



TO STUDY THE ECO-TOURISM OF DEVGAD TALUKA**Prof. Abhishek Ravindra Mestri**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation, and conservation. Tourism is an important source of earning income for many regions and villages. Eco tourism holds many successful stories to sustain the nature and culture of fragile environment. This research explores the concept of ecotourism in a coastal of Devgad region in Maharashtra, India, which is known for its rich biodiversity, pristine beaches, and vibrant cultural heritage. The study aims to assess the potential of ecotourism as a sustainable development model that can contribute to local conservation efforts, community empowerment, and economic growth. This research provides insights into the practices that can enhance Devgad Taluka's ecotourism potential while preserving its ecological and cultural heritage for future generations.

INTRODUCTION:-

Devgad is located along the Konkan coastline of Maharashtra and blessed with unharmed natural beauty, rich biodiversity and an exciting cultural heritage. Devgad Tehsil comprises around 98 villages. The region is well-known for its export of Alphonso mango. The mango orchards cover about 45,000 acres, producing approximately ten thousand tons annually. Devgad offers the perfect environment for promoting ecotourism. Diverse landscapes including mangroves, hills, backwaters, and marine habitats provides unique opportunities for ecotourism that is both educational and sustainable. (Mugade & Sapkale, 2017)

Ecotourism in Devgad focuses on responsible travel that conserves the environment and supports local communities. Visitors can explore clean beaches, experience authentic village life and take part in organic farming, bird watching and hiking through scenic coastal trails. With its blend of natural wonders and traditional Konkan culture, Devgad stands out as an emerging ecotourism destination that encourages environmental awareness while ensuring long-term preservation of its ecological treasures. (GAP BODHI TARU /Kamble & Dake)

Ecotourism has emerged as a significant approach to sustainable regional development, particularly in environmentally sensitive and culturally diverse landscapes. Devgad, situated in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra, represents a unique ecological corridor within the Konkan coastal belt, characterized by its rich biodiversity, varied geomorphology, and traditional socio-cultural systems. The region encompasses a mosaic of ecosystems, including sandy and rocky shorelines,

tropical orchards, mangrove habitats, estuarine networks, and hill ranges that collectively support a wide range of flora and fauna. (Mestry& Margaj,2025)

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:-

- To Examine the region's biodiversity, including flora and fauna, and evaluate its suitability as a destination for ecotourism activities.
- To Identify key natural attractions (e.g., beaches, forests, wildlife sanctuaries, and coastal ecosystems) that could be promoted through ecotourism.
- To Investigate how ecotourism can contribute to local economic development by creating jobs, supporting small businesses, and promoting sustainable livelihood options for local residents.
- To Assess the potential for ecotourism to empower local communities, particularly in terms of cultural exchange, education, and preservation of traditional knowledge.
- To Analyze the environmental, social, and infrastructural challenges that may hinder the growth of ecotourism in the region, such as over-exploitation of resources, lack of infrastructure, or resistance to change from local communities.
- To Investigate the role of government policies and regulations in either supporting or obstructing sustainable tourism development.
- To Review successful ecotourism models from other regions in India and internationally that could be adapted to Devgad's unique environment and cultural context.
- To Assess the role of public and private sector partnerships in the development of ecotourism.
- To Develop a framework for sustainable ecotourism in Devgad that aligns with environmental conservation, socio-economic development, and cultural preservation.
- To Recommend strategies for effective community participation, conservation efforts, and marketing of the region as an ecotourism destination.
- To Evaluate the importance of raising awareness about the benefits of ecotourism among local residents, tourists, and stakeholders.
- To Explore the potential for educational programs and ecotourism awareness campaigns to promote responsible tourism behavior.

Need for the Study: Scope of Ecotourism in Devgad

1. To Preserve Devgad's Unique Natural Resources

Devgad is endowed with pristine beaches, lateritic plateaus, mangroves, orchards, and rich biodiversity. However, these natural assets are vulnerable to degradation due to unplanned development and increasing human activity. Research is needed to identify ways in which ecotourism can support conservation while allowing controlled and responsible tourism. (MID-DAY/ Dipti Singh/ September 16 2022)

2. To Promote Sustainable Economic Development

The local economy of Devgad largely depends on agriculture—especially Alphonso mangoes—as well as fishing. Ecotourism offers an opportunity to diversify income sources, create local employment, and reduce economic dependence on seasonal agricultural cycles. A detailed study is required to understand how ecotourism can contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic growth. (MONGABAY, Vinaya Kurtkoti/ 28 September 2022)

3. To Strengthen Community Participation and Empowerment

For ecotourism to be successful, involvement of local communities is essential. Understanding community perceptions, willingness to participate, and their potential role in ecotourism initiatives will help ensure that development is both sustainable and community-driven.(Kumar& Jadhav,2023)

