



Ayodhya: Tangible Spiritual Cultural Heritage

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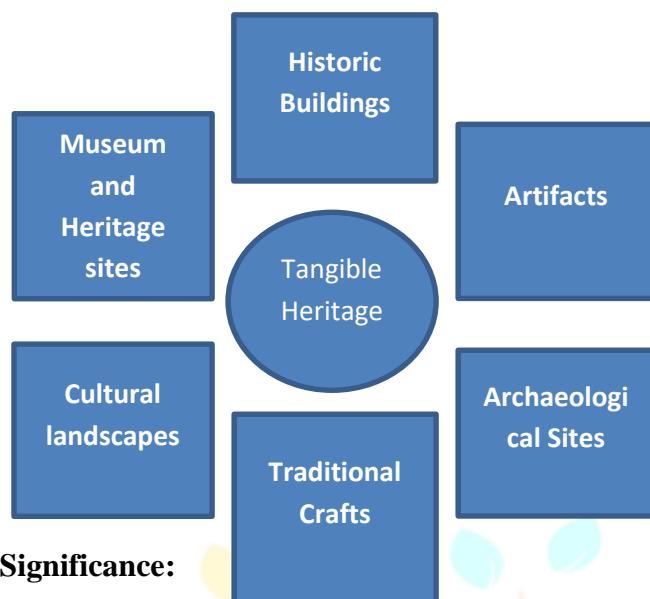
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Abstract: The term "tangible heritage" refers to actual historical artifacts and pieces that have historical, cultural, and artistic value. It includes a vast variety of objects, such as structures, works of art, manuscripts, historical crafts, and more. The value of tangible heritage is found in its effects on people, communities, and society at large. The preservation of history, the advancement of cultural variety, the encouragement of education and innovation, the growth of local economies, and the enrichment of our lives as a global community all depend on physical legacy. Its preservation is essential to making sure that historical cultural treasures continue to be an inspiration to and benefit for both present and future generations.

Keywords: Tangible, Heritage, Artifacts, Manuscripts, Historical crafts, Physical legacy, Cultural Treasures.

Introduction: Physical items, artifacts, buildings, and locations that are regarded deserving of preservation and protection because of their cultural, historical, aesthetic, or scientific significance are referred to as tangible cultural heritage. These material objects are valued as significant because they offer a direct connection to the past and aid in understanding and appreciating the history and cultural identity of a particular community or society.

The term "tangible cultural heritage" describes tangible items created, preserved, and passed down through generations in a civilization. It includes works of art, architectural treasures like structures and monuments, and other material manifestations of human creativity that have been given cultural significance in a culture. 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' refers to 'the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, abilities - as well as the instruments, items, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in certain circumstances, individuals recognize as part of their Cultural Heritage.' 2003 (UNESCO).museum



Ayodhya: Religious Significance:

Hindus place a great deal of cultural significance on Ayodhya, which also has a vibrant history. It is situated in India's Uttar Pradesh state. The religious and historical significance of Ayodhya drives the city's cultural pattern, which in turn influences many areas of customs and daily life. Here are some significant Ayodhya cultural tenets:

Lord Rama, a revered Hindu god, is said to have been born in Ayodhya. Hindus place a great deal of significance on the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, which is devoted to Lord Rama. Visitors and pilgrims from all over the world flock to the city to seek blessings and immerse themselves in the spiritual environment.

Many Hindu holidays are enthusiastically observed in Ayodhya. The most important holiday is Ram Navami, and Deepotsva which honours the birth of Lord Rama and is marked by opulent processions, singing, and plays. The festival of lights, Diwali, is also a big deal in Ayodhya since it is thought that on this day, 14 years ago, Lord Rama made his triumphant return to the city.

There are many temples and shrines in Ayodhya that are devoted to various gods. The Hanuman Garhi, Kanak Bhavan, Nageshwar Nath Temple, and numerous other revered temples, in addition to the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, draw worshippers year-round.

