

# Reshaping the Image of Indian Pilgrim Tourism- A Case of Vrindavan, Mathura

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## Article Info

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**Keywords:** Built environment, Mass- movement Pilgrimage tourism, Redevelopment, Urban sprawl.

**Abstract:** The research paper is about built environment and development of pilgrimage in India. to study how important is there need for pilgrimage tourism to be focused on and why it is required by analyzing the current condition of Indian pilgrim sites in context of its built environment which includes various factors of these places due to which various issues and problems are being faced by studying various pilgrim sites of different location with different cultural and architectural heritage aspect. and then understand the need for betterment of these places by finding vital solutions to improve the built environment of pilgrim sites with various strategies and increase the tourist inflow to such places as pilgrim tourism in India contribute to a large part of social, cultural heritage to maintain the dignity of Indian heritage by redeveloping or conserving of these sites. Various government bodies had also come up and private organization to heal and preserve these sites and proper management of high inflow of tourist as these sacred sites had a limited holding capacity and resources which could not fulfill an excess amount of tourist also with time the heritage infrastructure are getting deteriorated without proper care. so the aim of this research paper is to specify development strategies for Indian pilgrim sites to enhance built environment by various objectives that are to create a timeline of the development occurred in the pilgrim region by understanding the history through the impact of various invasions and various cultural, socio-economic aspects. Finding out solutions for tackling the issue of mass-gathering and mass- movement in these pilgrim sites due to increasing urban sprawl with the passing time and at the peak time where these issues increase more that are due to lack of resources, facilities, accommodation for tourist.

## 1. Introduction

Pilgrimage tourism is the type of tourism which motivates people who believe in religious and spirituality to visit the pilgrim sites. In India there are numerous pilgrim sites of different religion which attract a huge number of tourists all over the world to visit these sites and attain experience of built environment. But, most of the pilgrim sites lies in non-urban areas, that is in small towns, villages or in mountains, and due to high influx of tourist to these places and rapid growth of urbanization these places are getting distributed and deteriorated due to insufficient resources to match the inflow of tourist, which is bringing high pressure on built environment, dilapidating heritage etc. As, the sacred place has to suffer the high influx of tourist that is more than the holding capacity of a place with no other special arrangement in planning, infrastructure and other additional features. So, it has become important to light up this situation otherwise our built heritage will get badly deteriorate and this needs to be done by doing vital solutions for providing the development in a sustainable manner of pilgrimage tourism that might assist policymakers and the government of India. Now, in order to ensure planned and coordinated growth of these area, there is a need to regulate the development process in these urban and rural settlements, in a way that these settlements continue to serve their purpose as a place of great heritage and cultural values to national and international tourist. (Kiran Shinde, 2012).

## 2. Methodology

It consists of the linkage followed during this research study between literature study and case study.

### 2.1 Methodology For Case Study Along With Objectives

So different case studies selection was done of pilgrim sites in this paper of Vaishnodevi, Amritsar, Jerusalem. All the three case studies have absolute different aspects in context of location, built environment and architectural aspect which give various solutions to plan for sustainable development with contemporary touch in heritage sacred sites. With an aim in this paper to specify development strategies for Indian pilgrim sites to enhance built environment.

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## 3. Background Study

### 3.1 History

Vrindavan was based within the early 1500s, and the remnants of the town are a gift as they show how rich Indian heritage is, all vernacular techniques that have been used in construction, the north Indian style of architecture, settlement pattern of the town. Modern influences of pilgrim's journey, commercial enterprise and Swollen development have flooded the town currently with a population of roughly 60,000.

#### 3.1.1 Impacts of Invasions on Built Environment of Pilgrim Town

There have been many invasions in India but about Vrindavan which is located in Uttar Pradesh is recognized as a sacred place. The problems of Vrindavan majorly began with the Muslim invasions most of the built environment that are temples and infrastructure affected during 1015 AD period. (Kiran Shinde, 2012).