4. To Identify Gaps in Infrastructure and Policy Support

Although Devgad has significant natural potential, the region faces limitations in tourism infrastructure, accessibility, waste management, and environmental regulation. Research can

help identify what improvements and policy interventions are required to develop ecotourism without harming the environment. (Anil Kumar Singh, 2012)

5. To Address the Growing Demand for Eco-Friendly Tourism

With increasing global and domestic awareness about sustainable travel, tourists now prefer destinations that offer nature-based experiences with minimal environmental impact. Devgad has the potential to tap into this growing market, but research is needed to understand how to align local offerings with tourist expectations. (Narendra G Chandewar 2025)

6. To Prevent Unsustainable Tourism Practices

Without proper planning, tourism development can lead to pollution, habitat loss, overcrowding, and cultural disruption. This research is necessary to analyze potential risks and propose strategies that ensure tourism in Devgad remains environmentally responsible and culturally sensitive. (Dr. B. P. Kamble 2018)

7. To Support Long-Term Regional Planning and Conservation

Findings from the study can guide local government bodies, NGOs, and community organizations in formulating long-term plans for conservation, resource management, and sustainable development. This ensures that ecotourism becomes an integral part of Devgad's growth strategy. (S K Shelar, 2016)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

PRIMARY SOURCES :-

- **Tourism Operators:** Interviews conducted with local ecotourism operators provided us the insights into the current state of ecotourism, what challenges have faced, and the opportunities available in the region.
- **Community Leaders:** Made a discussion with local leaders & community representatives to understand how ecotourism impacts their community and their perspective on sustainable development.
- **Local Business Owners:** Discussions with the people who are engage with businesses those who contribute to ecotourism, such as hotels, restaurants, and transport providers.
- **Environmental Experts:** Interviewed environmentalists, conservationists, and researchers working on local biodiversity and sustainability issues.
- **Ecotourism Attractions:** Visited to popular ecotourism spots in Devgad Taluka like beaches, forests, nature reserves, or heritage sites, to observe the current tourism activities, visitor behavior, and the environmental impact.
- **Visitor Surveys:** Interviewed with tourists visiting to Devgad to understand their motivations, awareness of sustainability, and perceptions of ecotourism in the region.
- **Environmental Assessments:** Document the state of local ecosystems—forests, beaches, rivers, and wildlife—by conducting a survey on their ecological health and the extent of human interaction.
- **Local Government Documents:** Investigate reports or policy papers from the Devgad Taluka administration or Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) regarding ecotourism initiatives, policies, and planning.
- **Tourism Development Plans:** Analyzed regional or district-level tourism development documents that include provisions for sustainable tourism practices.

SECONDARY SOURCES:-

- **Literature Review:** I carried out an extensive review of the literature to explore the theoretical bases of ecotourism and sustainable development from both global and regional viewpoints.
- **Document Analysis:** I analyzed government policies, tourism master plans, environmental reports, and NGO publications to identify and understand the existing policies and frameworks that guide ecotourism development in the region.

- **Statistical Data:** I analyzed statistical reports, market research, and tourism data to assess the economic impact and potential growth of ecotourism in Devgad Taluka.
- **Comparative Case Studies:** I used case studies from other regions with similar coastal and rural characteristics to compare their ecotourism models and draw lessons from their experiences.
- **Tourism and Development:** I reviewed articles that examine the relationship between tourism development and local economies, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability, helping to situate my research within the broader discourse on ecotourism.

Devgad in the Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra is a hidden gem on the Konkan coast, known for its pristine beaches, historic forts, and its world-famous Alphonso (Hapus) Mangoes. It offers a blend of relaxation, history, and nature-based ecotourism experiences, making it ideal for the research focus.

Major Tourist Spots in Devgad Taluka

Devgad's attractions can be broadly categorized into Coastal & Nature, Historical, and Spiritual sites.

1. Coastal & Nature Attractions (Ecotourism Focus)

Devgad is particularly known for its clean, serene, and relatively less crowded beaches, which are the cornerstone of its ecotourism potential.

- **Kunkeshwar Beach:** Famous for its pristine sands and the ancient temple situated right on the shore. It offers a beautiful, spiritual coastal experience and often hosts water sports.
- **Devgad Beach:** Located near the town center, this beach is characterized by silvery-white sand, black rocks, and clear water. The huge windmills installed on the cliffs overlooking the beach are an added attraction, offering a unique blend of nature and modern technology.
- **Mithmumbari Beach & Taramumbari Beach:** These are recognized as calm, quiet spots perfect for nature lovers. Taramumbari is notable for its backwaters and Mangrove Safari, providing excellent opportunities for bird watching and a calm boating experience, which aligns perfectly with ecotourism principles.
- **Tambaldeg Beach:** A serene spot located about 12 km from Devgad town. It's often cited for its tranquility and features golden sands and coconut groves. It is a key area for **marine conservation** (e.g., turtle nesting, which aligns with ecotourism).
- **Waghotan Creek (Kayaking/Boating):** The creeks and backwaters in the region, particularly around villages like Waghotan and Taramumbari, are rich with mangroves. They offer tranquil boating and kayaking experiences, emphasizing the natural beauty and local ecosystem.
- **Devgad Zipline (Flying Konkan):** An adventure activity that involves a long zipline (reportedly one of the longest on the coast) providing a stunning aerial view of the Devgad coastline and surrounding greenery.

