

GEOTOURISM: A NEW ASPECT OF TOURISM (A CASE STUDY OF RAMESHWAR MAHADEV, BUNDI-RAJASTHAN)

Dr. Ashutosh Birla*

ABSTRACT

Geotourism is centered on exploring the earth's geographic and geological characteristics in order to promote environmental and cultural awareness. Although it is a relatively new field, it is connected to other types of nature-based tourism like ecotourism and adventure tourism. The current study emphasizes the geotourism potential in Rameshwar Mahadev in Bundi district, which is home to numerous incredible rock formations and geodiversity in the form of faults, folds, waterfalls, river shapes, and other amazing rock structures. To unlock the geotourism potential, which will lead to the preservation of the unique geofeatures and help locals find employment in the tourism industry, eco-friendly infrastructure and facilities must be developed.

Keywords: *Rameshwar Mahadev, Bundi, Geofeatures, Geotourism, Rajasthan.*

Introduction

In the modern world, the tourism sector has gradually grown in importance within the global economy. which not only aids in boosting employment but also encourages interpersonal interaction and the comprehension of different ethnic cultures. The tourism sector currently offers a wide range of goods, including ecotourism, nature tourism, geotourism, adventure tourism, etc.

Travel that preserves or improves a location's geographic character, including its environment, culture, aesthetics, history, and the health of its inhabitants, is known as geotourism. Dowling presented a revised definition of geotourism at the third international conference on geoparks in Osnabruck, Germany, from June 22–26, 2008: "Geotourism is a sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing the earth's geological features in such a way that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation, and conservation and is locally beneficial." Geotourism focuses on both the where and the what of destinations. Geotourism, put simply, is travel that has a link to geology and geomorphology. Beginning in the early 1990s, the geotourism idea was developed and promoted. (Hose, 1995). This type of travel has both geological and geographical components.

* Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Government Girls College Bundi, Rajasthan, India.

Bundi is a natural gift-place. Due to the presence of a wide variety of geological phenomena and outcrops, including among other landforms structure, residual hills, folding, faulting, waterfalls, and many more, many areas of the Bundi district present immediate possibilities for geotourism. Rameshwar Mahadev is a single of them. Geographical and natural splendour abound in this area.

Objectives

In order for Rameshwar Mahadev to become more than just a significant tourist destination, the study aims to emphasise its geofeatures. A number of supplementary goals have been determined from this main goal and are listed below:

- To research the geotourism and geo-conservation concepts in relation to the research region.
- To identify significant geofeatures in the research region.
- To determine the issues slowing the region's tourist growth.
- To investigate the geotourism possibilities in the Bundi district and Rameshwar Mahadev.
- To advertise the Bundi district's and Rameshwar Mahadev's natural attractions.

Research Methodology

The research is exploratory in nature as well as descriptive. Site visits, field work, conversations with stakeholders like hoteliers, tour guides, etc., and the documentation of geofeatures using photography in the study area were all used in the exploratory research that produced the main data. The study and analysis of written materials on geodiversity, geoheritage, geosites, geoparks, geoeducation, and geotourism were used for descriptive research. Although largely preliminary in nature, this research has used both primary and secondary data. Geographical highlights of the Bundi region and Rameshwar Mahadev.

Study Area

Rameshwar Mahadev is located in the Akoda gramme panchayat tehsil Hindoli region of Bundi, between 25°03'29.63" North Latitude and 75°04'104.31" East Longitude. The Vindhyan range also pass through this region. The region has a semi-humid climate. 90% of the yearly rainfall falls between June and September, with an average annual rainfall of 809 mm.

Present Status and Discussion

India attracts visitors from all over the world with its natural beauty and cultural variety so they can see its cultural heritage, historical sites, and incredible landforms. A number of states in India welcome visitors, but Rajasthan is a key travel location as it welcomes roughly one in five visitors to the country. According to the annual report of the tourism department of the Government of Rajasthan (2021), after the Covid pandemic, Rajasthan, which is well-known for its historical landmarks, vibrant festivals, and natural beauty, welcomed about 34806 foreign and 21.98 lac domestic tourists. The following year saw a gradual rise in this figure.