**Fig. 1:** Vrindavan the holy city

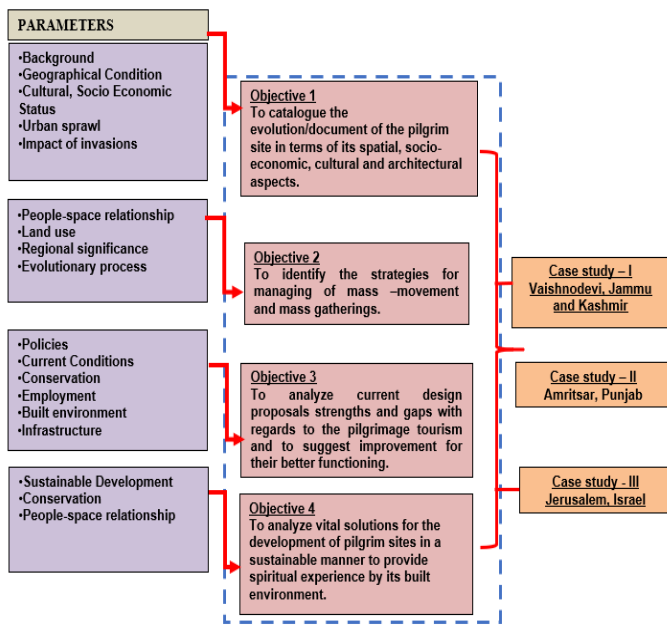


Fig. 2: Objectives link with case studies

3.2 Regional Significance

Vrindavan is a holy city of Lord Krishna, situated in U.P with a direct road link from Delhi to Agra (NH-2), about 145 kms south of Delhi.

3.2.1 Vrindavan Riverfront

The holy river Yamuna which is India's one of the holiest river flows through Vrindavan and Mathura. Some of the ghats in Vrindavan like Keshi Ghat and Chir Ghat, were constructed in yellow sandstone and have amazing architectural features. Due to inadequate construction downstream, the river is getting polluted. It has become very importance to conserve these ghats as they are also leading to environment pollution.

3.3 Quality of Life

3.3.1 Tourism Profile

The city gets pilgrims for whole year. It has become a major pilgrimage for Indian and Foreign visitors. the city conjointly is having vital historical linkage with different neighbouring places of Braj region, like Mathura, Gokul, Barsana, Govardhan, Nandgao etc. (As per U.P. Tourism Data, 2014).

3.4 Land use

3.4.1 Land Area

The area of Vrindavan is almost 4.56 sq.km. this shows that majorly residence in the town but with increasing tourist inflow more of commercial and public spaces has to be planned in a sustainable manner. (refer figure 3). Census 2011.

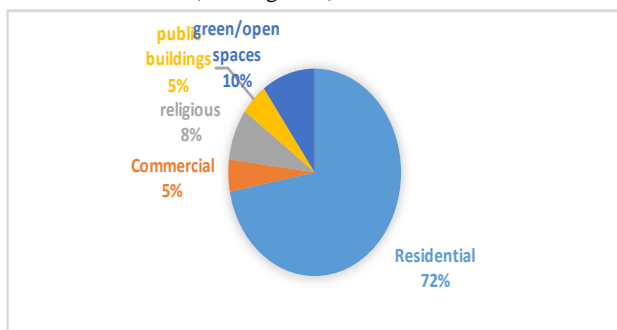


Fig. 3: Depicts land use

3.4.2 Built Form

Recently constructed residential buildings and they are a main reason responsible for the depletion of visual environmental quality in the town that is leading to very ongested planning and rapid growth of urbanization. (refer figure 4).

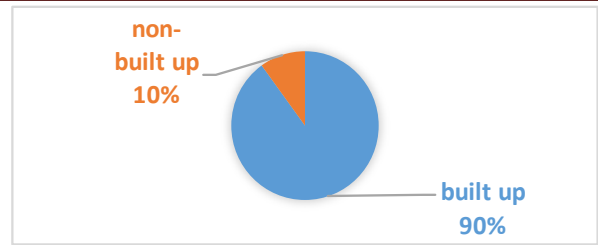


Fig.4: Depicts built up and non-built up

3.4.3 Open Spaces and Greens

In Vrindavan very few open spaces are available for public in the core area and only some of existing spaces are breathable else whole city is congested, more of open space is required to make a breathable and planned town. (refer figure 5).