In Ayodhya, there are numerous temples and shrines dedicated to various deities. Along with the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, other respected temples such as the Hanuman Garhi, Kanak Bhavan, Nageshwar Nath Temple, and many others are visited by pilgrims all year round.

The historic flavors of Uttar Pradesh are reflected in the native cuisine of Ayodhya. There are many wonderful vegetarian entrees, desserts, and munchies available. The city is renowned for the prasad (religious offering/food) that visitors to temples receive, which frequently consists of desserts like laddoos and kheer.

The intricate woodwork of Ayodhya, which includes exquisitely carved idols, furniture, and mementos honoring Lord Rama and the Ramayana, is well recognized. These handmade items are frequently bought by tourists as souvenirs.

Throughout the year, Ayodhya experiences a sizable influx of pilgrims—both local and foreign. The cultural structure of the city revolves around accommodating their demands by providing lodging, local guides, and other amenities to guarantee a fruitful pilgrimage experience.

Ayodhya is comparatively well-known among individuals in India and those interested in Hindu culture and history worldwide because of its historical and religious significance. It is important to remember that a person's level of awareness may differ based on their cultural, religious, and interest in history and heritage backgrounds.

Tangible Cultural Heritage of Ayodhya:

Ayodhya is a city in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and is well-known for its extensive religious and cultural history. It is a prominent site for religious and cultural tourism because of its central role in Hindu mythology and history. The following are some examples of Ayodhya's palpable cultural heritage:

The Ram Janmabhoomi Temple, which is thought to be the birthplace of Lord Rama, an avatar of the Hindu god Vishnu, is the most well-known and revered location in Ayodhya. Hindus visit this temple frequently, and it has undergone numerous renovations and adjustments throughout the years. Hanuman Garhi is a well-known temple for Lord Hanuman, a follower of Lord Rama. One of the most popular destinations in Ayodhya, it is perched atop a hill and provides a sweeping vista of the city. Hindus worship Kanak Bhawan, a historical building that was supposedly given to Sita, Lord Rama's wife, by Kaikeyi, the latter's stepmother. It is a must-visit location for Lord Rama and Sita lovers. It is said that Lord Rama personally founded the historic Nageshwarnath Temple, a shrine to Lord Shiva. A shrine dedicated to Lord Rama called Treta Ke Thakur is thought to be the location of where Rama undertook the Ashwamedha Yagna after leaving Lanka. It is claimed that Lord Rama performed his Jal Samadhi (water immersion) at Guptar Ghat, which is a sacred site on the Sarayu River's banks. Dwar Swarg This landmark, sometimes referred to as the "Gateway to Heaven," is said to be the site where Lord Rama is reported to have ascended to heaven.

Ayodhya is home to a large number of other temples, shrines, and historical places that are important to Hindu religion and culture in addition to these particular locations. When pilgrims and visitors visit Ayodhya to celebrate and take part in various events during holidays like Diwali and Ram Navami, the city enjoys a lively atmosphere.

Ram Janmbhoomi:

Ayodhya, commonly referred to as Ram Janmabhoomi, is a city in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. As the alleged birthplace of Lord Rama, a famous figure in Hinduism and the protagonist of the ancient Indian epic known as the Ramayana, it is of great religious significance to Hindus. The Babri Masjid, a mosque built in the 16th century by the Mughal emperor Babur, is at the centre of the Ram Janmabhoomi controversy. Due of his involvement, the mosque became known as Babri Masjid.

When a sizable contingent of Hindu activists demolished the mosque there in 1992 because they thought it had been constructed over the precise site of Lord Rama's birth, the location attracted worldwide attention. The destruction of the Babri Masjid sparked major riots and tensions between different communities in India, which resulted in a large loss of life and property. The subject was very divisive, and over the course of several years, numerous court fights were conducted to determine what would happen to the site. The Supreme Court of India finally resolved the case in November 2019. In addition to directing the distribution of an alternative plot of land to the Sunni Waqf Board for the construction of a new mosque in Ayodhya, the court's decision permitted the construction of a Hindu temple at the site.

