



TOURISM POTENTIAL OF WESTERN GHATS OF MAHARASHTRA AND ITS EFFECT ON BIODIVERSITY

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Introduction-

Western ghats of India are one of the hot spots of the world regarding its biodiversity. It ranges from Gujarat to Kanyakumari upto 1600 kms and approximately covers the area of 1,60,000 sq.kms. It has spread as parallel line to the Arabian sea and occupied the states like Goa, Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Kerala. It is located in between 72°56'24"E to 78°0'19'40" E and 8°0'19'8"N to 21°00'16'24"N. The highest point is Annamudi with a height of 2695 meters.

The biodiversity of this region is enriched with-

Flowering plants - 45000 (Endemic - 1720)

Trees – 490 (Endemic - 308)

Orchids – 245 (Endemic - 112)

Invertebrates – 315

Mammals – 23

Birds – 89

Reptiles – 87

Amphibians – 117

Fish – 104

The Western Ghats of Maharashtra are spread all along 650 kms. and spread across 7,75,000 hectares. The average rainfall is 2000 to 6850 mm and temperature ranges from 140 to 370 F°. The highest point is Kalasubai of 1646 meters.

The biodiversity of Western Ghats of Maharashtra is enclosed in various forms as Sacred Groves, National Parks, Rivers, Dams, Plateaus, Hills, Forts, Valleys and Forests.

a. National parks

b. Sacred groves

c. Rivers

d. Dams

e. Forts

f. Mineral deposits

a. National parks in Maharashtra

Sr. No.	Name of the park/ Sanctuary	District	Year of Establishment	Area sq.meters.
1	Chandoli	Sangli, Kolhapur, Satara	2004	317.67
2	Sanjay Gandhi	Boriwali	1983	86.96
3	Radhanagari	Kolhapur	1958	351.13
4	Bhima Shankar	Pune, Thane, Raigad	1985	130.78
5	Tansa	Thane	1970	304.81
6	Tungreshwar	Thane	2003	4.48
7	Karnala	Raigad	1968	60.62
8	Phansad	Raigad	1986	69.79
9	Deoulgaon	Ahmadnagar	1980	2.17
10	Koyana	Satara	1985	423.55
11	Malwan	Sindhudurg	1987	29.13

b. Sacred groves

Sacred groves are the protected forests due to religious regions. Maharashtra has a rich sacred groves with lot of diversity in it. In Maharashtra there are 2820 sacred groves covering 5255.17 hectare area. In Kolhapur district there are 133 sacred groves covering 264.11 hectare area, in Sangli district there are 13 sacred groves covering 136.7 hectare area and in satara district there are 23 sacred groves covering 24.96 hectare area. About 790 plant species and

352 plant varieties are recorded from these sacred groves.

c. Rivers

Maharashtra has the wide network of rivers originating from Sahyadris and Satpudahills. These rivers are Vasana, Dhom, Kanher, Mand, Urmodi, Tarali, Kera, Koyna, Vang, Yevati, Morana, Warana, Kadavi, Kasari, Kumbhi, Dhamni, Tulshi, Bhogavati, Doodhganga, Tilari, Chitri and Chikotra.

d. Dams

Maharashtra has lot small, medium and large dams which also shelters the diversity these are Vasana, Dhoni, Kanher, Urmodi, Tarli, Kera, Koyana, Vang, Yevati, Moma, Warana, Kadvi, Kasari, Kumbhi, Dhamni, Tulshi, Radhanagari, Doodhganga and Patgaon.

e. Forts

The state has lot historical forts in Maratha history these forts also serve as biodiversity sites these are Pratapgad, Pargad, Rangana, Samangad, Gagangad, Vishalgad, Vasota, Sajjangad, Ajinkyatara, Chandgad, Mahipalgad, Gandhrvagad, Pavitragead, Prachitgad, Bhudargad, Bhairavgad, Shivgad, Pavangad, Panhala, Sumargad, Mahimatgad, Bhavangad, Ganvantgad, Kalanidhigad, Sundargad, Jaigad, Devgad etc.

f. Mineral deposits

There are reach mineral deposits of Iron, Boxite, Manganese and Chromite in the State.

Developmental Activities in the State –

Due to the rapid development lot of activities are going on in the state which are disturbing the diversity. Some the major activities are-

- a. Tourism spots
- b. Industrialization
- c. Electricity generation projects
- d. Roads
- e. Dams
- f. Wind mills
- g. Mining
- h. Urbanization
- i. Land use pattem
- j. Deforestation
- k. Excessive use of medicinal plants

Role of Wildlife –

The wildlife plays a multiple role and values, these are Ecological, Medicinal, Utilitarian, aesthetic, Cultural, ethical, Religious and Educational.

Main threats to biodiversity:-**1) Habitat destruction :-**

Every organism needs specific microhabitat to be flourished when natural environments are modified or changed to serve human needs, habitat destruction takes place if it is in small extent, it is termed as habitat fragmentation. It has negative impact on biodiversity

2) Climate Change: - It is hottest hot issue among all of us. It alters the climate patterns & rain patterns and change the

traditional range of climate to which organisms were habitual. This forces the species to move in order to find favorable condition to live or to adapt. Some species successfully cape up with change will most of will be unable to do so.

3) Over exploitation :- When biodiversity is removed western than it can be replenished and over the long term, can result in extinction of species over exploitation combined with destructive harvesting practices causes lass of biodiversity in large extent

4) Invasive alien species (IAS)

Species that have spread outside of their natural habitat& threaten biodiversity in new area are major cause of biodiversity loss. Those species are harmful to native biodiversity in number of ways vie, predators, parasites, vectors etc. Most of the time invasive alien species do not have predators in new environment so their population size cannot be controlled.

5) Pollution: - It is the largest driver of biodiversity loss. It may be soil pollution, air pollution, water pollution.

6) Tourism :-

Now a day's biodiversity attracts tourist. They enjoy diversity of organisms at particular area. This adds to their knowledge, aesthetic value as well as economy of particular country. But we have to think thoroughly on the impact of tourism on the biodiversity. Most of the time tourist is with aesthetic view and lack scientific knowledge. Their knowing unknowing activities tend to destruct biodiversity. Their verticals cause pollution, they throw plastic utensils, and during their photography they rain our precious flora of that area.

Conclusion –

Though the biodiversity loss is occurring at rapid speed, people started to realize and are beginning to make choices as well as take actions to save biodiversity.

Still we need more action plans to save this. It is our prime duty to encourage other people and governments to conserve biodiversity.

References –

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