

**Heritage Conservation and Tourism in India:
Case Study in Hampi
Vishwas A. Korwar**

Assistant Professor in History, Sri.G.R.G Arts YAP Commerce
& MPD Science Degree College, INDI.

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ABSTRACT:

Cultural heritage, encompassing monuments, traditions, languages, and arts, plays a critical role in shaping societies and their identities. Tourism, an ever-expanding global industry, can both support and endanger cultural heritage. This paper explores the relationship between cultural heritage preservation and tourism, examining how tourism impacts heritage sites, both positively and negatively. Through analysis of case studies, this paper proposes strategies for balancing tourism growth with heritage conservation, ensuring that cultural sites remain preserved for future generations while continuing to contribute economically through tourism. Cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, provides a sense of identity and continuity for communities. It includes not only physical monuments, buildings, and artifacts but also practices, languages, and art forms passed down through generations. However, rapid globalization, urbanization, and the rise of mass tourism have placed many heritage sites at risk. As the tourism industry grows, the tension between preserving cultural heritage and promoting it as a tourist attraction intensifies. This paper seeks to explore the dual nature of the relationship between tourism and cultural heritage. On the one hand, tourism provides a platform for the promotion and preservation of cultural sites. On the other hand, it often leads to the degradation of these very sites. This study analyses these contrasting outcomes, using examples of both successful and detrimental interactions between tourism and cultural heritage. The paper also examines ways in which sustainable tourism practices can mitigate these issues.

KEYWORDS:

Cultural heritage, Monuments, Conservation, Preservation.



Introduction

Heritage conservation and tourism, two significant aspects of cultural preservation and economic development, are not independent entities. They are intricately intertwined in a complex relationship that requires a balanced approach. This balance is essential to ensure that the economic benefits of tourism do not compromise the integrity of our cultural heritage. Heritage conservation is the preservation, safety, and management of historic and cultural sites and artifacts with significant cultural value. This means preserving the integrity of the given sites and ensuring their appropriate longevity for the benefit of future generations. According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, heritage conservation refers to ‘the measures taken to extend the life of cultural heritage while strengthening transmission of its significant heritage messages and values. It involves maintaining the physical and cultural characteristics of the object to ensure that its value is not diminished and that it will outlive our limited time span’. Cultural heritage, in this context, refers to the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. Cultural heritage conservation involves various stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Their goal is to ensure that the sites are protected and conserved for the current and future generations and can be useful for cultural, educational, and aesthetic purposes.

Tourism is a socio-economic activity involving people’s movement to places outside their usual environment for personal or business purposes. Tourism can play a crucial role in promoting awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage in the context of heritage sites. When tourists visit these sites, they not only contribute to the local economy but also learn about and appreciate the cultural significance of these places. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines tourism as ‘a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents), and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which involve tourism expenditure’.

The UNWTO also defines cultural tourism as “a type of tourism activity in which the visitor’s essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries, and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions”.

Tourism is often seen to raise threats to the conservation of world heritage. However, it can also act as a platform and a vehicle for heritage presentation to the public, conservation, and guaranteeing its economic and social viability. Hence, tourism, in most cases, is a balancing mechanism that keeps and protects the heritage itself (Our World Heritage, 2021). The primary concern here is how to balance the needs of tourism and the need to conserve cultural heritage. On the one hand, tourism can increase income generation and, at the same time, increase the protection of cultural heritage. A growing number of travellers are interested in exploring cultures and histories, and this has to be done through responsible tourism practices that preserve the destination’s cultural heritage.

Objectives of the study:

1. historical documents related to heritage conservation and tourism in Hampi.
2. Examine both the positive and negative effects of tourism on cultural heritage sites in hampi.
3. cultural heritage sites from around the world, particularly in Hampi, where tourism has significantly impacted their conservation and sustainability.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Cultural Heritage:

Definitions and Importance Cultural heritage is broadly defined as the legacies of physical artifacts and intangible attributes inherited from past generations, maintained in the present, and bestowed for the benefit of future generations. UNESCO divides heritage into two categories: tangible (e.g., buildings, monuments, landscapes) and intangible (e.g., oral traditions, performing arts, rituals). Cultural heritage plays an essential

role in defining national identity and fostering a sense of community. The preservation of heritage is vital for maintaining cultural diversity in the face of globalization. By safeguarding historical landmarks, artistic expressions, and traditional practices, cultural heritage conservation contributes to the sustainability of culture. The

Role of Tourism in Cultural Heritage:

Tourism is a significant economic activity for many countries, especially those with rich cultural heritages. It generates income, creates jobs, and encourages cross-cultural exchanges. However, uncontrolled tourism growth can strain local resources, lead to overcrowding, and cause physical damage to cultural heritage sites. Tourism has the potential to fund the preservation and restoration of heritage sites through entrance fees, donations, and government or international grants. However, improper tourism management can result in the degradation of both tangible and intangible heritage.

Over-tourism can lead to damage to historic buildings, erosion of landscapes, and a loss of cultural authenticity as traditions are commercialized to appeal to tourists.

The Impact of Tourism on Cultural Heritage:

The impact of tourism on cultural heritage can be understood through both positive and negative lenses. On the positive side, tourism raises awareness about the value of heritage sites, contributing to their preservation. It provides funds for the maintenance and conservation of these sites, as well as the development of infrastructure surrounding them. Conversely, the negative impacts include environmental degradation, loss of cultural identity, and the commercialization of culture. Mass tourism can lead to overuse of heritage sites, contributing to physical damage. Tourist behavior, such as littering or inappropriate interactions with cultural artifacts, can also contribute to the decline of these sites.

