

Eco Tourism in Bhilwara District: A Geographical Study

Om Prakash Kumawat

Assistant Professor (HOD-Geography Department), Shri Pragya Mahavidhyalya, Bijaynagar, Beawar

Abstract

“Based on the prominence of physical and human factors, geography has traditionally been divided into two main branches – (1) Human Geography & (2) Physical Geography”.¹ A sub-branch of Human-Geography, Tourism geography understands the relationships and interactions between nature, the human-made environment, and tourism. Tourism is a distinct geographical phenomenon that involves the movement of people between a place of origin and a destination for leisure and tourism purposes with the concept of sustainable development. The most well-known mantra of Aitereya Brahman Upanishad is “Charaiveti Charaiveti”² which means keep moving Forward. This mantra inspired people to travel outside their homes and later it appeared in a refined form as eco tourism. It would not be an exaggeration to say that “Rajasthan is synonymous with the cultural tourism of India”.³ “Rajasthan is generally divided into four major Geographical Regions, 1. Desert Region 2. Aravalli Mountain Region 3. Eastern Plain Region 4. South-Eastern Plateau Region”.⁴ Among the above geographical regions, Bhilwara district is an integral part of the Aravalli mountainous region and the Eastern plain region of Rajasthan. Spread between 25 degrees 21 minutes north latitude to 25 degrees 35 minutes north latitude and 74 degrees 38 minutes east longitude to 74 degrees 63 minutes east longitude⁵, Bhilwara district is known for its natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage. Tourism can be divided into various types on the basis of their purpose/objective, although it’s nature is integrated and tourist visit places for more than one purpose. Through Eco-Tourism, we can benefit the cultural heritage of this district and the local communities. “Hamirgarh Eco Park” and “Menal Waterfall”, located in Bhilwara district have been developed under Eco Tourism Policy of Rajasthan, 2021.

KEY WORDS– Eco tourism, Eco park, Sustainable Development, Culture, Heritage, ANICUT, Eco Friendly Watch– Tower, Seven Falls, Step Fall.

1. INTRODUCTION

“Rajasthan is also known for its wildlife sanctuaries Tiger reserves biodiversity and other natural spots like lakes gardens park’s ect. Number of Eco Parks are the attraction of tourists and they also preserve and restore the endangered wildlife”.⁶ “Eco–Tourism” is a type of tourism for the preservation and improvement of natural, rural areas. It is quite different from a tour undertaken to a place. In this type of tourism, there is an intense focus on learning about and developing the area and the people living there. In the past years, Bhilwara district has made significant progress in this field. There are two important places in Bhilwara district in this area, first is Hamirgarh Eco Park and second is Menal Waterfall. Both of these have their own different features. While there are many such places in Bhilwara district which can be converted into important places of eco tourism. Hamirgarh Eco Park is situated on the outskirts of Bhilwara's umland area and also an important part of Hamirgarh-rural area. While Menal Falls is the main

waterfall of Rajasthan which is formed naturally on the Manali River in Bhilwara district. Geographically, Bhilwara district presents numerous opportunities for eco-tourism, with several sites that warrant priority development. It is imperative that we, along with the government, prioritize the development of these sites to promote sustainable tourism and conserve the region's natural resources.

2. Eco tourism places in Bhilwara district

1) Eco Park, Hamirgarh⁷

Geographically situated approximately 22 km away from Bhilwara district headquarters, the Hamirgarh Eco Park offers a unique opportunity to witness rare species of wildlife. The park's forest area is replete with trekking and hiking trails that provide an immersive experience of natural beauty. A notable attraction is the sunset point, which offers breathtaking views. Additionally, the park's high watchtower provides a panoramic view of Bhilwara city. To further enhance the experience, the park offers tourist safari facilities and a guest house, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the jungle environment. The park is home to a diverse range of wild birds and animals, including chinkara, wild boar, sehi, jackal, fox, rabbit, pheasant, and peacock. Attracting tourists from across the country, the park provides various amenities to cater to their needs. Temporary wooden houses and long swings have been built on the trees here. Two statues have also been installed in the Luv-Kush garden here. There are big trees and trees of different species are also found in the forest area of this eco park. There are many small waterfalls in the middle of the mountains here and a large number of devotees visit the Mansa Mahadev temple and Chamunda temple.