2. Historical & Cultural Sites

The region is steeped in Maratha history, with formidable sea forts dominating the coastline.

- **Vijaydurg Fort :** Though located slightly outside the main town, it is one of the most significant and popular sites in the Taluka. Built by Raja Bhoja II and later fortified by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, it is one of the oldest forts on the Sindhudurg coast. It is famed for its strategic design and virtual impregnability ("Eastern Gibraltar").
- **Devgad Fort:** Located on a hillock near the sea, this fort was constructed in the early 18th century. Though partially in ruins, it offers a breathtaking panoramic view of the Arabian Sea and the surrounding area. It is also home to a Ganesh Temple and the **Devgad Lighthouse** (open to visitors in the evening for sunset views).
- **Thakarwadi Museum (Pinguli):** A cultural attraction showcasing local art, tradition, and history, enriching the cultural tourism aspect of the area.

3. Spiritual & Pilgrimage Spots

- **Kunkeshwar Temple:** This ancient and beautiful temple dedicated to Lord Shiva is situated right on the beach, making it a highly picturesque and serene pilgrimage site. The temple's location combines spiritual significance with natural beauty.
- **Shri Dev Rameshwar Temple (Rameshwar):** A historic and spiritual site dedicated to Lord Shiva, located a short distance from Vijaydurg Fort.
- **Pokharbav Ganesh Temple:** Located in the serene village of **Dabhole** in the Devgad taluka of Sindhudurg, Maharashtra, the **Pokharbav Ganesh Temple** is also known as Pokharbav Shri Siddhivinayak Temple, is a hidden spiritual gem of the Konkan region. Below the main temple area, accessible by a few steps, there is an ancient **Panchmukhi Shivling**.
- **Vimleshwar Temple Wada :** The **Vimleshwar Temple** in Wada village is one of the most significant and ancient archaeological sites in the Devgad taluka of Sindhudurg. Known for its cave-like architecture and mystical water sources. This is one of the few temples where the Shivling is situated at a higher elevation than the entrance. Local folklore strongly suggests the temple was built by the Pandavas in a single night during their exile.
- **Dirba Devi Temple Jamsande :** The **Shree Dirba Devi Temple** in Jamsande is the revered *Gramdevi* of both Jamsande and Devgad. It is a site of deep historical and cultural importance, especially for the local fishing community and mango traders. Local history suggests that about **700-800 years ago**, the idol was hidden in the sea near Devgad to protect it from invaders. It was later recovered by a fisherman from the **Gabit community**. Behind the main temple, there is a **700-year-old idol of Lord Vishnu** featuring intricate carvings of the *Dashavatara*
- **Shri Dev Rameshwar Temple:** The Shri Dev Rameshwar Temple in Girye near Vijaydurg, is one of the most historically significant and architecturally stunning temples in the Konkan region. It is often called a "hidden" marvel, it is famous for its unique underground approach and its deep connection to the Maratha Navy. To reach there from starting point, you must have to walk through a **250-yard-long path** (Ghati) that was literally **cut through solid rock**, reaching depths of up to **50 feet**.

Key Tourism Activities & Experiences

1. **Beach & Relaxation:** Swimming, sunbathing, and long, quiet walks on the numerous pristine beaches (Devgad, Mithmumbari, Tambaldeg).
2. **Water Sports:** Activities like jet skiing and banana boat rides are available at some popular beaches like Kunkeshwar and Devgad.
3. **Historical Exploration:** Visiting Vijaydurg Fort and Devgad Fort, with a focus on their architecture, history, and the strategic importance of the Konkan coast.
4. **Ecotourism & Nature Trails:**
 - **Mangrove/Backwater Safari:** Specifically at Taramumbari/Waghotan Creek for bird watching and experiencing the unique Konkan backwater ecosystem. Mangrove safari at Taramumbari:
 - **Orchard Tours (Agro-Tourism):** Devgad is globally famous for its Alphonso Mangoes. During the season (typically March to May), agro-tourism experiences like orchard tours, learning about mango cultivation, and sorting/packaging are popular.
5. **Culinary Tourism:** Enjoying the authentic Konkani and Malvani cuisine, particularly the fresh seafood and local delicacies. Malvani restaurants:

CONCLUSION: -

From the study it is revealed that Devgad is particularly attractive to tourists seeking a peaceful, less commercialized coastal experience compared to nearby hotspots like Malvan or Goa, making it an excellent location to study the development of authentic, community-based ecotourism. It also gives opportunity to local business for all community people. It creates opportunities for Women to develop their business ideas.

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