One of the most divisive and emotionally charged issues in Indian politics and society has been the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid controversy. A decade-long disagreement was resolved by the Supreme Court's decision, and since then, efforts have been made to promote communal harmony and peace in the area. But for many Indians, the issue is still profoundly etched in their collective memory and sense of self.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi worshipping the construction site of Ram Mandir

(source: secondary data)



Main construction site Ram Mandir Parisar

(source: secondary data)

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Nagara style of temple architecture the basic form of a Hindu temple contains the following architectural elements:



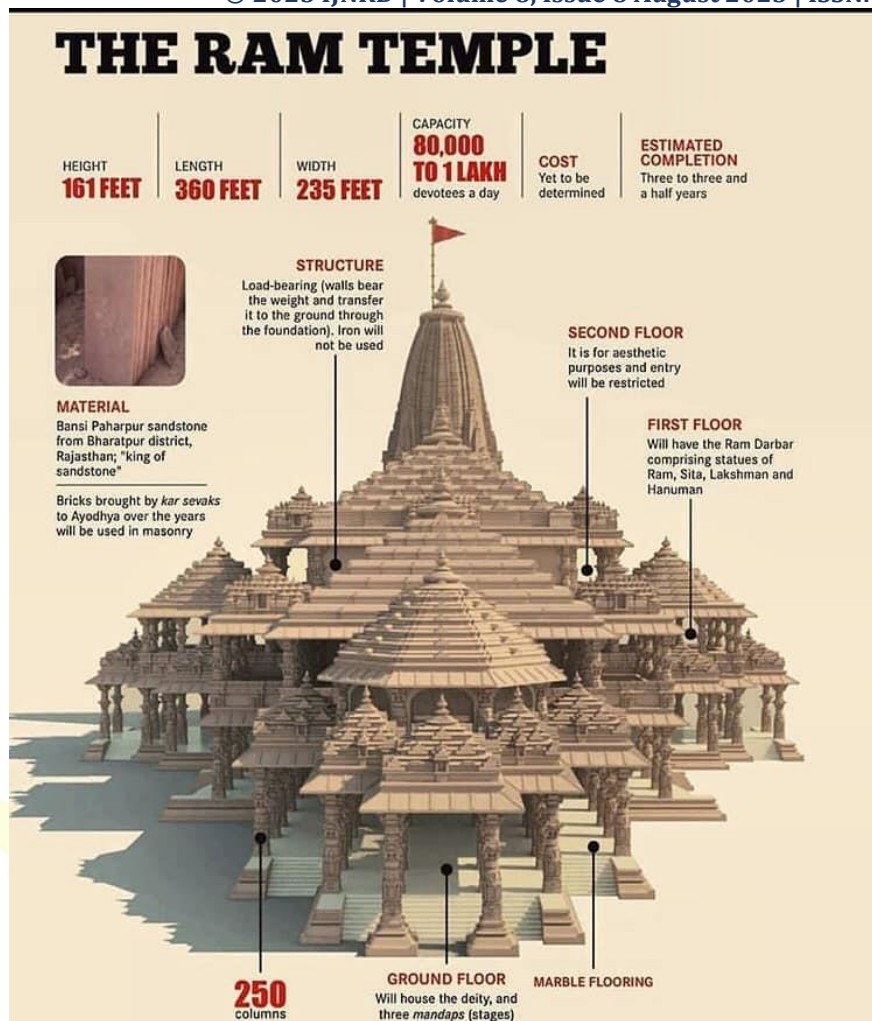
(Source: <https://swarajyamag.com>)

Garbhagriha - the small room where the principle deity/deities of the temple reside

Mandapa - the portico or hall at the entrance of the temple generally designed to house a large number of people

Shikhara - the mountain like spire which can have different shapes from pyramidal to curvilinear

Vahana - the mount of the main deity placed generally in line of sight from Garbhagriha



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/kulbeli/photos/a.212268819543912/793716848065770/?type=3&theater>)

However, apart from the basic common elements with the spiritual significance, the Indian landscape is adorned with temples with a wide variety of architectural styles that developed under regional rulers.

