

# Ecotourism and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development: The Case of Hyderabad, Telangana State

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**Abstract:** An ecosystem is a geographic area including all the living organisms' people, plants, animals, and microorganisms, their physical surroundings such as soil, water, air, and the natural cycles that sustain them. (Ecosystem 2018). Landscapes in Hyderabad are becoming an increasingly popular tourist destination, with both international and domestic travelers, where Ecotourism is the main activity contributing to the area's development. There is a need for sustainable development in Ecotourism, and the connection between tourism and the environment is much stronger than in other sectors. Ecotourism must account for social, economic, and environmental implications to succeed. This study aims to look at how ecotourism and sustainable development can be evaluated; and suggest ways to improve current ecotourism practices.

**Keywords:** Eco-tourism, socio-economic development.

## 1. Introduction

The Hyderabad is a Garden city. The nomenclature of Hyderabad by its founder, a justification as to why Hyderabad was called " Bagnagar" or "Baghnagar"(Garden-City) by the common people of Hyderabad-Golconda and by the foreign travelers during the eleventh/seventeenth century. (Qutub Shahis of Golconda 2006).

The development of Hyderabad is directly dependent on the quality of the environment and its sync beauty. It is recognized as a "landscape" destination with a plenty of open space, a clean environment, and a variety of flora and fauna. There are many places with beautiful nature in and around Hyderabad. Sustainable ecotourism development is one of the city's main objectives. To be sustainable, tourism should emphasize on the quality of environment as well as its "green" perspective, principles of minimal environmental impact, respect and support for local cultures and traditions, enhancing a formative experience for the tourist that strives for quality over quantity, and guaranteeing its conservation for future generations (UNWTO, 2013). In this context, the role of Ecotourism is essential, as a type of tourism aiming to conserve the natural environment and improve the well-being of local people (Hill and Gale, 2009).

The case study area of this subject is "Hyderabad" in Telangana State. A newly carved state from Andhra Pradesh. A state in India. Situated in the southern part of Telangana in

southeastern India, along the banks of the Musi River (Maps of India 2007). Ecotourism is considered the main activity in Hyderabad and plays an important role in protecting the environment. Many lakes, canals, tanks are found and are polluted with floating solid waste in and around Hyderabad city. The present work focused on the condition and quality of lakes and their preservation by achieving the local people's sustainable socio-economic development through Ecotourism.

## 2. Ecotourism and Current Situation

The tourism industry in Hyderabad is currently experiencing a crisis due to the outbreak of COVID-19. This has affected the bottom-up economy and caused mass tourism to be discouraged. Because of social distancing, mass tourism gatherings are not suggestible, so there is a need to develop Ecotourism in the city. In this situation there is a need to think about ecosystem and Ecotourism to meet the needs of present and future tourists while protecting and enhancing the environment. The theme for World Environment Day 2021 is "Ecosystem Restoration," and we will see the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration launch. Ecosystem restoration can take many forms: Growing trees, greening cities, rewinding gardens, changing diets, or cleaning up rivers and coasts. (World Environment day 2021).

## 3. Ecotourism is a Growing Sector

Ecotourism is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the tourism industry; several clusters of gardens were established in and around the outskirts of the city of Hyderabad. These gardens extended right from Koh-i-Tur (Falaknuma now) Charminar to Husain Sagar Lake. Some of the gardens which have been existing are as follows: they are garden clusters in and around the Golconda fort. The Bagh-i-Dilkusha or the Bagh-i-Koh-i-Tur Sultan Shahi BaghPhul Bagh below the Hussain Sagar lake Koh-i-Nabat Ghat (Naubat Pahar hillside botanical Garden) A cluster of Gardens surrounded the Hussain Sagar covering an area of twelve miles south of the city (Qutub Shahis of Golconda 2006)

This project aims to provide local people with economic, social, and cultural incentives to conserve the environment through renewable energy. Ecotourism promotes the

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conservation of forests and encourages people to conserve them. It is also beneficial for the environment and human welfare. Ecotourism must consider the social, environmental, and economic impacts of its activities. This study aims to identify ways to improve the practice of sustainable development.

Sustainable development is a concept that aims to provide the necessary conditions for the present and future generations to meet their needs. It does so by taking into account the needs of the present and future generations. It is often called intergenerational equality (Dixon & Pretorius 2001). The idea is that we should share natural resources with people who are alive on the planet today and with future generations of the earth's inhabitants. Sustainable development integrates economic, social with the aforementioned environmental goals. Sustainability highlights on resource conservation (Dixon & Pretorius (2001)

According to The World Tourism Organization (WTO), sustainable tourism should:

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a crucial element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and Biodiversity.
- 2) Ecotourism aims to promote the cultural authenticity of host communities while protecting their traditional values (EUROPEAN UNION 2013).

