

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF AYODHYA IN UTTAR PRADESH

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**Abstract:** Sustainable tourism is influenced by the dimension of cultural heritage, including community, basic infrastructure, visitor, administration, and enterprises, and other related issues. The tourism and cultural heritage are interrelated to each other. The Indian twin city of Ayodhya-Faizabad consists of the places of cultural heritage. Ayodhya is famous for pilgrimage, salvific quality, and holy tradition of Hindus. Of course, it is sacred and religious place for Hindus, besides there also exist religious sites of Muslims, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs. Like other holy cities, Ayodhya too enumerates unique and variety of cultural heritagescapes, like tradition, faith, festivities, pilgrimages, folklore, custom, artefacts, historical building monuments, and other tangible and intangible cultural heritage that attract the tourists. Since 1992 Ayodhya has been suffered from the religious contestation, as exemplified by Babari mosque and Ramajanmabhumi temple; such type of contradiction obstacles the tourism development, however pilgrimage-tourism has been the main force in the city. Ayodhya Faizabad represents an aesthetic and unique type of cultural landscape and heritagescape that include historical monuments, artefacts, Ghâts, water pools, traditional performances, mythology and faiths, custom, folklore, festivities, pilgrimages, and other tangible and intangible cultural heritages. These are attractions for pilgrims and tourists but lacking adequate or appropriate presentation and communication in respect to their significance of heritage values to both visitors and members of the local host community. The present paper highlights the cultural landscapes of Ayodhya – Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh.

Tourism has emerged as the biggest industry of future. The importance of tourism has been well recognized worldwide. Now tourism has ushered into a new area of expansion and importance,

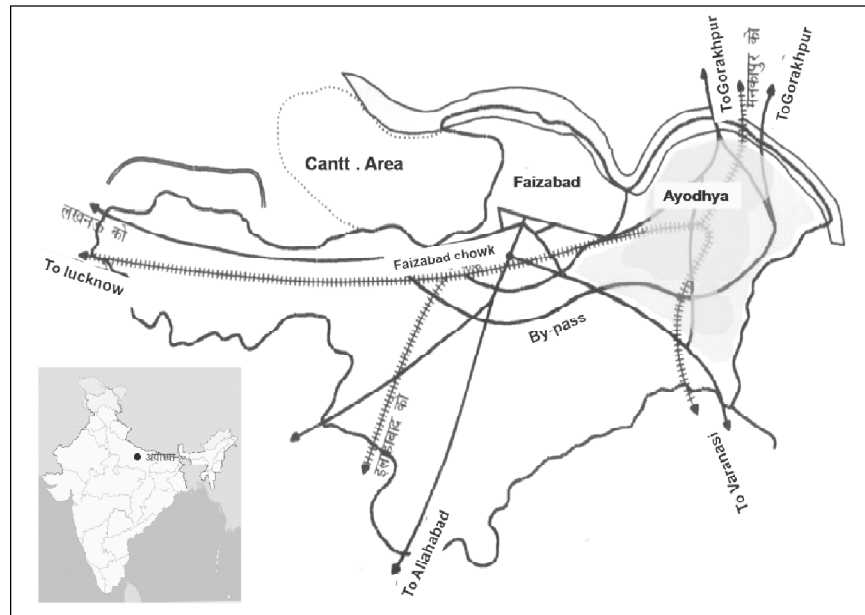
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it faces numerous emerging challenges and competition both from within and outside the country. In fact, tourism has enormous potential of employment generation and poverty alleviation. India has shown potential to emerge as a leading player in the global tourism. The recent policy changes also envisage strategic planning, management and development of tourism in India. Uttar Pradesh, the land of majestic landscapes, holy rivers, and tourist destinations bearing religious, cultural, historical and natural importance, world famous fairs and festivals present a variety of tourist's attractions. Thus, with this richness, Uttar Pradesh has not only become a prominent centre for tourist activities but also a state having unlimited possibilities for flourishing tourist industry. Importantly, state government has recognized tourism as an industry. Development of tourism as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, consisting of many diverse but inter dependent activities, entails cooperation and coordination among hoteliers, tour operators, planners and local administrators in order to achieve the objectives of generating a number of social and economic benefits like employment and tax revenue generation and foreign exchange earnings, promoting social and cultural cohesion and contact, augmenting public utilities and social facilities by enhancing municipal revenues and financial assistance from the government sources and providing support to local handicrafts and cultural activities by encouraging souvenir, trade tourist, festivals and other locality based entertainment programmes.