Bundi is becoming a popular tourist destination in Rajasthan for both local and foreign visitors. The district's Rameshwar Mahadev provides immediate chances for geotourism due to the existence of a wide variety of geological outcrops and phenomena, such as numerous landforms, residual hills, folding, faulting, waterfalls, and more.

The distance between district offices and Rameshwar Mahadev is 16 kilometres. This area's topography and geographic surroundings have been altered by erosion, and these changes not only make the area more beautiful to look at but also make it easier to learn about geography. The depression pool was created by the waterfall's water cascading over the foundation rocks. Following that, the erosion and deposition processes caused by the flowing water form landscapes. Geographical and natural splendour abound in this area. The main draw is water that is cascading from a height of 50 feet. This location is significant geographically because it contains layered rocks that stretch a considerable amount of time, as well as tight folds, open folds, synclines, ant synclines, fault lines, and karst topography (caves, stalagmite, stalactite, and cave pillars).

Through thorough SWOT analysis, an effort has been made to identify the key geotourism characteristic of this area.

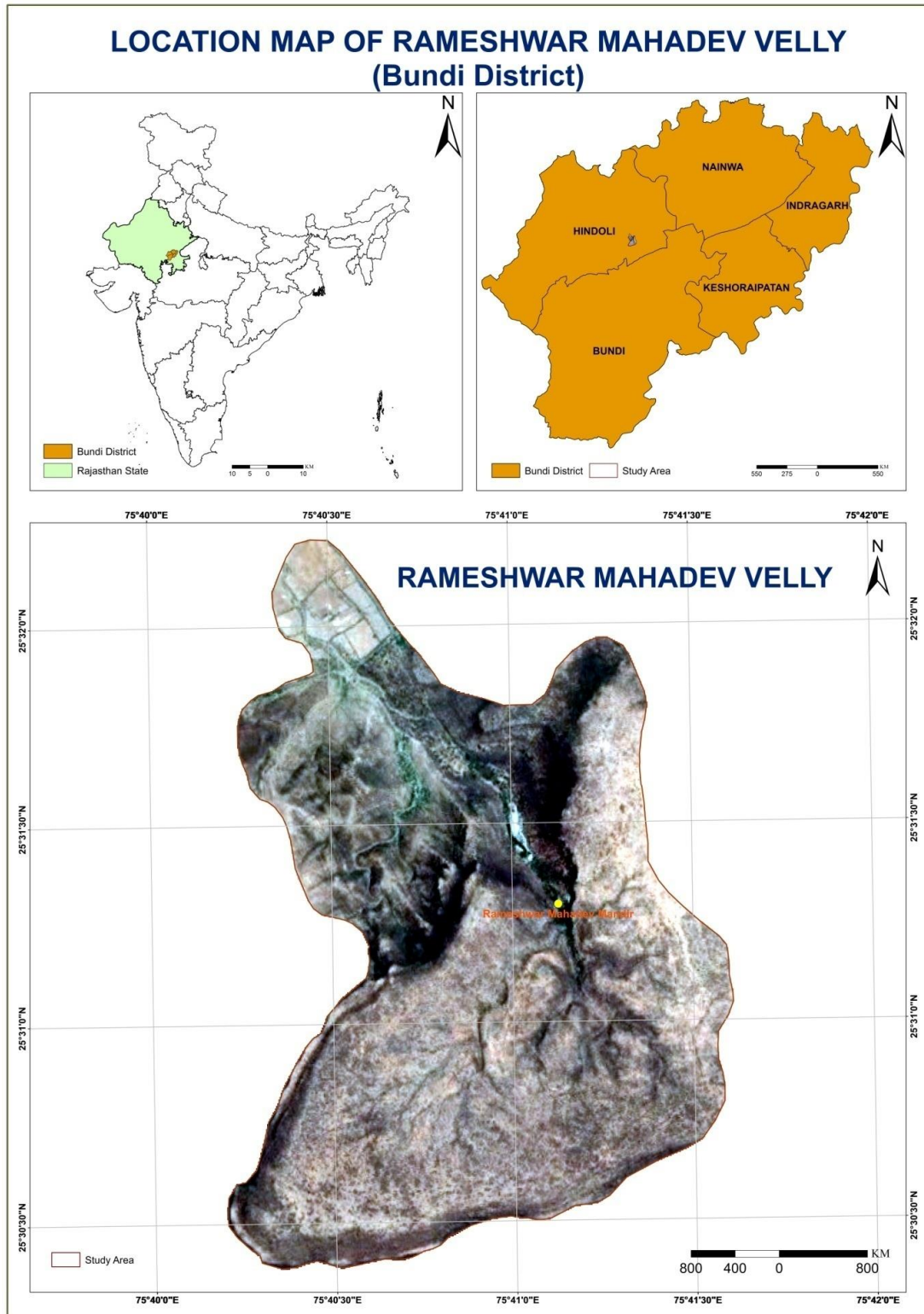


Figure 1: Location Map of Rameshwar Mahadev

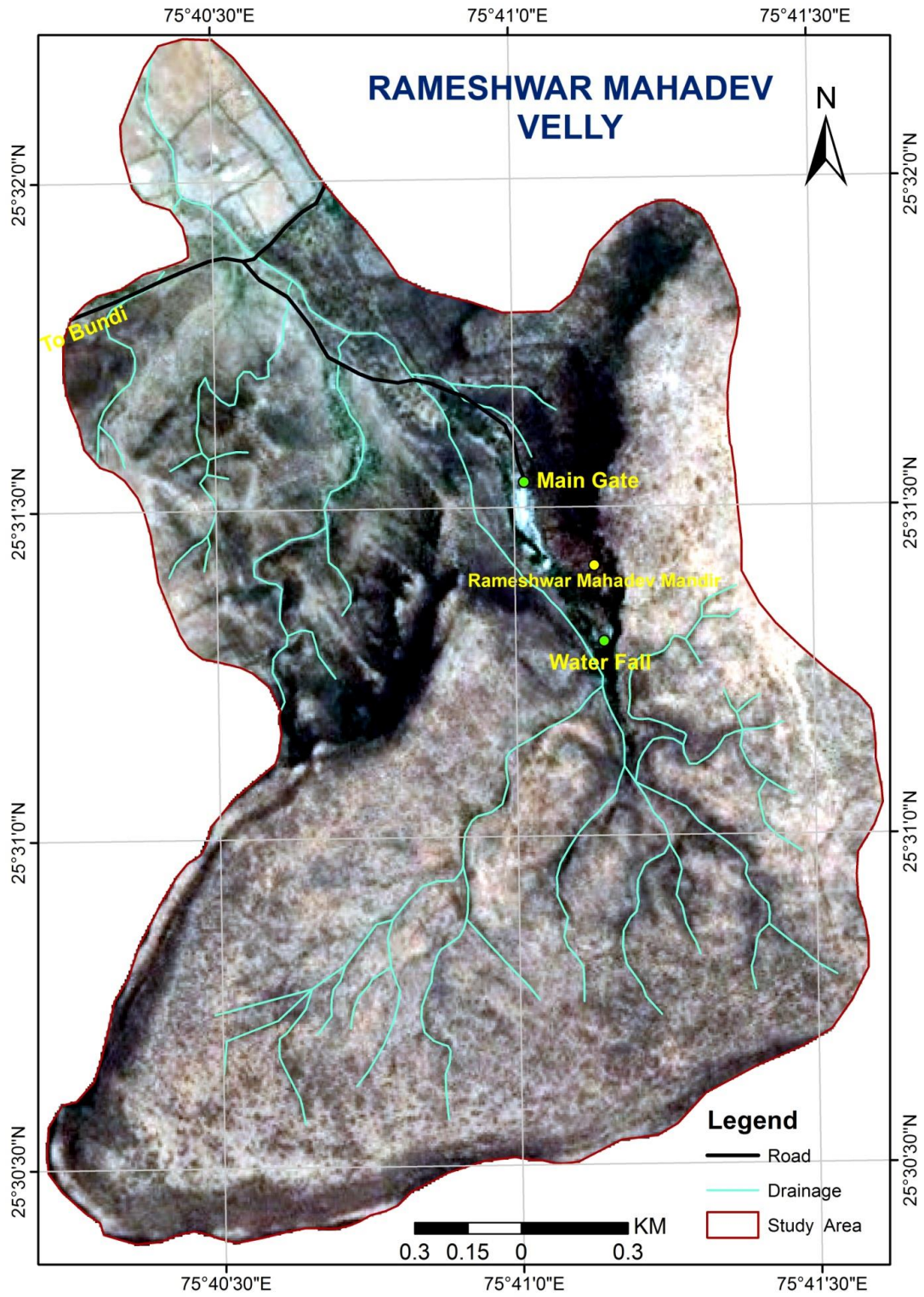


Figure 2: Rameshwar Mahadev Valley



Figure 3: View of Rameshwar Mahadev



Figure 4: Example of Fold



Figure 5: Example of Fold



Figure 6: Example of Fold



Figure 7: View of Waterfall

SWOT Analysis

In order to verify the facts during the research to explore and examine the potential of geotourism in Rameshwar Mahadev, I prepared a schedule and discussed it with the respondents. Additionally, very useful information was obtained through in-depth interviews with both locals and visitors. Below are the findings of the SWOT study (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats):

Strengths

- This area is a popular geotourism location for nature lovers.
- The variety in this area is extensive.
- This location boasts a wide range of natural loveliness.
- Currently, this location has an excellent infrastructure.