#### 4. Context of the Case Study

Hyderabad is the capital of Telangana as well as Andhra Pradesh's de jure capital. Covering an area of 650 square kilometers (Telangana government 2014). Hyderabad is one of Telangana's most unique landscapes because of its special character, arising from the complex interaction of its geology and physical landscape, natural scenic beauty, Biodiversity, a wealth of historic and prehistoric monuments, and local culture and activities. (History of Hyderabad2018)

The most visited places in Hyderabad are Public Gardens, also known as Bagh-e-aam, which means garden of public or people's park in Urdu. (Qutub Shahis of Golconda 2006) It is an enchanting place to visit. The park was built during the Nizam's reign by Osman Ali Khan, the seventh Nizam of Hyderabad, in the year 1846). It is considered to be one of the oldest gardens of Hyderabad. (Baag-e-Aam 2018) Durgam Cheruvu Lake is surrounded by granite rocks, which is said to be a rare thing not just in India but in all over Asia. (2012) Once at the lake, one can try out various kinds of exciting activities. The place has facilities available for boating, camping as well as trekking. (Durgumcheruvu, 2018). The area attracts large numbers of visitors each year (Central Statistics Office, 2018). As a result, tourism contributes to the local economy (Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation2018). Sanjeevaiah Park is a prominent location in Hyderabad, and it enjoys a prime location close to the Husain Sagar Lake. As a popular tourist spot, this park also has the fame of receiving the Best Open Landscape Award in 2010, under the category of Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage. It is also known to be one of the largest and oldest parks in Hyderabad, which is one of the most spectacular

landscapes in Hyderabad(HyderabadTourism).

Osman Sagar, Gandipet, is often visited by families and those looking for some peaceful time away from the hustle-bustle of the city. The lawn towards the lower side of the lake offers a picturesque ambiance, dotted with lush greenery by the side of the vast lake body. It presents a perfect setting for family outings. It is one of the famous one-day picnic spots in Hyderabad, where families and friends can relax and spend some time amid the refreshing atmosphere.

#### 5. Methodology

Ecotourism is a relatively new concept, and the existence of various definitions of it is not surprising. The key territorial players that took into consideration in the research defined Ecotourism as a type of tourism directly related to the environment. As some experts noted, it could be confusing for local people to distinguish between Ecotourism and nature-based tourism, as nature-based tourism relates to the environment. The most important thing for ecotourism providers is first to define the concept of Ecotourism.

However, some of the interviewers believe that there is no significant difference between Ecotourism and nature-based tourism. The only real difference is that nature-based tourism concerns only the environment.

In contrast, Ecotourism is more about benefits to local people as well. They believed that there is no need to distinguish between these two concepts and asserted that the most crucial thing is sustainably developing Ecotourism. When respondents were asked how they define Ecotourism at their respective organizations, most of the experts answered that they use the definition of the International Ecotourism Society, which states that 'Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural areas which preserves the environment and improves the welfare of the local people (TIES, 1990).

Regarding the social benefits, Ecotourism develops the community by attracting people to it. The cooperative approach gives local stakeholders a sense of place. People who were never involved in Ecotourism can learn about it, which has significant social benefits. The role of education is substantial in ecotourism development,

Part of the economic benefit is generating income for conservation and managing national parks and other public lands. By using core indicators of sustainable tourism, we assess the data taken from the research as follows:

Tourism volume and value indicator is a critical tool to assess the economic sustainability of the area by using the number of tourist overnights per month and daily expenditure per tourist (HydTou, 2021). According to the data of the Ecotourism Network (HydTou 2021), the most active months for tourism are October to March. The number of tourists during these months varies from 1000 to 2000, and the average tourist expenditure is 80-150 Rupees per day per person. Tourism Enterprises Performance affects the Sustainability of the destination. Tourist length of stay (measured in nights) is a significant indicator for accommodation providers in the area (HydTou, 2021). The majority of the visitors take a one-day tour. Some tourists stay between 2 and 7 days in bed and

breakfasts, hotels, and hostels.

The role of Eco-tourism in providing job opportunities directly to local people (HydTou, 2021). According to the Ministry of Tourism, Ecotourism offers new employment opportunities for local people in the food industry, accommodation, transportation services, and local guides. The Department of Tourism, the government of Telangana state, believes that Ecotourism provides new employment opportunities and businesses to local people from the Ecotourism Network.