Tourism as an industry in the state of Uttar Pradesh has emerged as a lucrative business activity, contributing significantly in socio-economic development of the state. The state government is developing various tourism circuits with more focus on cultural, ecological and heritage tourism potentials. However, development of tourism circuits will depend on complete documentation of destinations, cultural events, rituals, traditions, ecological systems and road map for holistic development of the region including infrastructure development. There is paucity of empirical data, authentic literature and works pertaining to architectural documentation, heritage conservation, and cultural landscapes of Ayodhya. Therefore, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive



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research cum documentation of existing tourism destinations, cultural landscapes, tourism infrastructure and services for holistic and integrated development of Ayodhya.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE

All kind of things that acknowledge about the past are under the premises of heritage. It always shows and maintains the relationship between the memories of our past for better consequences to purview present and envisioning future. The concept of heritage appeared with respect to cultural tourism, and tourism involves the movement of people through time and space, either between their living place and destination, or within destination area (Lew et al. , 2004). Heritage is what we inherit from the past and use in the present day. History is the past, whereas heritage is the modern day use of the past for tourism and other purposes. Heritage itself is not a thing and does not exist by itself nor does it imply a movement or a project, rather, heritage is about the process by which

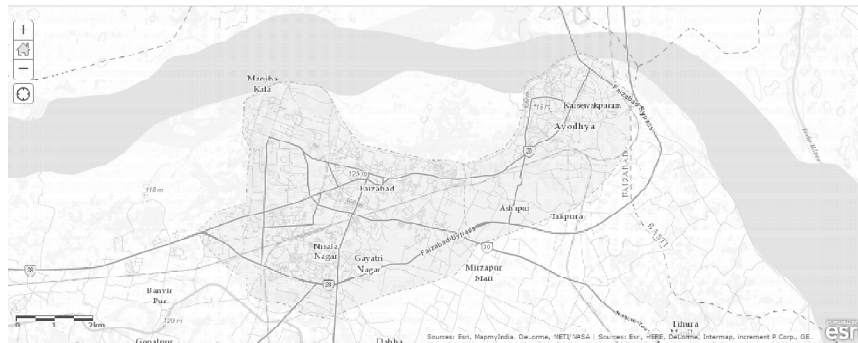


Figure 1: Location of Ayodhya Faizabad twin city on Saryu Riverscapes

people use the past a discursive construction with material consequences (Smith, 2006). There is an implicit relationship between heritage and history (in which heritage might be seen as a means of consumption of different readings of the past that history provides), the wide ring range of environment or contexts in which heritage identify certainly (Poria *et al.*, 2003).

Tangible immovable heritage, tangible movable heritage, and tangible heritage are the consequently cultural and natural form of heritage and history (Timothy and Boyd, 2003).

In the context of heritage tourism includes two main kinds of heritages, viz. natural heritage and cultural heritage. Natural heritage includes naturally occurring phenomena, such as forest,