- There is a significant domestic tourism destination.

Weakness

- Encroachments and illegal constructions are destroying the area's scenic landscape, and unrestrained business activity is out of balance with the environment there.
- Transportation and conveyance options are not tourist-friendly, and the majority of visitors think they are being taken advantage of by having to pay exorbitant prices to enter the centre.
- The hotel amenities are subpar.
- Due to their lack of training in geotourism, Bundi's tour guides are unable to pique the interests of both domestic and foreign visitors regarding the region's landforms and geofeatures.

Opportunities

- The expansion of morally responsible actions to support in the region.
- There is a chance to create a strategy that will benefit all the stakeholders and locals.
- There is potential for socioeconomic advancement, employment possibilities, and travel.
- The area is sufficiently big to plan and manage geosites carefully.
- There is potential for sustainable development through holistic, integrated planning and management; engage in educational development; and improve geotourism.

Threats

- Lack of obligations and a code of behaviour for both domestic and foreign visitors.
- Growing tourism-related activities are straining available resources.
- Vehicle trafficking is not environmentally beneficial.
- Geotourism's hasty and unplanned growth is destroying the area's scenic landscapes.
- Infrastructure developments linked to tourism are not in tune with nature.
- It is important to crack down on tourist fraud and criminality.

Suggestions

- The district headquarters should have good road access to the tourist attractions, as well as inexpensive and environmentally responsible transportation options.
- The tourism agency should educate the tour guides on the structures and formation processes of these significant geofeatures found in and near Bundi.
- So that students can gain experience and practical knowledge of the various landforms created over the centuries, various educational institutions ought to be invited to such locations for introductory tourist trips.
- Locals who live close to geotourism destinations should also be informed about how to preserve and keep the natural beauty of these places.
