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Stewardship To Statute: Integrating Ecotourism in India Through Community Participation, Sustainable Governance, & Public Trust of natural resources.

ISWARIYA V

Assistant Professor of Law, Erode College of Law, Erode.

ABSTRACT:

The study explores how far ecotourism initiatives in India proactively involving community participation, sustainable use of resources, and exchange of traditional ecological knowledge among communities, tourists, policy makers, and to future generation. Ecotourism can be integrated within enforceable legislation that guarantee sustainable ecological integrity, and conservation, resilience of natural resources, and equitable distribution of benefit across stakeholders. It tries to examine the constitutional, and institutional legal framework that convert customary conservation practices into statutory duties, ensuring that eco-tourism generates benefits sharing, balanced community livelihoods and future generational entitlement rights. Drawing on comparative legal analysis and applied socio-legal study, the study identifies governance model that recognizing environmental legal framework, public trust responsibilities, and collaborative governance with indigenous communities.

The study also try to evaluates India's ecotourism mechanism for revenue sharing, enforceable visitor-limits, and local self-governance that have been embedded in legal frameworks to prevent commodification and ecological degradation, and further looking into the subsidiary measures such as statutory benefit-sharing mechanism, free, prior and informed consent for indigenous

communities, independent monitoring and adaptive management clauses that allow regulatory reformations, penalties and remedies for non-compliance.

The anticipated outcome is a set of statutory insight and institutional reforms that integrate stewardship into statutory governance, strengthen grassroot collective involvement aligning with sustainable ecotourism governance and commitment toward future generations.

Keywords: *Ecotourism, Sustainable Governance, Public Trust Responsibility, Community Participation, Benefit-Sharing,*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

Ecotourism is considered as a natural-conservation based travel that seeks protect biodiversity, respect local culture, and generate sustainable livelihoods among stakeholders (TIES, 2015; Buckley, 2009)[1] Unlike mass tourism, ecotourism basically aim to balance economic activity with ecological stewardship following eco-friendly visits, environmental education, and community participation (Honey, 2008; Buckley, 2009)[2]. In reality, the conservation and social benefits depends on proper legal institutional frameworks that govern land use, access to the resources, distribution of revenues and the authorities (Kotze, 2014)[3]

The relationship between ecotourism and constitutional principles are twofold, First, constitutions that enshrine environmental conservation, duties and rights provide normative and doctrinal like fairness, community rights and protecting nature for future generations to elevate ecotourism from market activity to matter of public law. Second, constitutional doctrines such as public trust, right of nature, and obligations of the state to protect common resources creates legal standard policies and permits that are enforceable (Sax, 1970; Wesche,

[1] Buckley, R., 2009. *Ecotourism: Principles and Practices*. Wallingford: CABI; The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), 2015. *What is Ecotourism?* [online] Available at: <https://ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism/> [Accessed 11 Jan. 2026].

[2] Honey, M., 2008. *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?* 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Island Press; Buckley, R., 2009. *Ecotourism: Principles and Practices.* Wallingford: CABI

[3] Kotzé, L.J., 2014. *Environmental Constitutionalism in the Anthropocene*. Oxford: Hart Publishing.

2021)[4]. Where constitutional commitments are taken seriously, ecotourism must focus on protecting nature and involving community rights rather than merely maximize short-term revenue.

While focusing on principle of conservation the substantive content of legal regulation for ecotourism, need to focus on concept such as carrying capacity, integrity of ecosystem, precautionary management, and adaptive governance toward ecological science into legal threshold and duties (Manning, 2007; Holling, 1978)[5]. Embedding these principle in statute or regulation- through carry capacity limits, environmental management plans, and grassroot self-governance further aligns conservation law with local stakeholder knowledge systems, strengthening both ecological outcome and procedural legitimacy (OHCHR)[6].

1.2 Background and problem statement

Ecotourism has expanded rapidly as a development and conservation strategy, protection of biodiversity, cultural study, and local livelihood. Focusing on legal and institutional frameworks that transform conservation science and customary stewardship into binding laws. The constitutional commitments toward environmental protection, indigenous rights and duties exist in papers but not in actions, uneven operationalization and focus on short term commitments rather than long term investment. These gaps are studied to understand legal fragmentations, licensing regimes, short term returns, revenue sharing arrangements, and the conservation standards.

