning about wild natural environments. Wilderness travel is the personal re-creation through traveling in natural environments that are devoid of human disturbances. Among the various subdivisions of nature based tourism, ecotourism is the fastest growing tourism submarket. Recently, with rapidly developing economies in Asia, ecotourists from these countries are entering the market as consumers. The experience is expanding with the increase in number of parks. There is now a worldwide increase in nature travel market, (Zurick, 1992). Ecotourism has an idealistic agenda, defined by Drumm (1991) as progressive, educational travel, which conserves the environment and benefits local communities. The synonyms of eco-tourism are given below environment friendly tourism, nature tourism, green tourism, scientific tourism, cottage tourism, wildlife tourism, wilderness tourism, safari tourism, designer tourism, hard tourism, risk tourism, adventure tourism etc. In 1987, Ceballos-Lascurain defined the ecotourism as ecological tourism or ecotourism involving traveling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas, with the specific aims of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects found in these areas. In fact, train journeys to the first North American national parks in the late nineteenth century were called as ecotourism (National Audubon Society, 1991). Johnson (1967) reported heavy over-use of the North American national parks, with traffic congestion and the resulting impacts was erosion and the loss of wilderness. In recent years Blamey (1997), Fennell (1998), Fennell and Eagles (1990), Orams (1997), Swarbrooke and Horner (1999) and Valentine (1993) have modified, extended and developed many new definitions of ecotourism. The definitions of ecotourism are broad in scope. Ecotourism includes conservation, education, local ownership, and economic benefit for local relevance of cultural resources, minimum impacts and sustainability.

Study Area:

Bhor Tehsil is located 54km away from Pune City in a south-westerly direction. It is situated between 18^o45'N & 73^o15'E. It has an elevation of about 591.43m. Bhor Tehsil has an irregular shape, having an area of 892 km², bordered by Tehsil Khandala of Satara District on the east, Mahad of Raigad District on the west, Wai of Satara District on the south and Velhe, Haveli and Purandar tehsils on the north. The climate is moist but healthy. The vegetation is mainly of dry deciduous type and scrub type. It is due to moderate and irregular rainfall. Annual Average rainfall in Bhor Tehsil during the period 1951 to 2013 was 1283.73 mm. As per the census of the India 2011, total household in study area is 39007, total population is 186116, within that 94458 is male and 911958 is female. The literacy in study area is 72.40 percent. The study area is highest sex ratio in Pune District which is 103 per thousand. Figure 1 represent the study area.

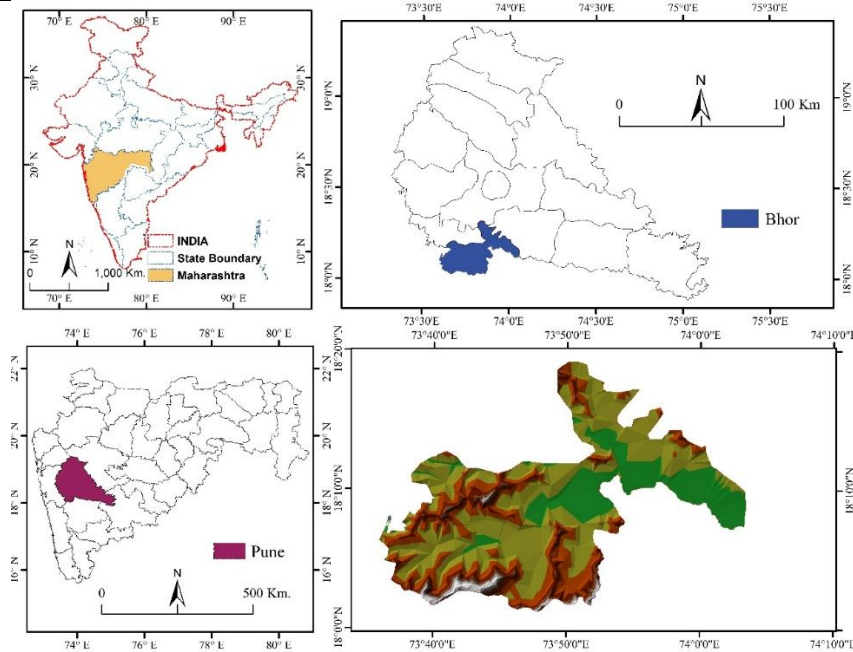


Figure 1. Location Map of study area.