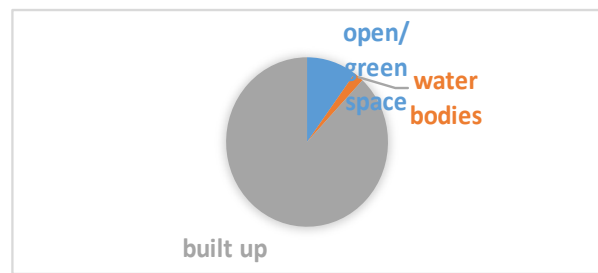
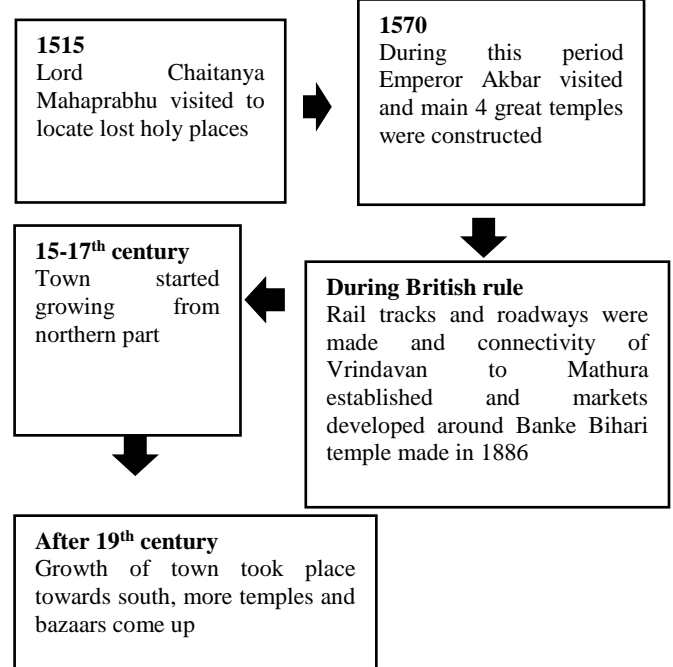


Fig. 5: Depicts open spaces

3.5 Evolutionary Process

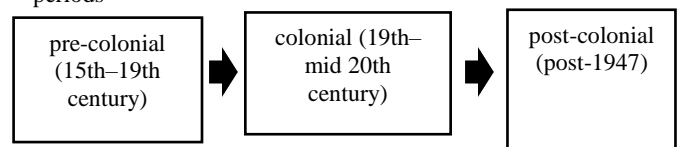
3.5.1 Settlement Pattern



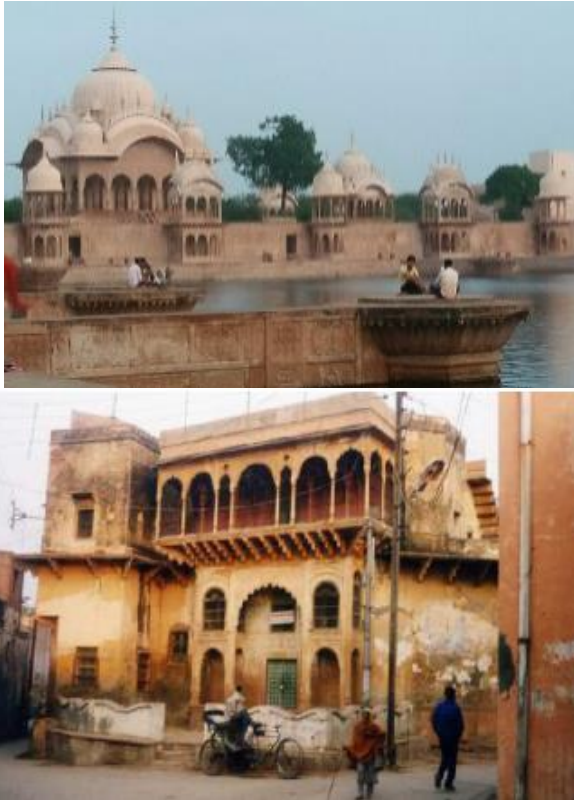
After the 20th century, Vrindavan became a city of almost 21,000 residents (Growse,1883, p. 266). The major reason for a rapid increase was the foundation of the (ISKCON) temple in 1970s, which brought a large number of tourist and other visitors from nearby areas. (Shinde, 2008).