The Nagara style of temple architecture is found in northern India. Nagara school is further subdivided into different schools based on region like Odisha, Khajuraho, Solanki etc.

In the Nagara style, the temple is generally constructed on a upraised platform called jagati. Mandapas are present in front of the Garbhagriha. These are adorned with the Shikhara, the tallest one being above the Garbhagriha. Unlike the temples in south India, Nagara style doesn't usually have elaborate boundary walls or gateways (South Indian temples often sport magnificent Gopurams). Generally, there is no water tank in the temple premises and the pradakshina patha is covered.

Reportedly, the stones from Banshi mountains in Rajasthan will be used for the construction. The temple will be a whopping 161-feet high and have three storeys. The temple will be designed according to the Vastushastra and Shilpishashtra. All the calculations for different temple elements are highly specific. There are different types of Shikhara found in Indian temples. A comparison with Khajuraho Vishwanath temple, also built in Nagara style, shows the similarity between the two.

Note that the main shikhara of the two are remarkably similar. They rise upward in a curved pyramidal fashion, ending in a horizontal fluted disc called an Amalaka topped with a Kalasha. This is called the latina-style shikhara..

South Indian temples, on the other hand, generally have stepped pyramid that rises up linearly rather than in a curve, known as Vimana. Also, this style doesn't sport Vimanas over the mandapas, but only the main shrine. In Nagara style, however, mandapas are also adorned with shikhara..

The shikhara over the mandapas in the pictures of the Ayodhya Ram temple can be seen having a square base, and a rectilinear outline. This is called the phamsana-style shikhara. Note that the mandapa shikhara right at the entrance has an octagonal base.



This is what the main shikhara will look like from the inside

Source(Internet)

Between the garbhagriha and the entrance of the Ayodhya Ram temple, there will be five mandapas in that order: kudu mandapa, nritya mandapa, and ring mandapa. On either side will be the kirtan mandapa and prarthana mandapa. There will be a total of 360 pillars in the building.

Chandrakant bhai Sompura, who also created the Akshardham temple in Gujarat, is the temple's principal architect. The Somnath temple was designed by his great-grandfather Prabhakarji Sompura.

According to Sompura, it will take roughly three and a half years to finish the temple. The foundation will be built with more than two lakh bricks that were gathered thirty years ago from all around the nation and with the name "Sri Rama" written in many languages.

Hanuman Garhi:

Ayodhya, in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, is home to the Hanuman Garhi, a Hindu temple built in the 10th century. It is one of the most significant temples in the city, along with Nageshwar Nath and the Ram Mandir, which is still under construction. One of the most well-known temple complexes of Lord Hanuman in North India is Hanumangarhi, which is accessible via 76 stairs from the centre of Ayodhya. It is traditional to go to the Lord Hanuman temple first before proceeding to the Ram temple. The mother of Hanuman, Anjani, lives in the temple, holding the young Hanuman on her lap. The Nirvani Ani Akhara and the Bairagi Mahants of the Ramanandi Sect are the guardians of this shrine. Hanumanji moved in when Lord Rama returned to Ayodhya following his triumph over Ravana. As a result, it was given the names Hanumangarh and Hanuman Kot. From this location, Hanumanji used to defend Ramkot. On Mata Anjani's lap in the main temple is Pawansut. Over 52 bighas, this enormous temple and residential complex are located. Numerous temples around the nation, such as those in Vrindavan, Nashik, Ujjain, and Jagannathpuri, have property, akhadas, and meetings belonging to this temple. Ram Janmabhoomi is close to Hanuman Garhi Temple. The Nawab of Awadh prevented the Muslims

from destroying the temple in 1855. Muslims believed that Hanumangarhi was constructed on top of a mosque. According to historian Sarvepalli Gopal, Ramanandi Bairagis and Muslims disagreed over the Hanuman Garhi temple in 1855 rather than the location of the Babri Masjid-Ram Mandir.