- In order for Bundi to become more than just a historical tourism destination, a district tourist map highlighting these geo-attractions should be created.
- In order for visitors to historical sites to develop interest in the geo-objects and reschedule their stay in Bundi, signage at those sites should also include pertinent information like distance and location maps of the places of geotourism significance in and around Bundi.
- The NH 52 has recently seen the construction of two tunnels with a historical aesthetic close to Bundi. At 1.1 km each, these tunnels are thought to be the longest in Rajasthan and a new source of interest for travellers. Because of this, effective signage displaying a location map, pictures, and other details about the geo-sites close to these tunnels may also aid in boosting the number of domestic visitors.
- Development of up-to-date lodging options at reasonable prices is essential for domestic and foreign visitors to remain longer and in a safer environment.
- It is important to promote geoawareness among the general population, tourists, academics, and students in order to improve the geotourism experience.
- Through geographic maps and diagrams, geographical exhibitions, poster displays, and open geographic institutions, all visitors and locals should receive geo-education.

Conclusion

Because of several factors, only about 1% of the foreign visitors arriving in Rajasthan currently choose to explore the historical town of Bundi and see its forts, palaces, cenotaphs, paintings, step wells, etc. Aside from these significant historical sites, Bundi is distinguished by its natural grandeur and a wealth of undiscovered geofeatures with the potential to attract geotourists to the region. In light of this, historical tourism combined with geotourism will play a significant role in the creation of job opportunities to boost the economy, and Bundi district will become a major geotourism destination on the global tourism map if the geofeatures and geobjects are developed on the line of geotourism and the suggestions to improve the tourism experience are worked upon.

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