3.5.2 Changes in Built Environment

Evolution process of Vrindavan went on through 3 historical periods-



The periodization was critical as a result of the colonial rule in India but it had affected on economy, religion and society, and specifically made important shifts within the pilgrim's journey (Shinde, 2008).



**Fig.6:** Riverside ghats and haveli constructed during the mid-18th century (precolonial period) by swamis

### 3.6 Infrastructure

In this research, importance of Vrindavan infrastructure has been catalogue on the basis of swot analysis and elaborated the local architectural style that can be seen in structures.

#### 3.6.1 Building Components

##### 3.6.1.1 Decorative Elements

- architectural imagination with context to Vrindavan temple architecture is very vivid which is a product of Islamic influence.
- elements such as arches (multi fold, pointed) are predominant in dome like structures.
- heavily influenced nagara and Dravidian style in Jain and Hindu temples.

##### 3.6.1.2 Functional Elements

- Jharokha (used for shading and lighting)
- eclectic culture (Dravidian, colonial, Islamic, Hindu, contemporary)
- Deities sculptures



**Fig. 7:** Temples built by a rich merchant in 1870s (colonial period) Britishers influence



**Fig. 8:** Iskcon temple



**Fig. 9:** Banke Bihari temple (Jaina Style Flying Brackets in Temples), (Rajasthani Jharokha Style Ornamentation).

#### 3.6.2 Building Material

Most of the temples of Vrindavan are almost 300 – 400 years old prominently sandstone - red and yellow was been used and till now these are used, also extensive use of lime-sukhi mortar can be seen in old structures.

### 3.7 People-Space Relationship

### 3.7.1 Space Flexible

Role and importance of a flexible public space is massive as it forms relation between built and social human behaviour. role of flexible space in pilgrim sites-(Growse, 1883, p. 266).

- development of community sense within individuals along with gathering space
- creation of sense of belongingness in a community
- interaction within masses
- creation of socio- economic spaces which boosts local economy
- space to practise belief and portray symbolism

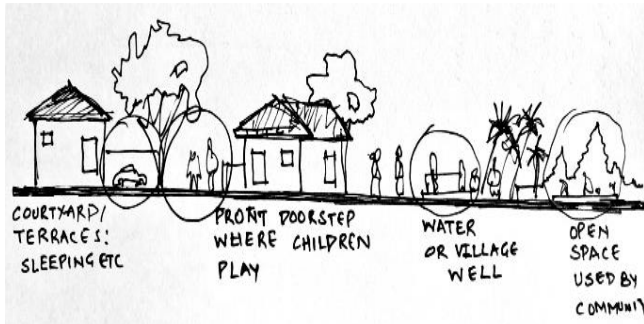


Fig.10: Use of open-to sky spaces in hot climate

### 3.7.2 Correlation built environment

Development of a sense of emotion and socio-cultural emotion that a person inherits from that particular space.

### 3.7.3 Existing public spaces response to the unplanned activity of pilgrimage

Pilgrimage generate a co-existence between people and activities and it is through these activities a general sense of belongingness is generated that a person carries throughout his journey. these activities have a deep impact in creation on the urban architectural context that a place develops and offers in its architectural experience. (Growse, 1883, p. 266).

### 3.7.4 Managing of Mass –Movement and Mass-Gathering

Movement of masses is predominantly one of the most important aspect in a pilgrimage and it takes place in a chain which include each and every small town that leads to the destination of pilgrimage, architecture and urban landscape of these places form the supporting aspects of any pilgrimage site. Most of these activities are performed under unorganized sector and does not come under direct authority of law or rules and regulations also lacking basic infrastructural and monetary support. due to extensive inflow of tourism and religious activity are becoming a threat to the ecosystem sustainability that a place holds.

Vrindavan experiences a relatively tough movement flow for tourist from various cities outskirts to the pilgrimage center and contributing to this issue is not only extensive and overwhelming traffic but also many other factors. (Norberg-Schulz,1980, p.59).