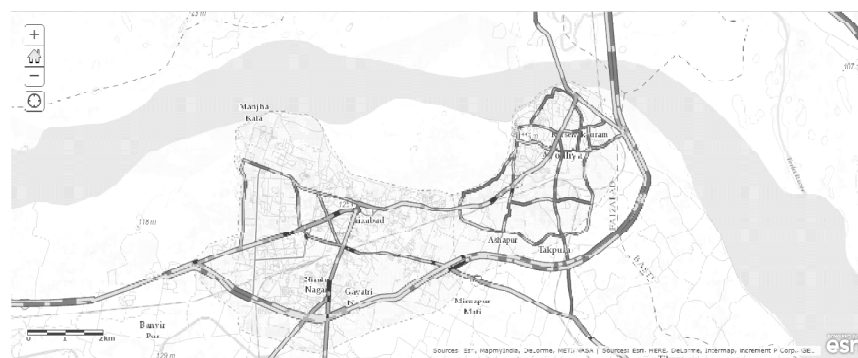


Figure 2: Ayodhya Faizabad twin city & mobility

lakes, rivers, mountains, deserts, and coastlines. Cultural heritage, on the other is the past created by humankind and its various manifestations, while natural heritage is an important part of tourism, particularly in the growing realm of nature-based tourism (Timothy, 2011). Cultural heritage and tourism closely connected with the various forms of urban tourism, rural tourism, and ecotourism, which are the core of heritage tourism. Present study identifies the varying components of cultural heritage and analyzes the scenario and prospects of tourism development in the study area. According to Hindu mythology, Ayodhya was settled by King Manu (Hindu progenitor of mankind), and narrated as the birth place of Lord Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu. Ayodhya was one of the famous cities and the first capital of the powerful Koshala among the sixteen Mahajanapadas of ancient India (Law, 1944, Chakrabarti, 2000). Ayodhya for a period of over two thousand years has borne witness to the presence of Jainism, Buddhism, Shaivism, Vaishnavism, and Islam too, therefore Ayodhya consists of the sacred and religious places for Hindus together with Muslims, Jains, Buddhists, and Sikhs too (Shaw, 2000). In the 12th century under the sultanate rule at Delhi and Mughal rulers, Ayodhya was invaded and destroyed many times by the order of the Mughal invader Mir Baqi Tashkandi who demolished the famous Rama temple Ramajanamabhumini of Pratihara from the Gahadavala period at the birth place of Rama, and in the following period of fifteen months he built a Muslim monument (Babari mosque) using the debris of the temple. Since its inception this has been controversial and sensitive place for centuries and even today. Muslims have never performed prayer (namaz) there. As it has been centre of Hindu-Muslim riots, the main site was opened for devout Hindus till 23rd of February 1857 when the East India Company (Britain) made a separating wall and stop the entry of Hindus through the mosque since 5th of January 1950 under the law, and only restricted entry was permitted (Singh and Rana , 2002). Faizabad originally known as Faizabad, was founded by Ali Vardi Khan, Nawab of Bengal. In CE 1722 when state of Awadh was established and Faizabad became its first capital Saadat Ali Khan was the first Nawab and progenitor of Nawabs of Awadh (Upadhaya and Mishra, 2012).

Faith is central to the desires, vows and acts associated with pilgrimage, and pilgrimage is a process whereby people attempt to understand the cosmos around them (Singh, 2009). In the tradition of Pilgrimage peoples always followed some sacred routes. Indian Hindu pilgrimage journey and its pilgrimage route are impartial part of agricultural landscape. Pilgrimage route has connecting the sacred destination from the pilgrims place. It was always attached with agricultural lands since ancient past, because that time most of the land covered with dense forest, some rural settlements, and its agro-lands.

Traditionally Panchakroshi started from the Sarayu River ghat on Lakshman ghat, Svaragadvara ghat or Naya ghat, but now in the modern context local people stated Panchakroshi from the nearest sacred places of them (Kumar and Singh, 2015).