(Source: Internet)

Kanak Bhawan Temple:

In Ayodhya, Kanak Bhawan is located northeast of Ram Janmabhoomi, Ramkot. One of Ayodhya's most beautiful and well-known temples is Kanak Bhawan. This structure is thought to have been given to Goddess Sita by Queen Kaikeyi soon after her nuptials to Lord Shri Ram. It is Goddess Sita and Lord Rama's own palace. The ancient Kanak Bhawan was crumbling when Shri Krishna himself reportedly renovated it during the Dwapar era. It is thought that Vikramaditya had it renovated during the Middle Ages. Queen Vrishabhvanu Kunwari of Orchha later rebuilt it, and the results are still visible today. Lord Rama and Goddess Sita are the two principal deities represented by the idols in the sanctum sanctorum. This temple is shaped like a sizable palace. This temple's design is reminiscent of the exquisite palaces in Rajasthan and Bundelkhand. The beginning of its recognised history can be traced to the Treta Yuga, when Shri Ram's stepmother gave it to his bride Sita as a wedding present. It was completely demolished while falling apart over time, and it was restored and remodelled numerous times. Kush, the son of Rama, completed the initial restoration in the early Dwapara Yuga. Following this, King Rishabh Dev reconstructed it in the midst of the Dwapar Yuga, and it is also thought that Shri Krishna visited this ancient site before the Kali Yuga (around 614 BC) began. It was initially constructed by Chandragupta Vikramaditya during the Yudhishtira reign, 2431 BC, and is still standing today. Samudragupta completed it after that in 387 AD. Nawab Salarjung-II Ghazi damaged the temple in 1027 AD. Maharaja Shri Pratap Singh Ju Dev, the Maharaja of Orchha and Tikamgarh in Bundelkhand, and his wife Maharani Vrishbhhan Kunwari restored it in 1891. On Vaishakh Shukla of Guru Paush's Shashthi, this structure was finished. Three idol couples may be found here, and they are all of Lord Rama and Sita. Maharani Vrishabhhan Kunwari erected the largest idol. She is thought to have been the driving force for the temple's establishment and building.



(Source: Internet)

Nageshwar Nath Temple:

Even now, Baba Nageshwarnath is the centre of devotion for followers travelling from all across the nation since he is revered as the embodiment of Ayodhya in religious beliefs. Because Lord Shiva's old temple is located in Ayodhya, its significance is increased. By worshipping Lord Shiva in this historic temple throughout the month of Savan, birth pains are eliminated and man acquires virtue. Therefore, get to Ayodhya, the city of Ram, as soon as possible and visit and worship Lord Nageshwarnath, who is located on the banks of the Saryu, if you too wish to gain merit by worshipping Lord Shiva during this holy month of Sawan. One of the twelve Jyotirlingas is Nageshwarnath. Ancient literature provide several tales concerning the Nageshwarnath temple, which is situated in the holy city of Ayodhya on the shores of the Sarayu River. Before leaving for Anant Dham, it is thought that Lord Shriram split the Ayodhya state into eight sections, which led to the construction of this temple. He had equally divided the entire kingdom between Pushkala and Manibhadra of Bharata, Angada and Subahu of Lakshmana, Neela and Bhadrasen of Shatrughna, and Lava and Kush of Shatrughna. Kaushambi's kingdom was acquired by Kush. One night, Kush had a dream in which the city of Ayodhya informed him that my situation has changed since Lord Shriram left for Anant Dham. Hanuman Ji was given charge of Ayodhya Dham, but as a dutiful devotee, he thinks it is improper to occupy his lord's seat. You come to Ayodhya to dominate because of this. Based on this dream, Kush travelled to Ayodhya and established it as his capital. The ancient Nageshwarnath Mahadev, which is located in Ayodhya's Ram Ki Padi Khetra, is renowned for his enormous grandeur. Both British writers and Hindu followers have spoken of his magnificence. According to English researcher Vincent Smith, despite 27 assaults, this temple has kept its integrity. According to Hamilton, there is no other divine and sacred site in the entire world like this. According to the scholar Max Muller, this temple has sustained itself by its constancy despite having to endure hundreds of storms. According to Cunningham, this is the only location on earth where a living being may experience absolute tranquilly. According to historian Lochan, Nageshwar Nath of Ayodhya shares a particular place in history with Rameswaram, Somnath, Kashi Vishwanath,.



