

## **“GEOTOURISM: A NEW ASPECT OF TOURISM” (A CASE STUDY OF BHIMLAT VALLEY)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Nowadays tourism industry has steadily acquired an increasingly important position in the global economy, which helps in not only increasing employment but also people to people contact and promotes ethnic cultural understanding. Presently, tourism industry is offering a variety of products in the form of ecotourism, nature tourism, geotourism, adventure tourism etc. Geotourism is the kind of travel that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place – its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and wellbeing of its resident. Geotourism derives is not just about where places are. It is also about what places are. At its simplest geo tourism is tourism with connection to geology and geomorphology. Bundi is a gift place of nature. Numerous areas of the Bundi district offer immediate opportunities for geotourism because of the presence of a diverse range of geological phenomena and out crops including amongst many landforms structure, residual hills, folding, faulting, waterfalls and many more. One of them is Bhimlat Valley. This place is full of natural and geographical beauty. The study is aimed to highlight the geo features of the Bhimlat Valley so that apart from an important tourist place it can become a geo-attraction in the world.*

**Keywords:** *Bhimlat, Bundi, Geofeatures, Geotourism, Rajasthan.*

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### **Introduction**

Nowadays tourism industry has steadily acquired an increasingly important position in the global economy, which helps in not only increasing employment but also people to people contact and promotes ethnic cultural understanding. Presently, tourism industry is offering a variety of products in the form of ecotourism, nature tourism, geotourism, adventure tourism etc.

Geotourism is the kind of travel that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place - its environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and wellbeing of its resident. At the 3<sup>rd</sup> International conference on geoparks in Osnabruck, Germany, 22-26 June 2008, Dowling presented a new definition of geotourism as “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 is not just about where places are it is also about what places are. At its simplest, geotourism is tourism with connection to geology and geomorphology. The geotourism concept was developed and promoted from the early 1990s onwards (Hose, 1995). This form of tourism has two aspects, i.e., the geological and the geographical.

Bundi is a gift place of nature. Numerous areas of the Bundi district offer immediate opportunities for geotourism because of the presence of a diverse range of geological phenomena and out crops including amongst many landforms structure, residual hills, folding, faulting, waterfalls and many more. One of them is Bhimlat Valley. This place is full of natural and geographical beauty.

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### Objectives

The study is aimed to highlight the geofeatures of the Bhimlat Valley so that apart from an important tourist place it can become a geo-attraction in the world. From this broader objective a number of subordinate objectives have been identified which are presented below:

- To study the concept of geotourism and geo-conservation with respect to the study area.
- To earmark important geofeatures in the study area.
- To identify the problems hampering pace of tourism in the area.
- To explore potential of geotourism in Bhimlat Valley as well as Bundi district.
- To promote geographical attraction of Bhimlat Valley as well as Bundi district.

### Research Methodology

The study is both explorative and descriptive in nature. Explorative research [primary data] was done by site visits, field study, discussions with the stakeholders like hoteliers, tourist guides etc. and documentation of geofeatures with help of photography in the study area. Descriptive research was done by study and analysis of published material regarding geodiversity, geoheritage, geosites, geoparks, geoeeducation, geotourism, etc. This study has used preliminary as well as secondary data but is largely of preliminary nature.

### Study Area

Bhimlat Valley is situated on south-west part of Bundi district between  $25^{\circ}18'09.52''$  North Latitude and  $75^{\circ}24'42.20''$  East Longitude in NeemKaKhera gram panchayat tehsil Bundi district Bundi. Vindhyan ranges and upermal plateau also traverse this place. Climate of the area is semi humid. Average annual rainfall is 809 mm with 90% rainfall between months of June to September.



**Present Status and Discussion**

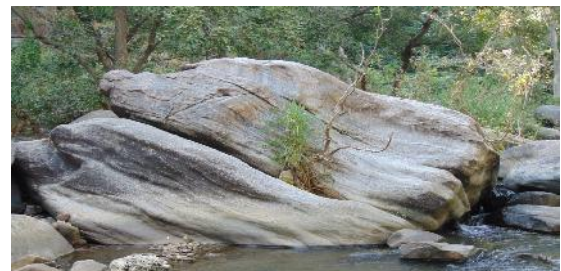
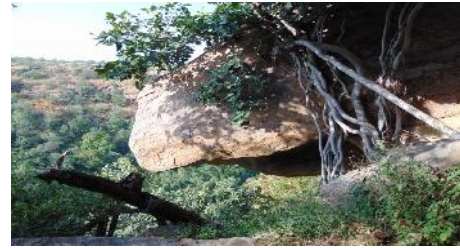
India is known for its natural beauty and cultural diversity which fascinate tourists from the world over to witness cultural heritage, historical monuments and amazing landforms. The tourists arriving in India are hosted by a number of states amongst which Rajasthan is an important tourist destination as it receives about every fifth tourist visiting India. As per annual report of tourism department of Government of Rajasthan (2014), some 16 lac international and 32 lac domestic tourists were hosted by Rajasthan which is an eminent figure on global tourism map and is characterised by historical monuments, colourful festivals and natural beauty.