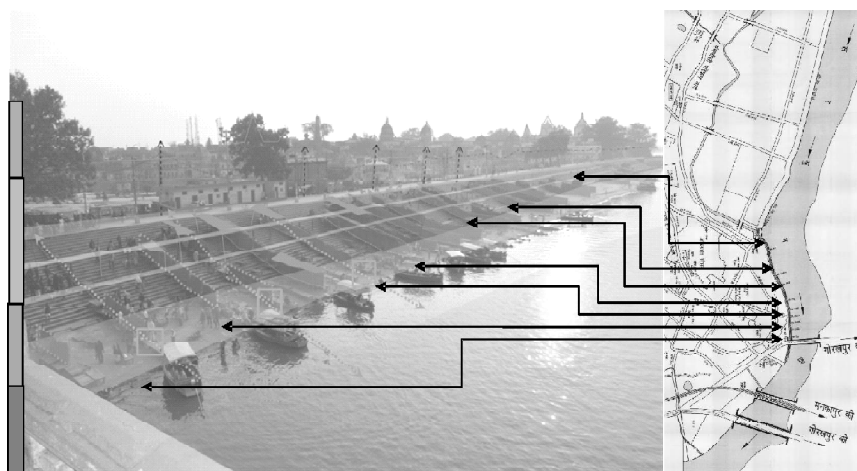


Figure 4: Sarayu river Ghats, Ayodhya: kinetic cultural interfaces

Mauni Baba ka sthana (the place of reticent or silent sage) is the halt station of Panchakroshi journey. The pilgrims perform the three main rituals in the whole journey started first 'snana' (bathing) in the holy Sarayu River, second 'dhyana' (meditation), and offer homage in the various sacred places those are associated with



Figure 5: Sarayu river & regional river course : temporality

Panchakroshi, and third is 'dana' free food and money offering to the poor's (Kumar and Singh, 2013).

On this occasion pilgrims also offer sugarcane and sweet-potato to the various deities following the local tradition. The



Figure 6: Sarayu river: Ghat typology & Ephemeral waterscapes

Chaurasikroshi pilgrimage journey displays the macrocosm (Mandala, the outer one) in three-tier cosmology of Ayodhya, Mythologically the route symbolises journey to 8.4 million of organic species where the soul has to move. The circuit is described as an aura of cosmic light that illumines the world (Singh, 2003).

The geographical manifestation of each pilgrimage journey evokes a new kind of landscape that, for the devotee, overlays sacred and symbolic meaning upon a physical and material base (Singh and Martin, 2015). The Panchakroshi, Chaudahkroshi, and Chaurasikroshi pilgrimage journey and accompanying agricultural landscape has aesthetic manifestation of religious cultural landscapes and heritagescapes. Bakker (1986 ) highlighted the historical aspects of Ayodhya while Davis (2009) described the sacred dimensions of the city. The religious experiences, birth place of Lord Rama, and historical importance of Ayodhya were elaborated by der Veer Peter Van in his writings published in 1997, 1988, and 1982. Fuhrer (1891) highlighted the monuments and antiquates in north west provinces of Oudh .Jacob ( 2008) , Jain (2013) Kishore (2016) and Verma *et al.* (2001) discussed the historical account of Ayodhya. Saryu Mahotsva, riverfront development, and cultural heritage were examined by Kumar and Singh (2016; 2016-17; and 2015). Singh and Rana (2006) highlighted cultural aspects of Ayodhya while Singh (2011) presented cultural and heritage landscape of Ayodhya. Singh (2011) also examined pilgrimage tourism in India. Singh (2006) also discussed the historical account of Ayodhya. Zimmer (1991) reviewed the myths and symbols of art and civilisation in India. The review of literature simply demonstrates that there is paucity of literature, research findings and data pertaining to cultural landscape, heritage, tourism and rituals of Ayodhya city. Thus, the proposed study will be of immense importance for operation point of view and policy perspective for overall development of heritage city.

Ayodhya is a small town of the ancient times in the district of Faizabad in Uttar Pradesh. It is situated on the bank of the River Saryu. It is about 140 km from Lucknow, the capital city of Uttar Pradesh. Ayodhya is better known as the birth place of Lord Rama and at that time it was the capital of the Kosala Kingdom. The name