### 3.8 Sustainable development

Vrindavan face an issue of overpopulation along with its uneven population density, its hosts 20-40 lakhs tourist every year and in order to achieve a sustainable environment it is important that it make environmental sustainability a key aspect in the cities growth along with other sectors that contribute to growth. (Krier, 1979, p.16).

the aim is to make a cleaner and greener city which doesn't compromise with ecological sustainability, and maintain a visual and religious harmony and a better living quality. (refer figure 11).

- The major role in this research paper is to provide environmental benefits and they are stated as "the creation of a clean and green Vrindavan, offering improved hygiene condition, living quality and a visually pleasing ambience."
- To enhance the built environment and roads quality.



Fig.11: Relation of sustainable tourism

## 4. Case Studies

### 4.1 Vaishnodevi, Jammu and Kashmir

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Ji is the holiest pilgrims of India, the shrine contributes as an important component of tourism in Jammu and Kashmir and also contributed to the economic growth and development of the religion.

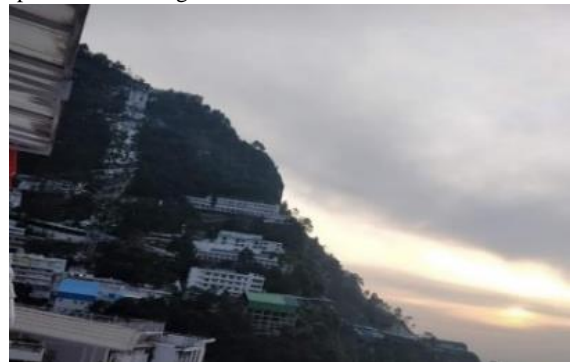


Fig. 12: Vaishno devi aerial view

### 4.1.1 Changing land use – Katra

As the excessive concern for aesthetic economic development, it had lay a deep stress on the part of land resources of the region. In the comparison of some urbanizing agents for the landscaping and the recreational needs of the tourists this has involved in higher rate of transformation of agricultural land and non-agricultural land. The development of tourism in this region has changed the standard and quality of life of those local residents as the social impacts of tourism.

### 4.1.2 Need of Development

The tourism is managed by the Temple Shrine board (Mata Vaishnodevi), with main objective that to provide good management and control and the funding including the land and buildings. The principle of sustainable tourism followed over there are uncontrolled. Tourism growth causes environment massacre, ecological problems, degradation of local resources and some other serious problems.

### 4.2 Amritsar, Punjab

The city symbolizes the spiritual and cultural heritage of the people of Punjab, located in the north western part of India.

The word Amritsar directly refresh the image of golden temple. Even it is compulsory that the heritage and cultural conservation efforts begin with the central temple complex. But the main problem of conservation in the region is outside the temple complex.



Fig. 13: Golden temple

#### 4.2.1 Historic core as heritage zone

The idea was for heritage and cultural conservation with region of specific architectural, historical and cultural interest that is integrated into the master plan of Amritsar. The built form, open spaces, road network and infrastructure in this zone is directed by a strong common and drive for preservation of heritage value of the area.

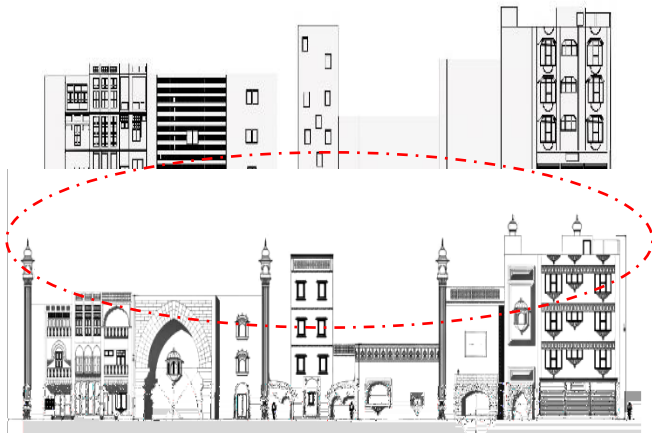


Fig. 14: Golden temple layout

#### 4.3 Jerusalem, Israel

Jerusalem, one of the oldest city in the middle east, located exactly on a plateau between the dead and the Mediterranean sea. It is considered holy to three major religion Judaism, Islam and Christianity. Jerusalem's Holy Sites due to various wars assumed responsibility for protecting all of the city's holy sites.



Fig. 15: Jerusalem city

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