In Rajasthan, Bundi is emerging as an important tourist destination for both domestic and international tourists. Bhimlat Valley of the district offer immediate opportunities for geotourism because of the presence of diverse range of geological phenomena and outcrops including many landforms structure, residual hills, folding, faulting, waterfalls and many more.

Bhimlat Valley is located 35 km away from district headquarters. This place is full of natural and geographical beauty. Water falling from a height of 100 feet is the centre of attraction. This place is of geographical importance as we find here layered rocks which cover a long time span, various types of rock features, 3 kms long gorge, rock painting and many more.













### SWOT Analysis

During the study to explore and examine of potential of geotourism in Bhimlat Valley I prepare a schedule and discussed with the respondents to verify the facts and with the help of personal interviews of the local resident and tourist very valuable information was obtained. The SWOT-analysis (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats) results are below:-

#### Strengths

- This place is a nature based geotourism destination.
- This place has a rich biodiversity.
- This place has a large variety of geographical beauty.
- Presently road connectivity exists at this place.
- There is a strong domestic tourist attraction place.

#### Weakness

- Encroachments and illegal constructions are spoiling natural and geographical beauty.
- Road condition, transportation and conveyance facilities are not tourist friendly and most of the tourists feel themselves cheated by paying unreasonable amount for accessing the interior.
- There are no hotel and refreshment facilities.
- Tourist guides of Bundi are not trained for geotourism, therefore, they find themselves clueless to satisfy curiosities of overseas and domestic tourists regarding landforms and geofeatures of the area.
- There are large amount of noise and plastic pollution due to various activities like as Goth, Religious programs etc. which are not in harmony with the wildlife and natural beauty.

#### Opportunities

- The extension of responsible activities to promote in the area.
- There is a potential to develop a vision for the betterment of all the stakeholders and local resident.
- A potential exists for socio-economic development, job opportunities and training.
- The area is large enough to plan and manage geosites intensively.
- Undertake educational development and enhancement of geotourism.
- There is the scope for the sustainable development in an holistic, integrated planning and management manner.



### Threats

- Lack of responsibilities and code of conduct for local and overseas tourists.
- Growing tourism activities are put the pressure on resources.
- Trafficking of vehicles is not environment friendly.
- Poorly planned and rapid expansion of geotourism is spoiling natural and geographical beauty.
- Construction of tourism related infrastructure is not in harmony with the nature.
- Tourist crime and cheating with tourists should be increased.



### Suggestions

- The tourist sites should be well connected with district headquarters by roads with affordable and eco-friendly transport facilities.
- Tourism department should train the tourist guides imparting enough knowledge about structures and processes of formation of these important geofeatures found in and around Bundi.
- Various educational institutes should be invited at such places for introductory tourist excursions so that students can have experience and practical knowledge of various landforms made over the centuries.
- Local people residing in vicinity of the geotourism destinations should also be made aware and provided knowledge to conserve and maintain natural beauty of these places.
- District tourist map should be prepared highlighting these geo-attractions so that apart from a historical tourist destination, Bundi can find a distinct place on national and global geotourism map.
- Signage at historical sites should also incorporate relevant information like distance and location map of the places of geotourism importance in and around Bundi so that tourists visiting these historical sites can also develop interest in the geo-objects to reschedule their stay in the Bundi.
- Recently two tunnels are constructed on the NH 12 with a heritage look near Bundi which are considered to be longest tunnels (1.1 km each) in Rajasthan and are new point of attraction for the people passing through the area. Hence, proper signage depicting location map, photographs and other information about the geo-sites near these tunnels may also help in increasing number of domestic tourists.

- Development of modern lodging facilities at affordable costs is necessary for prolonged and safer stay of domestic and international tourists.
- To enhance the geotourism experience, geo-awareness for the public, tourists, scholars and students should be undertaken.
- Geo-education should be given to all the tourists as well as local resident through geographical maps and diagram, geographical exhibitions, posters displays and open geographical museums.

### **Conclusion**

Presently only about one percent of the international tourists arriving in Rajasthan choose to visit the historical town of Bundi and witness forts, palaces, cenotaphs, paintings, step wells, etc. because the tourism here is badly affected by a number of factors. However, apart from these places of historical importance, Bundi is also characterised by natural beauty and many unexplored geofeatures having potential of geotourism in the area. Hence, if the geofeatures and geoobjects are developed on the line of geotourism and the suggestions to improve tourism experience are worked upon; historical tourism coupled with geotourism will play a vital role in creation of job opportunities to boost the economy and Bundi district will become a major geotourism destination on the global tourism map.

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