Objective:

This research paper mainly focuses on the important ecotourism centres of Bhor Tehsil and their potential for development of ecotourism.

1. To investigate natural attraction site in study area.
2. To examine the growth of ecotourism in different site in Bhor Tehsil.

METHODOLOGY

The primary and secondary data have been used for the research paper. The questionnaire has been prepared to collect the data. The cartographic technique has been also used to represent the data.

A) Primary Data

Interviews:-

This was the main method of data collection administered to the Government and to local community representatives. An interview guideline was prepared containing a detailed list of questions and checklist for every department / official being interviewed. Data collected from interviews was documented through notes taken by the interviewers rather than through tape or video recordings as the latter would not have been appropriate with several government officials.

The primary data has been collected from tourist by filling up the questionnaires by random sample method; fifty tourists have been selected for filling up the questionnaires.

Focus group discussions:-

In order to collective perspectives from local community members, focus group consultations were organised. A discussion guideline was prepared for the conducting the discussions. Data from the focus group discussions has been documented in writing and through audio visuals.

Field observation:-

Field observation has been another important instrument for collecting qualitative data, especially for socio-cultural and environmental impacts of tourism activity.

B) Secondary data

The main secondary sources of data that were interlaid examined were: Official websites of the respective state governments and Government of India. SOI (Survey of India) topographical maps of the study area at the scale 1:50,000. SRTM DEM 30m downloaded from USGA.

Assessment of Ecotourism Potential in Study Area:

The environmental assessment for ecotourism potential its sustainable development, management and strategies for future planning are the crucial factors in ecotourism development. There are many parameters for assaying the environmental impact of ecotourism development e.g. frequency and attendance, location, distance etc. The assessment of ecotourism potential in Bhore Tehsil was done with seven different parameters of ecotourism potential. The formal and informal assessment and standard tests were used for knowing of ecotourism potential of Bhore Tehsil. Environmental assessment, in any form, is a necessary component of effective ecotourism development.

Conclusion:

Eco-tourism in Study Area:

The entire study area is hilly and undulation surface with dense vegetation so the area is developing a more ecotourist centers. Figure 2 represent the triangulated irregular network (TIN), figure 3 represent the Slope map of study area and figure 4 represent the Slope Aspect map of Study area. Study Area, earlier famous as historic place it's one of the most important place in Marathi history. Currently it has more than three forts.

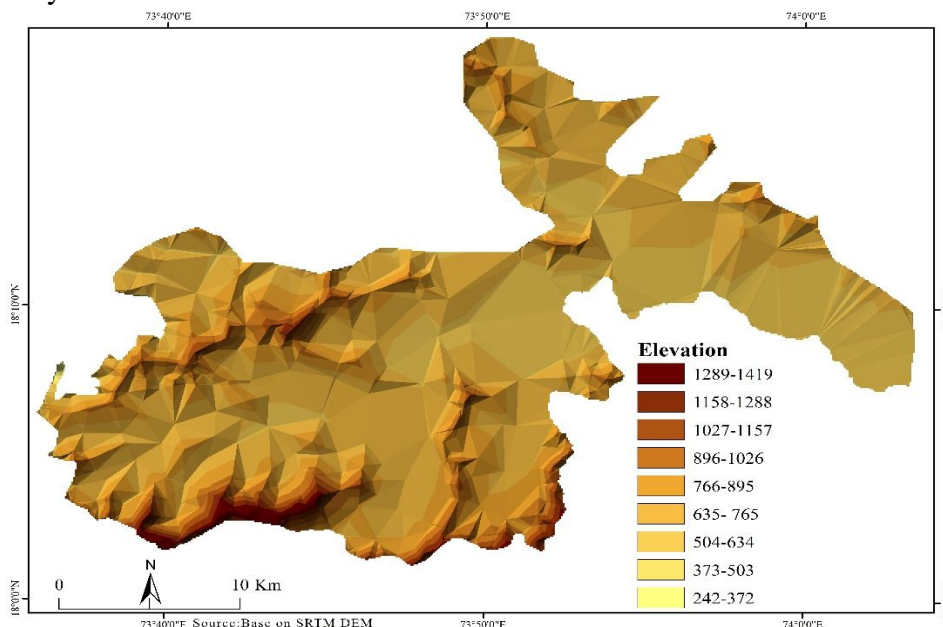


Figure 2 Triangulated Irregular Network (TIN) of Study Area.