Statement Of Problem:

1) How does constitutional doctrines (public trust, rights to environmental protection, duties of state) been implemented within established legal frameworks' to make ecotourism activities legally accountable for fairness and sustainability?
2) To what extend the existing framework and remedial doctrines empower stakeholder and ecosystem to involve

[4] Sax, J.L., 1970. *The Public Trust Doctrine In Natural Resource Law. Stanford Law Review*, 22(3), pp.361; Wesche, P., 2021. *Rights Of Nature In Practice: A Case Study On The Impacts Of The Colombian Atrato River Decision*. *Journal of Environmental Law*, 33(3), pp.531–555.

[5] Manning, R., 2007. *Parks and Carrying Capacity: Commons without Tragedy?* Washington, DC: Island Press; Holling, C.S., 1978. *Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management*. Chichester: Wiley.

[6] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), n.d. *Consultation And Free, Prior And Informed Consent (FPIC)* Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/indigenous-peoples/consultation-and-free-prior-and-informed-consent-fpic (accessed 11 Jan. 2026)

statutory protections against degradation driven tourism?

3) How far India statutory frameworks (revenue sharing, carry capacity limits, EPIC based grassroot management) effective in converting customary stewardship into binding laws?
4) What regulatory instruments and enforcement mechanism are needed to align ecotourism with long-term conservation goals?

1.3 Aim and Objective

To have a in depth understanding of how India legal framework that makes accountable to conservation and future generation.

Objectives

- To Interpret Legal Foundation - the constitutional provisions & judicial doctrine in relevance to ecotourism governance
- Analyse the enforcement mechanism, their remedial measures, and administrative oversight of ecotourism.
- To have a statutory evaluation of instruments in relation to ecotourism existing laws and regulatory tools.
- To have an integrated study of conservation science, social-ecosystem integrity, and economic developments.
- Finally to identify the doctrinal gaps on legal ambiguities, conflict, and certain barriers in enforcing intergenerational obligations.

1.4 Methodology overview and ethical considerations

The study adopts the doctrinal research methodology, relying on constitutional doctrine, statutes, case law, and scholarly commentaries to critically examine how law can make ecotourism accountable for conservation and protection toward present and future generations. It also involves comparative study focus on international ecotourism governance and practices, integrating conservation principles such as carrying capacity and adaptive managements.

CHAPTER 2: ECOTOURISM WITH CONSTITUTIONAL & DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

2.1 Introduction To Ecotourism And Their Principles

Ecotourism travels are considered to be a responsible nature travel focusing on conservation of environment, sustaining the economic and social welfare of local people in and around the eco-tourism sports, and try involve nature awareness and community

involvement (TIES, 2015)[7]. Focusing on three important aspects, "The conservation", "The Communities" and "the Interpretation", harmonising as one and with equal mutual dependency. In practice, the operators, participants, and promoters should commit toward following guidelines such as (The International Ecotourism Society, 2015)[8]

i. Reducing the negative impact to it maximum on physical, social, psychological and their behavioural
ii. Build understanding and upliftment towards experience for both visitors and stakeholder's.
iii. Channel the financial benefits towards environmental conservation and restoration.
iv. Generate economic benefit among communities and private partnerships.
v. Provide environmental awareness and education through naturae experience and cultural learning.
vi. Plan, Design, and construct infrastructure that try minimise ecological footprints and use of resources.
vii. Respect towards indigenous rights and co-ordinated management among communities.

2.2 Ecotourism in India

India consider Ecotourism as an emerging concept for sustainable travel & conservation, its legal framework sits within broader environmental and wildlife statues that tend to regulate forests, protected areas, coastal areas & ecological sensitive zones. The ecotourism frameworks is structured around two principal dimensions, such as following conservation strategies and developmental tools regulated by forest authorities or other authorities appointed by national and state government (Government of India, 1986; Government of India. 1972)[9]. In particular MoEFCC made statue's for ecotourism to have permanent structure in 2021 for initiative on forest land and considered it as non-forest activity, requiring prior approval under the act (Government of India, 1980; MoEFCC, 2021)[10]. This ensure

[7] The international ecotourism society (TIES), 2015. **TIES Announces Ecotourism Principles Revision.** Available at: https://ecotourism.org/news/ties-announces-ecotourism-principles-revision/ (accessed at: 25Jan 2026).

[8] The International Ecotourism Society, "What Is Ecotourism?", the international ecotourism society, 2015. Available at: What Is Ecotourism - The International Ecotourism Society (accessed 13 Jan.2026)

[9] Government of India, *The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986*. New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice; Government of India, *The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972*. New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice

[10] Government of India, 1980. Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. New Delhi; Ministry of law and Justice; Ministry Of Environmental, Forest And Climate

that ecotourism initiatives are legally scrutinised before implementation.