Source: Internet

Treta Ke Thakur:

A Hindu temple named Treta Ke Thakur or Tretanath Temple is located alongside Ayodhya's Naya Ghat. One of the well-known temples along Sarayu Ghat's banks, it is a must-see location when touring Ayodhya. The Treta ke Thakur Temple, one of Ayodhya's well-known temples, is devoted to Lord Rama, also known as the Lord of the Treta Yug. The temple was rebuilt in 1784 AD by Maratha queen Ahilyabai Holkar after being constructed 300 years earlier by the Kullu monarch. The temple has great religious importance since Lord Rama performed the "Ashwadmedha Yagya" ceremony here to commemorate his triumph over Ravana. The Treta Ke Thakur Temple is a superb example of Hindu temple building in the north Indian Nagar style, including traditional "shikharas." Lord Ram, Goddess Sita, Lakshaman, Bharat, Shatrughan, Lord Hanuman, and Sage Vashishtha are among the deities whose statues are kept at the temple. The idols of Shri Ram, his three brothers, and Sita are thought to have been transported from the original temple, which was located beside the Saryu River. Each idol is a single piece of black sandstone and is all-black. Only once a year, on Kartik Shukla Ekadashi, which falls in October or November, is the Treta Ke Thakur Temple available to worshippers. On this day, the gates are open constantly. The Kartik Shukla Ekadashi is widely observed.



(Source: Trawell.in)

Guptar Ghat:

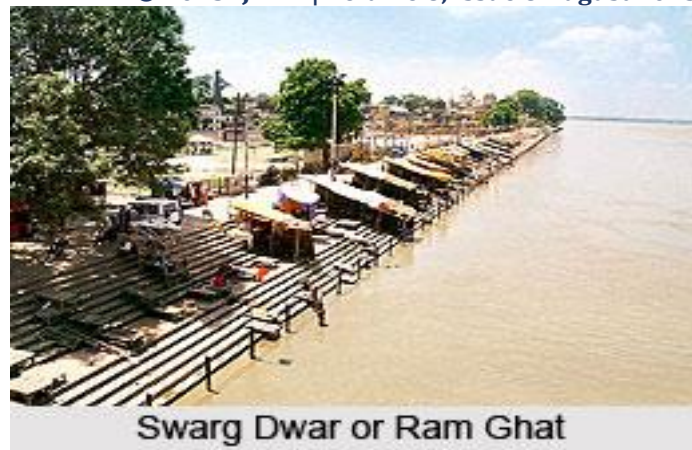
A sacred ghat called Guptar Ghat is located in Faizabad, close to Ayodhya, on the banks of the River Saryu. It is a well-liked religious destination in Ayodhya. Guptar Ghat is of great religious importance. According to tradition, Lord Rama is said to have pondered at Guptar Ghat and performed the Jal Samadhi there in order to leave the planet and return to his native home, Vaikunta. Devotees have a common belief that bathing in the Saryu River at this ghat will wash away their sins and relieve them of cares of this life. As worshippers and priests sing songs in honor of Lord Rama, the ghat is filled with chanting of his name. This ghat, now known as the Gupta Ghat Van, was previously next to the colonial Company Gardens and has a flight of stairs leading to the holy river. The Sita-Ram temple, Chakrahari shrine, and Narsingh temple are three of the many temples located here that are well-known. The Guptar Ghat was renovated in the 1800s and has since undergone several improvements by the UP government. It is now furnished with contemporary conveniences.