2) Menal Waterfall–

Located about 70 to 74 kilometres from the district headquarters Bhilwara, the "Menal Waterfall" formed by the "Menali River"⁸ is the best example of a Step Waterfall. Flowing on sandstone rocks here, this waterfall presents a picturesque view. It is a major destination for tourists not only from Rajasthan but also from India. There is also an ancient Shiva-temple near this waterfall, which preserves cultural heritage. The atmosphere here is captivating and the sound of the waterfall captivates the tourists coming here. Both the above places have been developed under Rajasthan Eco Tourism Policy- 2021. This is not only preserving the local culture but also preserving local festivals, traditions and ancient customs.

3. Eco tourism opportunities in Bhilwara district: a case study–

There are many other places in Bhilwara district where eco-tourism has been adopted on social priority such as-

Harni Mahadev, Bhilwara– It is an important center of faith for the people living in the area around Bhilwara city. It is also an important religious tourist destination, which has been developed by Municipal Corporation, Bhilwara. This SHIVLINGA is holy place under a rock at the foot of a hill at a distance of just 6 kilometers from Bhilwara city. The area around it has been developed from a natural point of view. The pond nearby has been made picturesque and places for people to visit have also been created. Apart from NCC and NSS by Manikya Lal Verma Government College, Bhilwara and other cultural programs are also held here every year from and the people of the umland area of Bhilwara rural area located around this temple are also getting the benefit of tourism.

Adhr Shila Mahadev, Pur, Bhilwara–

Here a very big rounded rock is resting on a small sharp stone and is hanging in the air like an umbrella. It is known as "Adhr Sheela Mahadev". A Shivling is established there. Many people come every year to

see it. The people living nearby have closely knit and protected this area. The forests are not cut in the surrounding area and there many spots have been created for tourism.

Sawai Bhoj Temple and Sawai Bhoj's Bhani/Bida/Beed, Asind–

In The Rajasthan, the forest area around any Devasthan i.e. the holy temples of Dev Ji, Bheru Ji, Jhunjhar Ji, Mata Ji etc. It is protected by the local people and social efforts, cutting of any kind of wood from such forest area is strictly prohibited, only animals can go for grazing, this protected area of forest is called in local language “Beed/Beeda/Bhani”. A huge fair is organized every year on Bhadrapada shukla ashtmi (July–August) at Sawai Bhoj, Asind, Bhilwara, which is the center of faith of the Gurjar community and almost all the communities of the state. There is a pond near this temple and "Sawai Bhoj Ki Bhani" is situated adjacent to the pond. Every person visiting this holy place does not forget to drink RABARI made from the fresh buttermilk of cows.

“Ladki Dam” and “Meja Dam” on Kothari River–

Ladki Dam is the Dam near Ladki village in Raipur tehsil of Bhilwara district. “The river Kothari is a tributary of BANAS”.¹⁰ A park has also been developed here.

The Meja Dam is situated near Bhilwara district headquarters on this river, which is the biggest dam of this river. This dam is famous for its green park and it is a center of attraction for local tourists and Researchers. There are many small trekking and hiking paths here which are used by tourists and villagers for cycling and walking.

Lavkush Vatika, Mandalgarh–

Mandalgarh is a part of the Bijolia plateau in Rajasthan. It is combined called “Mandalgarh-Bijolia plateau”. There is a village called "Bhadak Chhatri Kheda", here, the Forest Department of the Government of Rajasthan has constructed the "Luv-Kush Vatika Park"¹¹ at a cost of two crores. There are ENICUT, Eco-Friendly Watch Towers, Entry Gates, Rain Shelters have been built by the government. Along with the Seven Falls waterfall with its natural beauty and various types of wild animals like Chinkara, Panther, Wild Boar, Indian Bear, Jackal, Neelgai, Jackals, Wolf etc, are found here. Whatever construction work has been done in this garden is eco-friendly, which is the center of attraction for the local people and tourists. There is a high watch tower, we can see the natural beauty of the entire forest area and one eco trail built here, tourists can easily go around and see the flowing– Water, Forest and Vegetation. This Eco Park has provided employment to the local people living nearby village's and has also provided cultural protection in this area.