Figure 7: Cultural Heritage of Ayodhya - Ram Paudi

Ayodhya comes from the name of King Ayodhya , the fore father of Lord Rama. The history of the city goes back to the 5th century, during the Kanishk rule, when it was called Saket. Ayodhya was also the capital of Awadh when it was under the rule of the Nawabs. Today it is one of the major pilgrimage spots for Hindus. According to the Skand Purana , it is considered one of the seven most sacred places of the Sanatan Dharma. Ayodhya is not just a place for Hindus. It also has great significance for the Buddhist and Jain scholars. The city exhibits important heritage and historical facets of Buddhism and Jainism in its many temples and monuments. It is also said that many learning centres have been established here at the time of the Maurya and the Gupta dynasty. Ayodhya was taken over by the Mughals when Babar entered India. It is believed that he destroyed the temple of lord Rama which was at his birth place and constructed a mosque at that place. Since then it had been a controversial site between Hindus and Muslims. In 1992 the mosque was destroyed. The culture of Ayodhya is an example of the brotherhood of Hindus and Muslims. Hanumanghari Temple, a very famous temple dedicated to Lord Hanuman, was built by the Nawab

of Awadh. Other monuments of religious significance are Sundar Bhavan and the famous Ramji Temple. The best time to visit Ayodhya is October to March. The city has a subtropical climate which is warm and humid. The average summer temperature is 32°C and the average temperature in winter is 16°C. The rainy season lasts from mid-June to early October.

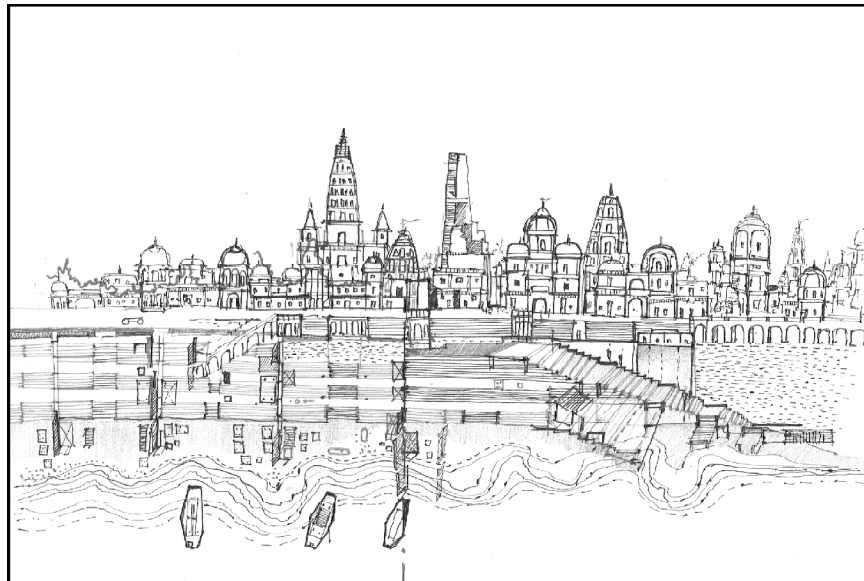


Figure 8: Authors illustration of AYODHYA townscapes

There is a makeshift Mandir at Ram Janmabhoomi with *Ram Lalla*, representing Rama as a child, smiling over a blooming lotus. The 27-inch-high deity is carved in white marble from the mines of Makrana in Rajasthan and laced with gold. The palanquin is made of seasoned rosewood brought from forest in Karnataka. Under Indian government no one was permitted near the site for 200 yards, and the gate was locked to the outside. Hindu pilgrims, however, began entering through a side door to offer puja. Moti Mahal was residence of Shirajuddin Daula's wife Bahu Begam. Architecture of the place is example of Mugal architecture. It is few km from Ayodhya. Hanuman Garhi, a massive four-sided fort