There are considerable benefits to the members of the Ecotourism Network, including the provision of a networking forum, a conservation and advocacy forum, sustainable tourism training and networking programs, destination marketing, and promotion strategies. The agriculture and fishing sectors are particularly well-positioned to benefit from tourism. (TS, 2021). Also, it should be noted that ecotourism development in Hyderabad has promoted the expansion of the green cover throughout the city; the program Haritha Haram was launched by the Telangana government on 3 July 2015. It is one of the Telangana Flagship programs to rejuvenate degraded forests, and in the areas outside the existing forest, massive planting activities were to be taken up in areas such as; road-side avenues, river and canal banks, barren hills and foreshore areas, institutional premises, religious places, housing colonies, community lands, municipalities, and industrial parks. (Haritha Haram July 2015) The Telangana government will develop Bhruhat Pattana-Prakruthi Vanams (BPVs) across all the urban local bodies as part of the Haritha Haram program [HH].

Nearly 77 big BPVs (492 acres) and 142 small BPVs (178 acres) would be raised in the current financial year. AS a result of the productive use of land and an increase in farmers' income. (Harithaaram2021) Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation believes that the idea of Ecotourism is to support and help the economy by using environmentally sustainable methods. According to reports, around 14% of deforestation occurs worldwide only because the usage of papers (AICHE 2016) for a healthy environment needs at least 33% of forest cover. In India, there is even less than 25% of forest cover now left. This is a significant concern. This means that it is a need to reduce deforestation (AICHE2016).

By the idea of Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. Ashutosh and Naren from Bangalore have taken the initiative to Rescript stationery products like copier, pen, and A4 sheet papers as the white pieces are being used in schools, colleges, and office work to a large extent (Eco freaks 2021).

The idea of Recycling paper plays a vital role in protecting environmental Sustainability. However, there are several concerns in the area regarding the economic aspect of Sustainability.

One of the main factors that ecotourism operators in Hyderabad consider is the environment. Through the use of environmental impact indicators, they can identify areas where they can make improvements. Sustainability of Ecotourism Climatic features of a region influence tourism directly and indirectly and play a crucial role in tourism development. (Rahman, 2010). Within the ecotourism implementation

existence of water resources creates advantages in terms of both visually and utilization. According to the data obtained from the tourists, some of them show dislike for the limited infrastructure available in ocean parks, such as swimming costumes and the less availability of boats to row on them. (Hyderabad Tourism 2021)

The use of transportation by visitors contributes to air pollution. It contributes to greenhouse gas emissions by tracking visitors' distances and encouraging improvements in the use of environmentally-friendly vehicles for tourism (HYD T, 2018).

Landscape and Biodiversity Protection to preserve natural areas, maintaining a high level of Biodiversity is essential; protected areas are crucial in the destination's tourism industry as it gives an attractive image of the goal. The experts in Ecotourism also highlight the role of landscape and gardens in Hyderabad. One of the main objectives of tourists who visit the area is to see the beautiful landscapes in Hyderabad (TS, 2021).

## 6. Social Sustainability of Ecotourism in the Hyderabad

A variety of social indicators are used to measure the impact of tourism on the local community and the cultural heritage of the destination. The factors that affect the social effects of tourism are identified and analyzed to develop practical recommendations. However, some dislikes indicated areas for improvement, such as the area's infrastructure. This was also mentioned by the tourism product providers (HydTourism 2018). Protecting and Enhancing Cultural Heritage, Local Identity, and Assets. Cultural identity is crucial worldwide.

For example, if heritage buildings are destroyed or replaced with modern structures, the character of the destination changes. Cultural Heritage is an asset that is valuable to preserve and enhance. It is also essential to protect and enhance the local identity of a region.

## 7. Conclusion

Due to Covid-19 and lockdown have had a catastrophic impact on the country's tourism sector. There's still uncertainty regarding international travel. According to members of the Ecotourism Network, however, the search volumes for domestic travel indicate an appetite for going on vacations.

After months of lockdown, people want to be amid greenery and nature to get some fresh air and enjoy good weather.

The study revealed that ecotourism development is closely linked to the development of the whole region. This means that it has the potential to be a sustainable tool for local development. However, there are some barriers to this kind of development. The objective of the Hyderabad Eco-Tourism Network is to develop eco-friendly regions in the area by taking into account the views and interests of the local residents and visitors.

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