



## ALTERNATIVE TOURISM DESTINATIONS ALONG SINDHUDURG COAST, SINDHUDURG DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

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### ABSTRACT

*It is the known fact that in the contemporary world, competition is increasing in many fields of economic sectors including primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary. However, while keeping a pace with the fast growing world and standing on the path of competition, it is necessary that the nations need to adopt the principles of sustainable approach in every walk of their activities. One of the alternatives here to sustain the economy in an ecological way it to continue with Eco-tourism activities by exploring the destinations and forms of tourism that will attract large number of tourist to particular destination. The present paper the focuses on one of such alternative in Coastal district of Maharashtra, i.e. Sindhudurg. The research study discusses primary on activity of fishing and marine tourism as an alternative to stop environmental degradation and simultaneously improve the economic lifestyle of the region.*

**KEYWORDS:** Sustainable, marine tourism, fishing, coastal management.

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Sindhudurg district is located on the western side of Indian Peninsula. The state of Maharashtra is among the top five states in India in terms of overall species diversity. The state has a coast line of 720 km which is 9% of the total Indian coast line that extend from Dahanu and Bordi in the north to Goa in the south and falling in five coastal administrative district of Thane, Mumbai, Raigad, Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg (from north to south). Towards the southern end of Maharashtra coast line lies the Sindhudurg district, situated between latitude  $15^{\circ}37'$  and  $16^{\circ}40'$  North and longitude  $73^{\circ}19'$  to  $74^{\circ}18'$  East. The district is bordered by the Arabian Sea in the west and Sahyadri range in the east. It has a total area of 5207 sq.km and a coast line of 121 km (17%) of the total coast line of Maharashtra. The district comprises of eight talukas namely Devgad, Malvan and Vengurla (these three are in the coast), Vaibhawwadi, Kankavali, Kudal, Sawantwadi and Dodamarg (these five are inland).

### 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to identify new diving sites along Sindhudurg coast, taking into consideration favourable factors like richness of marine life, accessibility, geomorphologic features, safety, complimentary tourism attractions in the vicinity etc.

### 3. MARINE BIO-DIVERSITY AT SINDHUDURG COAST

The area is also notable for its unique coastal and marine biodiversity. The ecological significance of coastal and marine resource of the Sindhudurg region, particularly the Malvan coast, has been recognized and documented in various publications dating back to 1947. The National Institute of Oceanography has undertaken several scientific studies in the Sindhudurg region. The importance of the region's biodiversity

was highlighted in their first report published in 1980 in which Malvan in particular was identified as one of the most biologically diverse areas of Maharashtra. Further, under the integrated coastal and marine area management programme of India's Department of Ocean Development (DOD), eleven ecologically and economically critically habitats were identified along with India's eastern and western coast. Malvan is one of these eleven areas on the basis of its biodiversity value.

Due to its high ecological importance an area of 29.12 sq.km of Malvan coastal water was designated as the Malvan Marine Sanctuary in 1987. The total area has got enormous economic significance as well as potentiality for future development. A notable feature of Sindhudurg coast is the coral reefs that have been recorded at Vengurla Rock Island, Malvan and Angria Bank. Detailed ecological exploration of Angria Bank is yet to be undertaken. A preliminary survey by Science and Technology Park, Pune, estimated the coral extend to over 350 sq.km, provided ideal habitat for other divergent flora and fauna. Angria Bank and surrounding areas are reported to be a conflagration site for migrating marine animals like whale and whale shark.

#### **4. THE MAIN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AT SINDHUDURG – TOURISM**

The principal economic activity of Sindhudurg coast is Tourism. The Sindhudurg district contributed 4.7% of the total fish production of Maharashtra state in 2008-09, which were 395,963 tones. Top two contributors were Malvan and Anandwadi. Along with the fishing, tourism is rapidly emerging as an important economic function. Tourism is becoming a key driver of the rural economy in Sindhudurg, with its dependence on natural resource like Coral Reef, Dolphin Watch, Turtle Festival and Nature Trail. At present activities such as snorkeling, diving, water sports, etc are concentrated in and around the Sindhudurg Fort in Malvan, which incidentally harbours the largest coral patches and associated flora and fauna. Over the years, increasing tourism pressure has resulted in degradation of the marine ecosystem around Malvan.