At the policy level, *National Strategy For Ecotourism* (2022) set the strategic pillars for site identification, carrying-capacity assessments, certification schemes, branding, and community participation (Ministry of Tourism)[11]. It emphasises that ecotourism must be community-centric, generating livelihood while protecting biodiversity. Following multi-layer governance, The Ministry provides national vision and strategy, MoEFCC regulates forest and wildlife activities, & state governments prepare its own ecotourism strategies and mange site-level implementation. In addition, local governance has significant role along with local community who are recognised as stakeholder, with policies, public participations, co-management and benefit sharing (Ministry of Tourism)[12] .

2.3 Constitutional Foundations Of Environmental Protection

Environmental protection in India is constitutional guaranteed by Part III, IV & IVA , under Art 48A directs the state to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forest and wildlife, while Art 51A(g) impose fundamental duty on citizens to protect and improve the nature, inserted after wake of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference), this amendment marked as formal commitment to environmental protection (Constitution of India)[13]

Later Judicial interpretation has expanded these provisions significantly, the SC has read the Right To Clean And Healthy Environment into the Art 21(Right to Life), thereby elevating environmental protection to the status of a fundamental rights[14]. This judicial activism has ensured environmental protection is not views merely as policy goal,

Change(MoEFCC), 2021. *Clarification on ecotourism activities Under The Forest (Conservation Act), 1980*. New Delhi: Government Of India.

[11] Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, National Strategy and Roadmap for Ecotourism, April 2022. Available at: National Strategy for Eco Tourism_0.pdf (Accesses 24 Jan.2026)

[12] Ministry Of Tourism, Government Of India, *National Strategy for Ecotourism*, April 2022. Available at: https://tourism.gov.in (Accesses 24 Jan.2026)

[13] Government of India, Constitution of India, 1950 ((Forty-second Amendment, 1976), **Articles 48A. Protection and improvement of environment and safeguarding of forests and wild life**.— The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wild life of the country and **51A(g) Fundamental duties**- to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures

[14] M.C.Mehta v. Union of India, AIR 1987 SC 1089; Subhash Kumar v. state of Bihar, AIR 1991 SC 420.

but as legal obligation that both government authorities and private entities must follow and uphold.

2.4 Doctrinal Principles Relevant To Environmental Conservation

India's environmental legal framework has always been developed around number of foundational principles that played a significant role in addressing ecological concerns and are highly relevant to ecotourism governance. Among these, the Precautionary Principle emphasizes the need for preventive actions from environmental risks, recognizing scientific uncertainty should not be used a reason for delaying protective measures[15]. Similarly, the Polluter Pays principle requires those responsible for environmental damages need to bear cost for environmental damages and restoration[16], along with it Public Trust Doctrine, which recognizes the state as trustee of natural resources and state take the ownership responsibility upon forest, rivers, wildlife, and other ecological assets for benefit of future generation[17]. These principle doctrines strongly reinforced through judicial decisions too particularly in cases such as Vellore Citizen's Welfare Forum v. Union of India (1996) and various M.C. Mehta cases, which have helped shape India's environmental jurisprudence. All together, these doctrines provide a strong normative foundation for balancing environmental conservation with sustainable development. They tend to promote accountability, encourage responsible environmental stewardship, and support the protection of natural resources, all of which are fundamental to effective governance.

Building on these foundations, Indian courts have also expanded the doctrinal landscape of environmental conservation such as supreme court explicitly recognised "*Doctrine Of Absolute Liability*", established in "Oleum Gas leak[18] case ensuring strict

[15] UN, 1992. Rio Declaration On Environment And Development. Report of the United Nations Conference On Environment And Development, 3–14 June 1992, UN Doc. A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I). **Principle 15** states: "*In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.*"

[16] Ibid., **Principle 16** states: "*National authorities should endeavour to promote the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment".*

[17] M.C. Mehta v. Kamal Nath, AIR 1997SC 388.

