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## A STUDY OF POTENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ECOTOURISM IN GAGANBAWADA OF KOLHAPUR DISTRICT OF MAHARASHTRA STATE OF INDIA.

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**Abstract:**-Ecotourism is a modern phenomenon emerged for conservation of nature with the enjoyment of nature in tourism. Gaganbawada is having very rich biodiversity with various types of ecotourism destinations. This area is having number of lakes and small hills with dense forests which can be attraction for the tourists who seek for nature based tourism. Geographically, it is isolated from the developed destinations of tourism. Due to the lack of transportation facilities it is hidden from the tourists. It has potential for the religious as well as ecotourism. The attention of this paper is to focus the potentialities of this tourist place.

**Keywords:**Ecotourism, tourists.

### INTRODUCTION

Ecotourism is a growing sector of the global tourism industry that is making significant positive assistance to the environmental, social, cultural and economic well-being of destinations and local communities around the world. Offering market-linked long-term solutions for the natural degradation and economical upliftment of the local people, ecotourism provides effective economic incentives for conserving and enhancing bio-cultural diversity and helps protect the natural and cultural heritage of our beautiful earth. By increasing capacity building opportunities, ecotourism is also an effective medium for empowering local communities around the world to fight against poverty and to achieve sustainable development.

WTO estimates that nature tourism generates 7% of all international travel expenditure (Lindberg, 1997). The World Resources Institute (1990) found that while tourism overall has been growing at an annual rate of 4%, nature travel is increasing at an annual rate between 10% and 30% (Reingold, 1993). Data which supports this growth rate is found in Lew's (1997) survey of tour operators in the Asia- Pacific region who have experienced annual growth rates of 10% to 25% in recent years (Lindberg, 1997). WTO (1998) stated that ecotourism and all nature-related forms of tourism account for approximately 20 percent of total international travel. Fillion identified, through an analysis of inbound tourist motivations to different worldwide destinations that 40-60% of all international tourists are nature tourists and that 20-40% are wildlife-related tourists. (Different multipliers were used in these figures.) Nature tourists can be defined as tourists visiting a destination to experience and enjoy nature, and wildlife-related visitors can be defined as tourists visiting a destination to observe wildlife (e.g. birdwatchers).

The eco tourism development is start in 20th century in India first in kerala. But now it is growing fast in NE state, Himalaya and western ghat belt. India specifically was in dire need of this sort of tourism owing to the number of tourists it has started attracting from the world over. Numbers of natural destinations are here in Himalaya and on western ghat belt which are rich in flora and fauna but some of them are explored much in white tourism and therefore degraded. It shows the need of ecotourism therefore now development of ecotourism start here. Maharashtra is also having belt of western ghat of about 600 kms. This is crowned with flora and faun and declared as hotspot by UNESCO. Which is can be best resources for ecotourism development. The Gaganbawada is coming in this belt therefore here review of Gaganbawada tehsil of Kolhapur district has been taken to develop as ecotourism destination.

**OBJECTIVE:**

The objective of the present study is the assessment of potentials for the development of ecotourism in Gaganbawada Tehsil of Kolhapur district.

**DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY:**

The data is collected from primary i.e. visiting the places, taking the photographs and fill up the questionnaire and secondary sources i.e. Govt. offices, Census Handbook, Gazetteer of Kolhapur district and internet.

The collected data has been analyzed by some statistical and cartographic techniques as per the availability of data. The collected information finally tabulated, analyzed, interpreted and conclusion has been drawn. The data have been displayed in the tables by the level of intensity in the rank (1 2 3 4 5).

**STUDY AREA:**

Gaganbawada is one of the tehsil, located in south-west part of Kolhapur district in Maharashtra. It stretches between 16° 24'N to 16° 44'N latitude and 73° 40'E to 74° 1'E longitude. The climate of Gaganbawada is very pleasant. The average maximum and minimum temperature is 34.2°C and 15.2°C. The annual rainfall is about 4900 mm. This tehsil is having 279.3 sq. km area. As per the 2001 Census the population of Gaganbawada tehsil is 32525.

This tehsil represents separate physical properties i.e. Sahyadri hill ranges, climate, flora and fauna, and also some cultural factors remain this tehsil as a remote area in respect of the tourism development.

Gaganbawada Tehsil as an ecotourism attraction:

Gaganbawada is a hill station nearby Kolhapur (56 km to the south-west). As per the need for being an ecotourism spot, this place denote some bright features i.e. the diversity of flora and fauna, ancient fort and architecture, huge forest cover and broad deep valleys. Following are the ecotourism destinations found here;

**1. Gagangiri:**

Gaganbawada is known for the Gagangiri Maharaj monastery. It situated on the hill in Gaganbawada village. It is about 3 kms away from village. Road to monastery is winding and Ghat section which shows eye catching view of valleys with dense vegetation and cool breeze makes us happy. The height of this place is 771 mts from mean sea level. This place is situated on the edge of Sahyadri hill range.

**2. Palsambe Waterfall (Ramling):**

Palasambe waterfall is also known as Ramling because of caves of Shankara. It is about 12 km north east from Gaganbawada, and 6 to 7 kms inside from main road. It has an ancient rock-hewn carved out in a single rock in the spring with the waterfall flourishes every monsoon season with 15 ft of height. This place is covered with thick vegetation. It is truly called a place of ecotourism which has got religious touch.