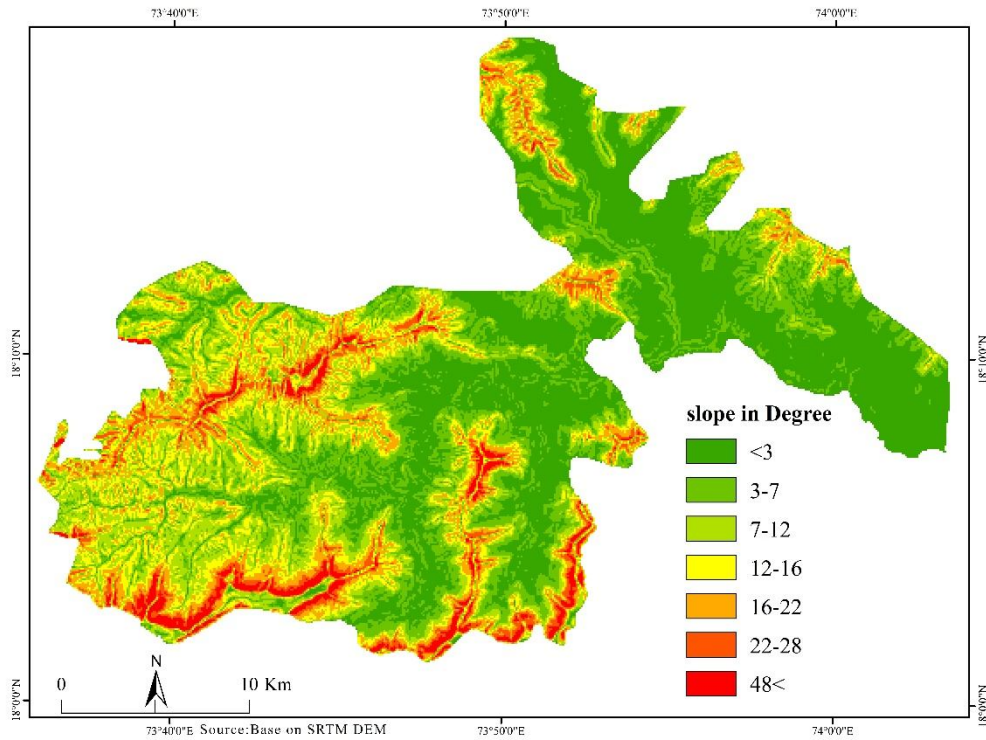


Figure 3. Slope Map of Study Area.