[18] Vellore Citizenships' Welfare Forum v. Union of India, AIR 1996 SC 2715; M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, AIR 1988 SC 1115 (Ganga Pollution); M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, AIR 1997 2 SCC 353 (Taj

accountability for ecological harm caused by hazardous activities, reinforcing responsibility for ecological harm cause by hazardous activity. Over the period, "*Principle Of Intergenerational Equity* [19]and "*Sustainable Development*[20] added to Indian ecological jurisprudence, as asserted environmental resource's must be preserved for future generational and requiring development protects (including tourism projects) to harmonise ecological integrity with economic progress. Together, these doctrine embed accountability, precaution, stewardship, and sustainability into ecotourism governance, make it a right-based and future-oriented practices.

CHAPTER 3: STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS & INSTITUTIONAL DESIGNS OF ECOTOURISM

3.1.Legal and policy framework

India's ecotourism framework remains largely policy driven rather than statue driven laws, the National Strategy for Ecotourism(2022)[21] outlines key importance such as site classifications, capacity building, digital monitoring system, and pilot projects aimed at promoting sustainable tourism in every parts of India. Along with it policy initiatives, existing environmental and forest laws continue to regulate tourism activities in ecologically sensitive areas. At the state levels, several state governments such as Kerala, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh ,a dn Tamil Nadu have formulated ecotourism policies and guidelines that emphasize community participation, sustainable forest management, and benefit-sharing mechanisms,

Despite these developments, there are certain gaps which remains within India's ecotourism governance framework and laws. One of the most significant challenges is, absence of comprehensive legal framework dedicated specifically to ecotourism. As the result, monitoring, compliance, and enforcement responsibilities are dispersed

Trapezium Case); M.C. Mehta v. Union of India, AIR 1991 2 SCC 353 (Vehicular Pollution Case).

[19] Rio Declaration, 1992, "**Principle 3** states: *The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations"***;** Oposa et al. v. Factoran, G.R. No. 101083, Supreme Court Of Philippines, 30 July 1993, 224 SCRA 792 (Recognising the right of present generation to sue to protect the environmental for future generations)**;** state of Himachal Pradesh v. Ganesh wood products, Supreme Court of India, AIR 1996 SC 149; (1995) 6 SCC 363 (invoking duties to conserve forest resources for future generations); Gabčíkovo-Nagymaros Project (Hungary v. Slovakia), Judgment, ICJ, 25 Sep 1997, I.CJ. Report 1997. P.7 (Court and separate opinions addressing obligations to protect the environment for future generation.)

[20] World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Brundtland Report), United Nations, 1987; ibid.

[21] Ministry of Tourism (2022) *National Strategy for Ecotourism*. Government of India, New Delhi. Available at: https://tourism.gov.in (Accessed: 15 January 2026).

across multiple governance. Furthermore, carrying capacity assessments and licensing requirements are not uniformly implemented, leaving many ecologically sensitive destinations vulnerable to overcrowding and environmental degradation. Although community participation is widely acknowledged as key principle of ecotourism which provide local communities with meaningful decision making authority and guaranteed benefit-sharing mechanism remains limited. In addition, the legal standing of communities and non-governmental organizations in ecotourism related disputes has not been recognized.

Thus, India's ecotourism framework possesses a strong policy vision grounded in sustainability, community participation, and conservation financing. However, the absence of consolidated statutory framework and clear enforcement mechanism continues to create a gap between policy objectives and its implementation. Strengthening the legal foundation of ecotourism would help translate these ideas into enforceable obligations, which promotes both environmental conservation and socio-economic development.

3.2.Governing Authority And Institutional Roles

As we could see that ecotourism governance are multilayered governing authority involving central, state and local authority. At the central level, the Ministry of Tourism provides strategic direction, branding, and funding support, while MoEFCC oversees environmental clearance, biodiversity protection, and regulatory frameworks (MoEFCC. 2022) and other agencies (National Strategy For Ecotourism)[22] often collaborate through national strategies, guideline, and inter-ministerial committees.

At the state level, tourism department, forest departments, and wildlife boards are responsible for site approvals, concessions, and day-to-day management of ecotourism projects. However, institutional capacity varies widely, with some state having strong ecotourism boards and other relying on fragmented departmental coordination (MoEFCC, 2023; Wildlife Division, 2023; Ministry of Tourism, 2022)[23].

[22] Ministry of Tourism (2022), *National Strategy for Ecotourism.* "Chapter 8 – Governance And Institutional Framework", Governance following institutional structure by Vision group under Union Minister, Inter-Ministerial Coordination Committee under Cabinet Secretary, National Board on Sustainable Tourism under Secretary (Tourism),

[23] Ministry Of Environment, Forest And Climate Change (MoEFCC) (2023) *Guidelines For Eco-Tourism In Forest And Wildlife Areas*. Government of

At the local level, panchayats municipalities, and community organisations are increasingly recognised as partners in benefit-sharing and stewardship. Joint forest management committees and community-based tourism cooperative have been integrated with local knowledge and ensure equitable distribution of tourism revenues. Community participations are promoted through Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs). However, several institutional challenges continues to exist[24].