Rajasthan's first Tourism and Environment Training Center, Village – AARJIYA

Near Bhilwara city, Rajasthan state's first “Forest Tourism and Environmental Education Center” is under construction at Aarjiya Nursery on Ajmer Road, Bhilwara. its construction cost of about Rs 2 crore. In this Center, the state's including Bhilwara district Various forest areas, wildlife, vegetation, Aravalli mountain range etc. will be shown in the centre by models.

BAGOR Civilization and Bagor Sahib Gurudwara, Bagor, Teh. MANDAL

This Medieval Civilization town “BAGOR” has been protected by the Archaeological Survey of India with effort of local government bodies & communities. “The Bagor civilization is the largest archaeological site of medieval Indian art and culture, Situated The River Bank of Kothari”.¹² Bagor is a historical place situated at a distance of 30 km from Bhilwara district headquarter. There is situated a Gurudwara where the 10th Sikh Guru Govind Singh Ji stayed while going to Punjab. It is a historical Eco–Tourism place which is preserved.

NAHAR Dance & Chhatri of Jagannath Kachchwaha (canopy of 32 pillars), Mandal–

“On the occasion of the festival of colours, Holi, Nahar dance is organised in Mandal on Rang Teras, 13 days after Holi”. This is a dance tradition which is more than 400 years old. While going from Mewar to Delhi, Shah Jahan stopped to rest on the banks of the pond of Mandal, to make them happy, the people of the town danced by wrapping cotton all over their body, this is called "Nahar dance". On this day, "Badshah ki Sawari" is taken out during the day and at night four artists performer present Nahar dance, thus thousands of tourists come to town Mandal every year to see them.

Chhatri of Jagannath Kachchwaha¹³—This 32 pillared Chhatri made of white marble in the Mughal period. It is unique in itself. In 1608 AD, the Mewar army attacked and won over the Mughal army resting here. Many soldiers with including Jagannath Kachchwaha and Narayan Das Rao Khandar were attained martyrdom. And this 32 pillared chhatri was built in their memory.

Both two places located in bank of the Kothari river, Both has historical and cultural importance. It should be recognized as an eco-tourism place.

4. Positive Impacts of Ecotourism—

When traveling with an eco-friendly mind set it's important to remember that what your actions have consequences. This means being mindful of how you interact with the environment around you, from avoiding littering to respecting cultural customs, never pollute etc, only these super powerful actions benefits everyone involved, including yourself.

Eco tourism has many positive effects in Bhilwara district. Eco tourism has given impetus to environmental conservation and boosted the local economy, it has also given priority to development with community participation and cultural conservation. People have got environmental education as well as awareness and employment opportunities.

5. Challenges of Eco-tourism—

In Bhilwara district thousands of people visit the Ladki Dam and Meja Dam every year. Everyone has a different purpose but they throw the plastic bags, empty plastic water bottles, empty packets of potato chips etc in the open environment which is a kind of destruction of eco-tourism.

Approximately Lakhs of people every year visit the fair of Sawai Bhoj Asind but the scene after the fair can disturb you, because you will find evidence of stinking plastic bags, plastic bottles of cold drinks, stinking open defecation etc at many places. If this is not environmental degradation, then what is it? Something similar happens with Menal Waterfall, Hamirgarh Eco Park, Adhar Sheela Mahadev, Lavkush Vatika, etc but there is no one paying attention. “Eco tourism is fine but it has increased the challenge of saving the environment”.¹⁴ Before going on a trip, we have to boycott unenvironmental things such as plastic food packets, plastic bottles, etc. If you are packing food from home, do not pack it in metallic foil paper. Excessive Eco-tourism can lead to disruption of local communities. Crowds of tourists can cause noise pollution, air pollution, cultural pollution, traffic congestion and pressure on local resources.

6. CONCLUSION:

The era of information technology has not only bridged the distances between countries but has also driven the rapid growth of industries that significantly impact a nation's economy. Among these, eco-tourism stands out as a leading industry promoting environmental conservation and sustainable development. Places like "Hamirgarh Eco Park" and "Menal Waterfall" in the Bhilwara district are prime examples, receiving both social and governmental support. Additionally, numerous other potential eco-tourism

destinations hold the promise of becoming key drivers of this sector in the future. However, for eco-tourism to truly benefit the environment and local communities, it must be developed in a responsible and sustainable manner, ensuring long-term growth and preservation.

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