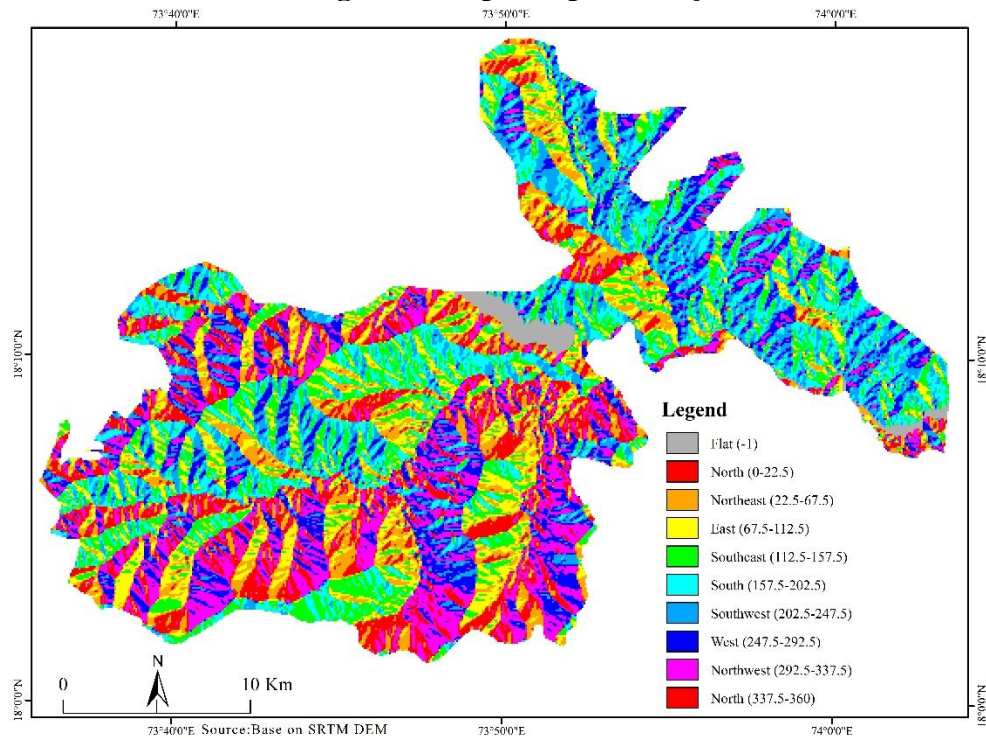


Figure 4. Slope Aspect Map of Study Area.

The major-forested areas of the Bhor forest sub division 35941.392 ha, which include Bhor, velhe and purandhar. Reserved forests 17890.554 ha, protected forested 9.984 ha, Acquired forests 2163.440 ha, forest land notified under section 4 of IFA 1927, 15814.390 ha, Compensatory Aforestation 63.390 ha. These natural attractions consist of some hills; green areas and especially dam Bhatghar Dam on yelwandi river water body surface area 31,900 km² and Niradevghar dam on Niira river water body surface area 14307km². Which have become the famous natural eco-tourism viewpoints of Bhor tehsil. A total of 102 flowering plant species, 130 bird species, 15 mollusks and uncountable forms of insects have been recorded in and around the Bhor tehsil.

Table 1. GPS readings and ecotourist center of a few sites in Bhor Tehsil area

Locations in Bhor Tehsil		GPS Readings			ecotourism center
Sr. No	Location	Latitude	Longitude	Altitude	
1	Baneshwar	18°15'406"	73°52'346"	655m	Temple with Garden
2	Bhor	18°45'340"	73°14'601"	592m	Scrub
3	Pisavare	18°07'902"	73°47'608"	601m	Plantation
4	Pombardi	18°08'467"	73°48'926"	630m	Dance Forest
5	Wathar	18°07'781"	73°47'636"	605m	Forest with Grassland

Table 2. Occupational Structure of Tourist

Sr. No.	Occupation	No. of Tourist	Percentage
1	Educational Student	12	24
2	Science and technology	8	16
3	Business	10	20
4	Service	18	36
5	Farmer	1	2
6	Industrialist	1	2
Total		50	100

Source-Writers

The above table shows the effect of occupational structure on the tourism. Occupation is related to the income of the person. The 80% tourist belongs to service and business sectors. Income is dominating factors on tourism development.

Table 3. Purpose wise classification of Tourist

Sr. No.	Purpose	Tourist	Percentage
1	Religious/Historical	10	20
2	Educational	6	12
3	Entertainment	14	28
4	Medical	3	06
5	Adventure	17	34
Total		50	100

Source-Writers

Table 3 shows the purpose of tourist to visit at different places in Bhor Tehsil. Entertainment and Adventure tourist percentage is more as compare to others. The area of Bhor Tehsil is mountainous so adventure places naturally develop as well as near to Pune city impact of that Adventure tourism well in the others.

Table 4. Age wise classification of Tourist

Sr. No.	Age Group	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
1	Below 20 Years	6	3	9	18
2	20-40 Years	11	12	23	46
3	40-60 Years	7	8	15	30
4	Above 60 Years	2	1	3	6
Total				50	100

Source-Writers

Table 4 shows the age-group of the tourist who visited at different places in Bhor Tehsil. According to the table most of the tourist visited to different places in Bhor Tehsil belong to the age-group between 20 to 60 years. Near about 76 percent of tourist are in this age group.18 percent of tourists are belonging in the age group of below 20 years.

In the Focus group discussions most of people says that natural beauty main attraction of tourist as well as physical property of Bhor Tehsil.

In the Field observation most of the tourist enjoy with natural beauty.

Ecotourism is 'environment- friendly' tourism which potentials to fulfill goals of economic development and the conservation of natural environment in study area. It is the fastest growing segment of international tourism in the world, which contributes to the environmental protection and calls for the sustainable use of natural resources for tourism development in study area. It is also known as responsible tourism that values natural environment and respects the host culture. Ecotourism stresses on greater public participation in planning and decision-making concerning resource use.

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