**3. Lakhamapur Dam:**

This dam is one of the projects of Medium Kumbhi Project under Maharashtra Krishna Development Corporation. This barrage is build up of soil and stone on Kumbhi river. Its length is 906 meter and height is 42.58 meter. From here one could get scenic view of Kumbhi river and at the evening time this spot offers most beautiful sunset view.

**4. Morjai Temple:**

South of Gaganbawada Morjai is situated; In 560 A.D., King Manglesha built this temple. This hill is 975 metres from the mean sea level. Geomorphology of this table land is distinctive and attractive for researchers. This place also offers excellent nature trails for trekkers. Some waterfalls flows in monsoon on the western side of this hill. Number of peacocks are here therefore it known as Morjai. This place is surrounded by thick vegetation of medicinal and unique wild plants.

**5. Vesraf Waterfall:**

This is a seasonal waterfall about 4 to 5 km inside from the Kolhapur-Gaganbawada main road. This waterfall is located in the interior area of the forest having 50 ft of height. This waterfall should protect from the mass tourism activity and deforestation by local people.

**6.Andoor Dam:**

This is earthen dam has been constructed on small channel. The stored water then mixes into Kumbhi river. This is accessible to the tourists and can develop in the future as an ecotourism area due to the dense vegetation and water provision for animals.

**7.Kode Dam:**

Kode dam is located 9 to 10 kms inside from main road of Kolhapur-Gaganbawada. This is dry during summer. Various kinds of Geomorphological features can be seen into the channel. This spot is not developed because of unsuitable transport facility, and other infrastructural facilities.

**8.Karul Ghat**

Karul Ghat goes towards Northern part of Sindhudurg District. The quality of road is good. Length of Karul Ghat is 11 km. The entire ghat comes under the administration of Vaibhavwadi Tehsil of Sindhudurg. This ghat is beautiful and very scenic in monsoon. Number of waterfall fall down in this ghat in rainy season. Tourists can enjoy fog in rainy day.

The Gaganbawada is located on the Pune - Goa national highway. Most of the tourists are travelling to Goa via Gaganbawada. But very few tourists are taking halt here only for rest of few hours or for tea. Few tourists from Konkan, and Kolhapur city are coming to visit Gagangiri Maharaj monastery. But this place is having resources to develop as ecotourism destination. If it is developed tourists can take halt here at least for two day. But now here only three hotels are available for accommodation and food facility. Internal road to tourists destinations are not well constructed. Signage boards are also not available here on the road. Therefore tourists will not able to visit all internal attractions. Near about all internal attractions are in dense forest. Therefore here tourists are hesitating to visit alone therefore they need help of local people.

This place is full with natural resources required for the development of ecotourism. But yet it is not developed. Infrastructural facilities are also not developed here. Only three hotels are established on the road. About 1023 villages are there in the Gaganbawada and all these villages are engaged in agriculture sector. These all villages are beautiful places and truly represent Indian villager culture. This is also an attraction for the people living in metropolitan cities.

Therefore when we surveyed this tehsil to study the development of tourism and resources available for the development of tourism we found some tourists here mostly coming from nearby places. We have asked some questions to these tourists to find out what actually they feel about this destination? Why they are visiting this place? Are they satisfied? What they need here for the tourism activity? These questions are asked to know about the status of the development here and about what they want here to develop. The analysis of these questions is as follows.

**Table No. 1  
General image of Gaganbawada Tehsil (In per cent)**

		1	2	3	4	5
1.	Destination is natural and attractive	5	-	15	45	35
2.	Local People Participation	-	5	5	30	60
3.	Unique image	-	5	10	25	50
4.	Popularity of the destination	-	50	20	20	10
5.	Respect of Natural environment	-	5	-	25	70

Source: Compiled by Researcher.

45 per cent of tourists are agree about positive opinion of tourist areas. The Staff working at the destinations is friendly towards the tourist (60 per cent agree). As per the opinions of tourists Gaganbawada Tehsil has a unique image in tourism (50 per cent agree). It is seen here that the people living in this tehsil are respecting the nature (70 per cent agree).

**Table No. 2**  
**Satisfaction Index**

Sr. No.	Component	SI
1.	Destination is natural and attractive	4.05
2.	Local People Participation	2.55
3.	Unique image	4.4
4.	Popularity of the destination	2.9
5.	Respect of Natural environment	4.6

In the satisfaction index tourists has highest satisfaction rank to the destination its unique image natural environment and attractiveness. But they have given lower rank to the local people participation and popularity of the destination.

This shows that this destination having resources as natural environment and scenery for the development of ecotourism but it has been not explored for the same. Even local people participation is also not there which is also showing that there is no development of tourism in the Gagan Bawada. Therefore here some suggestions are suggested for the development of ecotourism in the region.

- 1.Awareness among local people should be increased regarding the development of tourism in the region.
- 2.Natural areas and forest should be conserve in this area.
- 3.Publicity of this area should be done by the MTDC
- 4.Local people should encourage to develop food and accommodation facilities the Gagan Bawada
- 5.Internal roads should be constructed
- 6.Signage board should be there on the road
- 7.Tour buses to Gaganbawada should start from the Kolhapur city.

These are some of the suggestion definitely help to the development of ecotourism in the region.

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