(Source: Trawell.in/UP)

Swarga Dwar:

Swarg Dwar, popularly known as Ram Ghat, is situated a half-kilometer north of Janmabhoomi. This Ghat for bathing is significant. Lord Rama is also rumoured to have been burnt here, according to Indian legend. The area between Sahasradhara and Nageshwarnath Temple is known as Swarg Dwar. Swarga Dwara is located on the riverfront and is the site, according to some stories, of Rama's cremation. In Ayodhya, the short strip of land connecting Sahasradhara and Nageshwarnath Temple is frequently represented as Swarg Dwar. Buildings on the Ghat facing the Sarayu River are seen. They were largely constructed in the 18th century in the court of King Safdar Jung by the Hindu Nawab Naval Rai. The structures on the Ghats look beautiful from a distance. However, the river bed has recently changed, diverging from the ancient Ghats and moving northward. The new Ghats that are currently there were built near to the new bridge in the 1960s, and they provide a beautiful vista to enjoy.



Swarg Dwar or Ram Ghat

(Source:Indianetzone.com)

Conclusion:

In many respects, tangible heritage is essential to the growth of tourism. The term "tangible heritage" refers to tangible, outward manifestations of cultural and historical importance, such as traditional arts and crafts, monuments, buildings, and archaeological sites. Here are some ways that physical heritage aids in the growth of tourism:

Tangible historical sites are frequently the major draws for visitors hoping to get a sense of the history, culture, and architecture of a place. Awe-inspiring historical sites, antiquated ruin sites, and beautifully kept architecture may lure tourists from all over the world. Tourism centred on physical heritage has the potential to significantly boost local economies. Tourist spending directly contributes to the expansion of the tourist sector and generates job possibilities for local communities by funding admission fees, guided tours, souvenirs, lodging, and local businesses. **Area revitalization:** Promoting tourism centred on tangible heritage might result in the resuscitation of underutilised or neglected places. Infrastructure improvements, preservation initiatives, and tourist amenities may revitalise historic places and give sagging neighbourhoods new vitality. Tangible historical sites serve as a forum for cultural exchange and understanding. In order to respect and learn about one another's heritage, tourists from many backgrounds and nations come together, promoting a deeper understanding and appreciation of other cultures.

Education and research: Historical sites and museums save important historical records, enabling historians, researchers, and academics to examine the artefacts and buildings and learn from them. This in turn promotes academic travel and the progress of knowledge.

Community pride and identity: The promotion and preservation of material heritage may provide local communities a sense of pride and identity. It fosters a sense of ownership and care of their cultural heritage by assisting people in maintaining traditions, connecting with their roots, and sharing their past with outsiders.

Tourism centred on tangible heritage may help to promote sustainable development when it is carefully handled. Stakeholders may collaborate to conserve historic places by spreading knowledge of the value of conservation and responsible tourism.

Regional development: Visitor exploration of tangible heritage sites frequently takes place outside of metropolitan centres, resulting in more equitable distribution of the industry's positive effects throughout regions and the promotion of balanced development. Heritage sites may act as potent icons for a location when it comes to branding. They develop into iconic depictions of a location, drawing travellers looking for real experiences and helping the destination stand out in a crowded tourism industry. In general, tangible heritage

has a diverse function in the evolution of the tourism industry, combining cultural preservation, economic development, and sustainable practises to produce engaging visitor experiences and long-term gains for local communities.

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