F*irst*, major concern is absence of dedicated statutory authority for ecotourism, which often results in overlapping multiple responsibility and that leads to lack of coordination. *Second*, coordination mechanism are mostly ad hoc, with MoUs and committees lack in binding powers. *Third*, capacity disparities across states mean that monitoring, enforcement and benefit sharing are inconsistently applied. Finally, local bodies lack statutory decision-making powers mostly limited to consultation rather enforcement.

3.3.Monitoring, Compliance And Enforcement Mechanisms

Current policy emphasises on baseline surveys, certification and digital tools (visitor counters, GIS mapping, branding/ certification schemes) to track performance, and encourages states to pilot real-time monitoring and visitor management systems. While the enforcement relies on administrative sanctions (suspension of permits, fines) and existing environmental adjudicatory mechanism (tribunal and courts). Policy guidance promotes co-management models, community benefit-sharing, and capacity building (training, certification, and micro-enterprise). Several states and protected area projects use joint management agreements or community-based tourism models,

However key gaps, statutory requirement for specific ecological and social indicators, independent third-party audits, mandatory public dashboards, and automatic licence triggers tied to threshold are not uniformly codified, implementation depends on state rules and project level contracts. Policy call for grievance redress and fast dispute resolution, but explicit statutory provisions granting broad standing to specific harms, performance bonds sized to restoration costs,

India, New Delhi; Ministry of Tourism (2022) *National Strategy for Ecotourism*. Government of India, New Delhi; Wildlife Divion, MoEFCC (2023) Wildlife Wing; Policy And Governance Functions Under The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Government Of India, New Delhi.

[24] ibid

and conservation funds with community governance are still emerging rather than settled. but statutory co-management with defined decision-making powers, reserves seats, and enforcement benefit-sharing formulas remains patchy.

3.4.Initiative And Action Plan For Green And Eco-Tourism

The Government of India has rolled out a suite of policy measures and programmes to mainstream sustainability across India's tourism sector, from the National Strategy for Development of Ecotourism (2022) to practical scheme like Swadesh Darshan 2.0 and certain other initiatives. These initiatives aim to promote low-impact visitor experiences, strength community benefit and safety, such as

1. National Strategy For Development Of Ecotourism (2022)- National roadmap circulated to state/UTs setting priorities for Site classification, Capacity building, Digital monitoring, Pilot projects, and State-level implementation.
2. Promotion of Green and Eco-tourism (2025)- public communication emphasising holistic promotion of eco-tourism and sustainable tourism as part of national campaigns.
3. Eco-tourism Guidelines (MoEFCC, 2021)
4. Swadesh Darshan 2.0 (Revamped 2023) – destination related tourism and scheme reorientation toward sustainable, thematic circuits, and ecological safeguards rather than only infrastructure.
5. Travel for Life (TFL) Programme- Behaviours change initiative encouraging sustainable actions by tourists and tourism businesses (energy/ waste/ water conservation, low-impact practices.
6. And certain other initiative such as promotion of rural homestays, tourist safety and support measures, gender and safety financing linkage.

The key gaps over these initiatives are, policies are heavy but statute are lights as they consider as non-binding legal force, as enforcement depends on discretionary administrative actions, which is kind of a fragmented mandates with weak finance, so monitoring, restoration, and benefit sharing are inconsistent. More focus on short term revenue incentives, weak obligation and responsible authority.

CHAPTER 4: POLICY RECOMMENDATION & CONCLUSION

4.1 Model statutory provisions

Carrying Capacity and Licensing: Participatory governance is promoted through Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs), village level ecotourism councils, and community training initiative. However, several institutional challenges continue to exist. One major concern is the absence of dedicated statutory authority for ecotourism, which often results in overlapping responsibility. (Drumm & et.,) [25]

Revenue-sharing and conservation finance: an effective governance also requires independent audits of both ecological and social indicators, supported by publicly available monitoring dashboards, performance bonds, and statutory restoration order. These mechanism help ensure that compliance is transparent and financially recured. By making connectivity over environmental performance with legal and financial accountability, they strengthen the overall effectiveness of ecotourism governance. (Wunder, 2005)[26]

Co-Management and Participatory Governance: local communities need to participated in decision-making boards, supported by gender-inclusive participation requirement and effective redressal mechanism. Such measures would create legally protected right for local communities and stakeholders.