with circular bastions at each corner and a temple of Hanuman inside, is the most popular shrine in Ayodhya. It is most popular temple of Ayodhya. This temple is dedicated to God Hanumanji, It is build of Nawab of Avadh. Situated in the center of town, it is approachable by a flight of 76 steps. Its legend is that Hanuman lived here in a cave and guarded the Janambhoomi, or Ramkot. The main temple contains the statue of Maa Anjani with Bal Hanuman seated on her lap. The faithful believe wishes are granted with a visit to the shrine. Kanak Bhawan is a temple gifted to Sita by her mother with her marriage to Rama, and only contains statues of Sita with her husband. Ramkot is the main place of worship in Ayodhya, and the site of the ancient citadel of its namesake, standing on elevated ground in the western city. Although visited by pilgrims throughout the year, it attracts devotees from all over the world on "Ram Navami", the day of the birth of Rama. Ram Navami is celebrated with great pomp in the Hindu month of Chaitra, which falls between March and April. Swarg Dwar is believed to be the site of cremation of Rama. Mani Parbat and Sugriv Parbat are ancient earth mounds, the first identified by a stupa built by the emperor Ashoka, and the second is an ancient monastery. Treta ke Thaku is a temple standing at the site of the Ashvamedha Yajnya of Rama. Three centuries prior, the Raja of Kulu built a new temple here, which was improved by Ahilyabai Holkar of Indore in 1784, the same time the adjacent Ghats were built. The initial idols in black sandstone were recovered from Sarayu and placed in the new temple, which was known as Kaleram-ka-Mandir. Chhoti Devkali Mandir is the temple of goddess Ishani, or Durga, Kuldevi of Sita. The temple of Nageshwarnath was established by Kush, son of Rama. Legend has it that Kush lost his armlet while bathing in the Sarayu, and it was retrieved by a Nag-Kanya who fell in love with him. As she was a devotee of Shiva, Kush built her this temple. It was the only temple to survive when Ayodhya was abandoned until the time of Vikramaditya. While the rest of city was in ruin and covered by dense forest, this temple allowed Vikramaditya to recognize the city. Treta Ke Thakur temple is located at bank of Sariyu river. It is very ancient temple. This temple is said to house of ideal of god

Rama which was carving the ancient time out a black sand stone. This place is considered where lord Rama performed.

The festival of Shivratri is celebrated here with great splendour. Chakravarti Mahraj Dashrath Mahal, known as Bada Asthan and Badi Jagah, is at Ramkot Ayodhya Faizabad Uttar Pradesh. It is open for public from 8 am to 12 noon and 4 pm to 10 pm. every day. Ram Vivah, Deepawali, Shravan Mela, Chaitra Ramnavami and Kartik Mela are special occasions when number of devotees increases manifold. Dotted with so many religious places and shrines, in Ayodhya is a venerated place that has been revered by all, fraction of Hindu religious. This holy place is associated with Lord Ram, the hero of the great epic Ramayana. All the places in Ayodhya is somehow related to this legendary ruler who is regarded as an icon of virtue, truth and devotion. Chakravarti Maharaja Dasrath Mahal is not an exception to this common phenomenon. Now the place houses a temple, which depicts Ram, Sita and Lakshmana Bharat Shatrughan as the chief deities. Though the shrine is not much bigger in size, its environment provides such serene and tranquil feeling that the devotee would be able to sense the presence of the Lord Ram. The lesser known places of tourist interests include: Angad Tila, Shri Rama Janaki Birla Temple , Tulsi Smarak Bhawan, Ram ki Paidi, Kaleramji ka Mandir, Datuvan Kund, Janki Mahal, Gurudwara Brahma Kund, Rishabhadeo Jain Temple, Brahma Kund, Amawan Temple, Tulsi Chaura, Laxman Quila, Ram Katha Museum, Valmiki Ramayan Bhawan, Mandir Sunder Sadan . Guptar Ghat is located at Sarayu River. It is pilgrim place of Hindu. Gupar Ghat is consisted to the place where the king Ram said downed himself into water Jal Samadhi to leave this place and then after shree Rama God is gone to Vaikunth.

The historical and pilgrimage twin city Ayodhya-Faizabad possesses rich cultural heritage that attracts more than 1.5 million people on various religious occasions. There has been increase of more than tow fold in the arrivals of tourists in the twin cities during the period of 2003 to 2014 (Table 1).