Annual tourist flow to Sindhudurg district stands at more than 700,000 in 2010 as compared to 100,000 in 2006. Most of the tourist activities are located along the coast among which the popular tourist attractions are the forts (fort of Sindhudurg, Vijaydurg, Devgad, Yashwantgad and Terekhol), Beaches, Dolphin Watches, Backwater cruises, Housesboat stay, Snorkeling and Scuba Diving. Tourism is gathering momentum in the district. Over 3000 persons in the coastal district are involved land benefiting from tourism. The main beneficiaries are coastal communities. The present sites cannot accommodate the large inflow of tourists.

Alternative sites for marine tourism are therefore required to be identified and developed so as to reduce the acute pressure at Malvan-Tarkarli. The marine biological information generated out of the various projects being implemented by leading scientific institution under the UNDP-GEF Sindhudurg Project may be utilized towards identification of alternative sites. Development of such sites may be based on the ecotourism potential of Sindhudurg coast, taking into account the richness of marine life, diving sites, unique ecological habitats including rocky islands, mangrove forests etc. Besides, such development plan could dwell on creation of underwater tourism destinations. While developing such alternative tourism destination plan, emphasis must be given towards capacity building of the local population in marine interpretation, as snorkeling/scuba diving guides, boat operators etc. to generate employment.

#### **5. ECOTOURISM AT SINDHUDURG – A CHALLENGE**

i) Sindhudurg district was declared as a district of tourism in 1997. Because of its magnitude and dynamic nature, Maharashtra government has planned to infuse more investment for the development of tourism in Sindhudurg district. There is a need to prepare a master plan for the identification of alternative sites and also for the development of beach tourism and coastal cuisine. Comprehensive landscape plan along with seascape will boost tourism, especially for the Angria Bank where already tourist movement has started from Goa. With the proper planning and investment this can be promoted as a thriving coral eco system and eco-tourism centre. There is need to enrich Maharashtra Government's initiative for the future exploration of Angria Bank in order to determine the feasibility of expanding Marine tourism in the area. The

expectation is that the extensive coral reef that provides habitat for a variety of fish, etc, could make the area one of the India's best recreational destination, and the MTDC hopes to make it an eco-tourism hotspot. At the end it can be recommended that there is need of setting up of Dolphin Safari centre at Vengurla, Scuba Diving centre at Malvan, training for aquarium maintenance, Hotel Management, Automobile repairing, Tourist guide with English fluency. All these will create service sector job which is at this moment lacking in the district. The local communities have started benefiting from the economic potential of the sustainable and responsible tourism. Earlier, one decade before, local people were apprehensive and critical about the social impact of tourism that might disrupt the social balance of the society. There is a behavioral transformation among the local communities which will continue and also will improve significantly and the local people will realize the mutual interest in directing the growth of tourism in Sindhudurg coastal area.

There is need to support the development of plan, low impact, less intrusive community driven tourism that can significantly reduce negative dependency on bio diversity resource, boost the local economy and help in developing a strong constituency for marine and coastal bio diversity conservation. In collaboration with MTDC and for its department, project will support development of a sustainable tourism management plan for the Sindhudurg coastal eco-tourism.

To support development of the Sustainable Tourism Plan, there is need to support several diagnostic studies such as (a) assessment of visitor patterns, interests and existing infrastructure; and (b) the impacts of current and projected levels of beach, cultural and ecotourism on biodiversity. The Sustainable Tourism Management Plan will specify goals, objectives and activities for mainstreaming biodiversity conservation consideration in both types of tourism.

## 6. CONCLUSION

To facilitate implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Management Plan, extensive training will be provided to staff from MTDC, Forest Department, and the local tourism industry on issues related to (a) global biodiversity significance of the SCME; (b) impacts of current and projected tourism patterns on coastal and marine biodiversity and links with the long-term sustainability of the tourism product; (c) visitor carrying capacity of vulnerable areas such as the Angria Bank; (d) special requirements such as prohibiting visitation in certain areas during specified periods to minimize disturbance to vulnerable habitat, flora and fauna; (e) best practices in providing sustainable tourism services geared to the local tourism industry including sustainable design, resource use, waste management; (f) strategies for providing environmental interpretation services and guidance to tourists on responsible tourism behavior; (g) best practices in visitor management to minimize impacts on biodiversity; (h) certification issues and options for biodiversity-friendly tourism.

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