Monitoring and Compliances: Effective governance also requires both ecological and social indicator through independent audits, supported by easy accessible monitoring dashboards, and statutory restoration orders. These mechanism help ensure that compliance to be transparent, measurable, enforceable, and financially secured. (Archana, 2022)[27].

Legal Standing And Remedial Measures: The legal framework should expressly recognise the right of local communities, NGO's, and public interest groups to bring ecotourism related disputes before court and tribunals. It should also provide effective

[25] Drumm, A.,& et., (2004) *Ecotourism Development: A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers – The Business of Ecotourism Development and Management*. Arlington, VA: The Nature Conservancy.

[26] Wunder, S. (2005) *Payments for Environmental Services: Some Nuts and Bolts*. CIFOR Occasional Paper No. 42. Bogor: Center for International Forestry Research

[27] Archana, K. (2022) 'Menace of Ecotourism and the Role of Legislations in India', *Indian Journal of Environmental Law*, 29(3), pp. 112–130; UNEP (2019) *Tourism and Environmental Sustainability: Compliance and Monitoring Mechanisms*. Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme.

remedies, including injuctions, restoration orders, fines, and compensation for environmental damage.(Shyam, 2019; Pujar & Mishra, 2020)[28]

4.2 Implementation strategy

Phased Rollout: Reforms should be with pilot projects in selected ecotourism sites to test tools like carrying-capacity licences, co-management boards, and finance. Successful practices can then be embedded through state-level legislative amendments ultimately leading to a national framework law that harmonises governance while allowing local adaptation.

Capacity Building: the reform are effective by institutions and communities having the capacity to implement them, this requires training for regulators (tourism and forest officials) in ecological monitoring, licensing, and enforcement; training for communities in governance, finances and sustainable tourism; and training for operators in compliance, visitor management, and eco-certification.

Technology Integration: as the modern governance requires reliable data and transparent systems, can Integrate GIP Mapping, Visitor Management Systems (digital counters, Geofencing, online booking platforms) and Certification Platforms On Eco-Label.

Transparency And Accountability for effective governance: statutory framework require regular open public disclosure of monitoring reports, enforcement mechanism, and proper utilization of conservation funds. Data's such as ecological indicators, visitors numbers, penalties imposed should be readily accessible. Greater transparency and openness not only promotes public trust but also enables local communities, organisation and effectively monitor system and hold both authorities and tourism operators accountable actions.

4.3 Conclusion

The ecotourism framework of India are currently guided mostly by environmental laws, policies, rule and guidelines that mostly emphasize upon sustainability, conservation, and community participation. While these frameworks creates important goals to achieve, their impact also remain limited

[28] Shyam Divan (2019) 'Public Interest Litigation and Environmental Protection in India', *Indian Journal of Environmental Law*, 34(2), pp. 145–162; Pujar, S.C. & Mishra, N. (2020) *'Ecotourism in India: An Analytical Review of Current Practices and Future Prospects'*, *Tourism Review International*, vol. 24, no. 3–4, pp. 289–302.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2020.1861040

because they lack in statutory force. As the result most of these ecotourism framework act as recommendation rather than enforceable mechanism. To address these gaps, their is need for legislative reforms that adopt key ecotourism principles into binding law. Such reforms must include mandatory carrying capacity assessments, licensing, focusing on conservation funds and legally standing local communities with co-management arrangements. By providing such kind of legal foundation , india can move toward effective framework governance than policy aspiration. This would environmental support and conserve biodiversity but also promote inclusive socio-economic development for local communities.

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2. Drumm, A.,& et., (2004) *Ecotourism Development: A Manual for Conservation Planners and Managers – The Business of Ecotourism Development and Management*. Arlington, VA: The Nature Conservancy.

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5. Rio Declaration, 1992, "**Principle 3** states: *The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations***";**

6. World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Brundtland Report), United Nations, 1987; ibid.

7. Ministry of Tourism (2022) *National Strategy for Ecotourism*. Government of India, New Delhi. Available at:

https://tourism.gov.in (Accessed: 15 January 2026).

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10. Government of India, *The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986*. New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice; Government of India, *The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972*. New Delhi: Ministry of Law and Justice