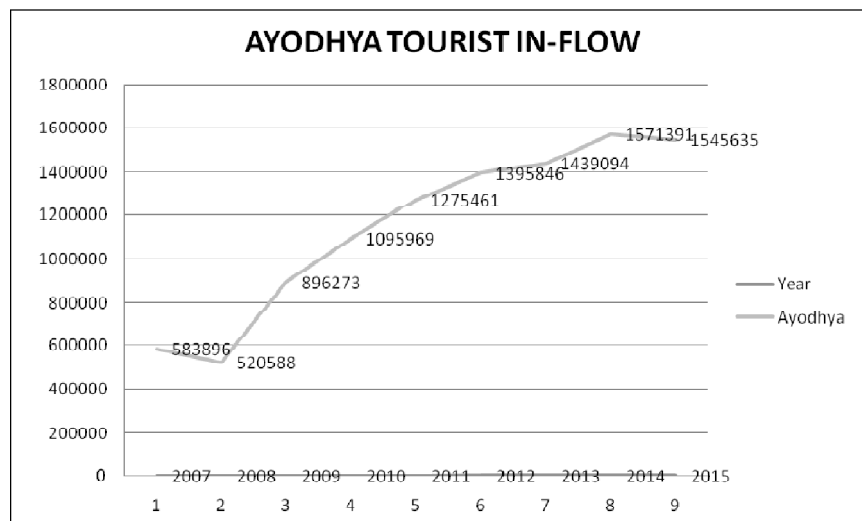


Figure 8: Tourist arrival in Ayodhya Town 2007-2015

**Tourists Arrival in Ayodhya – Faizabad**

| Year | Ayodhya | Faizabad |
|------|---------|----------|
| 2007 | 583896  | 7902     |
| 2008 | 520588  | 7843     |
| 2009 | 896273  | 8044     |
| 2010 | 1095969 | 8714     |
| 2011 | 1275461 | 8941     |
| 2012 | 1395846 | 9849     |
| 2013 | 1439094 | 11008    |
| 2014 | 1571391 | 11369    |
| 2015 | 1545635 | 142074   |

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Uttar Pradesh, 2016

Ayodhya-Faizabad represents an aesthetic and unique type of cultural landscape and heritagescape that include historical monuments, artefacts, *ghats*, water pools, traditional performances, mythology and faiths, custom, folklore, festivities, pilgrimages, and other tangible and intangible cultural heritages. These are attractions

for pilgrims and tourists but lacking adequate or appropriate presentation and communication in respect to their significance of heritage values to both visitors and members of the local host community. Lack of awareness can hinder and prevent the development of public, political and governmental support and funding to protect and conserve the heritage places. Government should plan sustainable strategy and guiding visions for conservation and protection of heritage monuments and sites for future generation while taking care of people's involvement and provision for required infrastructure.

The waterfront cultural landscape of Ayodhya represents the achievement of manifestation of the historical, mythological, architectural, cultural, religious, and heritage values of the ancient city. The waterfront of Ayodhya has manifestation of the four kinds of "scapes", first the Sacredscape that contain the various sacred places, temples, *chhavanis*, and *ashrams*, second the Ritual scape containing the variety of rituals performed by the pilgrims (e.g. bathing, offering, cremation, etc.), third the Rivefrontscape consisting of the Ghats, steps, and fourth the Holy Tankscape/ Kundscapes. Ayodhya records more than twenty holy tanks on the Panchakroshi route and more than forty along the Chaurashikroshi circumambulation paths. They all present beautiful scenario of holy Tankscape/ Kundscapes and are related to the gods and various deities, hence making Ayodhya an ancient Abode of divine Beings.

## CONCLUSION

Ayodhya-Faizabad represents an aesthetic and unique type of cultural landscape and heritagescapes that include historical monuments, artefacts, Ghâms, water pools, traditional performances, mythology and faiths, custom, folklore, festivities, pilgrimages, and other tangible and intangible cultural heritages. These are attractions for pilgrims and tourists but lacking adequate or appropriate presentation and communication in respect to their significance of heritage values to both visitors and members of the local host community. Lack of awareness can hinder and prevent the development of public, political and governmental support and funding to protect and conserve the heritage places. Government

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