METHODOLOGY:

We first began by conducting a comprehensive review of the literature and historical documents related to heritage conservation and tourism in Hampi. We conducted field visits to assess the site and its conditions in April 2024. During our visit, interviews were conducted with tourists and local residents to understand their perspectives on the state of conservation and tourism and their experiences and issues.

After this, the information gathered was analyzed and employed to provide future directions for sustainable tourism practices. These are aimed to benefit both tourism and heritage conservation.

STUDY AREA:

Hampi, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a place of great historical and cultural value. It is located in the Hosapete Taluk of the Vijayanagara District in Karnataka, India. In the olden days, it was the capital city of the Vijayanagara Empire. Hampi is home to more than 1600 monuments protected by the State Archaeology Department and 59 monuments preserved by the ASI, 56 of which are in the core zone. The area also features five historic canals and their associated water systems, over a hundred kilometers of fortifications, and more than a hundred kilometers of historic pathways.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Mythological Significance:

Hampi, known in ancient times as Pampa Kshetra and Kishkindha, holds a significant place in

Hindu mythology. It is identified as the kingdom of Kishkindha, the realm of the monkey king Sugriva, featured in the Hindu epic, the Ramayana. According to the Ramayana, this region is where Lord Rama, along with King Sugriva, and its army, along with Hanuman, journeyed to rescue Lord Rama's wife, Sita, from the demon king Ravana. This association with the Ramayana has given Hampi a very high mythological value.

The mythological importance of Hampi extends beyond the Ramayana. It is also referred to in the Puranas and other ancient Hindu texts as Pampa Devi Tirtha Kshetra. Goddess Pampa also referred to as Parvati, is believed to have performed a rigorous penance, known as Tapas, before her marriage to Lord Shiva, one of the primary deities. Another legend narrates that it was here that Lord Shiva, using his third eye, incinerated Kama Dev, the God of Love, adding another layer of divine narrative to the region. The name "Hampi" is derived from the Kannada name "Hampe," which in turn originates from the ancient name of the Tungabhadra River, "Pampa." This etymology underscores the region's ancient roots and its enduring cultural importance.

Historical Significance:

Hampi served as the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire. The empire was founded by Harihara I and Bukka Raya I in 1336. The capital of the empire, Vijayanagara, or Hampi, was a marvel of architecture and urban planning. It opened a new page in the history of the land. It rose to become one of the world's greatest and largest cities by 1500 CE and probably the richest in India. It was an engineering and architectural splendour. It was strategically placed near the Tungabhadra River to conduct trade, agriculture, and defence easily and conveniently. The city was a cultural hub, drawing traders from across the globe, including Persia and Portugal. The unique architectural style of the empire, known as Vijayanagara Architecture, blended South and Central Indian traditions to create awe-inspiring temples and structures that still stand today. When the Italian visitor Niccolo de Conti visited Vijayanagara in 1420, estimated the city's circumference at sixty miles. Domingo Paes, a Portuguese traveller of the 16th century, compared Vijayanagara's size to Rome and praised its beauty, noting it was "the best-provided city in the world" where "everything abounds."

By 1520, under Krishnadevaraya's rule, Vijayanagara had become the first truly global city of the time, cosmopolitan, large in size and stature. It was so rich that diamonds were sold by the in the streets. But, the empire fell in 1565 at the Battle of Talikota. Led by Rama Raya, the empire's army was defeated by the alliance of the Deccan sultanates, leading to the destruction of the city of Vijayanagara.

Preservation and Management Efforts:

In 1986, the Hampi Group of Monuments was recognized as a World Heritage Site. After this, the government of India and Karnataka started working on the guidelines for the World

Heritage Centre. Then, on October 22, 1988, the Government of Karnataka, under sub-section 3 of section 19 of the Karnataka Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1961, issued a notification. This notification declared certain specific areas in the villages of Hampi, Krishnapura, Kaddirampura, Singanathahalli, Kamalapura, Venkatapura, Bukkasagara, and Nimbapura in the Hosapete taluk of the Ballari (now in Vijayanagara) district, and Anegundi and Virupapura Gadda in the Gangavathi taluk of the Raichur (now in Koppal) district as protected areas.

Tourist footfall:

Hampi attracts an average of around 3,000 visitors daily. This figure can rise to about 10,000 daily visitors during peak times. Hampi has a dry and hot climate, which significantly influences the visitor patterns throughout the year. From March to early June, the summer season sees temperatures close to 40°C. This intense heat leads to a drop in the visitor's count. The monsoon season, from June to early August, brings wet weather to Hampi. The winter season, from November to February, is the colder period of the year and attracts the highest number of visitors, particularly in December and January. This surge indicates a preference of visitors during the winter months. On the other hand, the summer months of May and June show noticeable visitor numbers dip. Over the years, from 2010–11 to 2017–18, Hampi has seen a gradual increase in visitor numbers, peaking in 2017–18.

Tourists:

The majority of the tourists surveyed were Indian nationals (98), with a significant number of foreigners (55) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) (1). Among the Indian tourists, 52 individuals were from districts outside Vijayanagara District, 20 were from the same district, and 26 were from other states within India. The foreign tourists represented various countries, with the highest numbers from France and Italy (7 each), followed by Germany, the UK, and the USA (6 each). The largest age group among the tourists was 25–34 years old (61), followed by 18–24 years old (37), indicating a younger demographic preference for visiting. In terms of gender, there were 110 males and 44 females.

Locals and Service Providers:

Among the 54 respondents, 43 were local service providers, while 9 identified as locals. The respondents are from various locations: Hampi (25), Kamalapura (16), Kadirampura (7), Anegundi (2), and other areas (2). The age group distribution leaned towards the middle-aged, with the majority being between 25–44 years old (30 respondents). There were 42 males and 10 females. Many respondents were self-employed (34), predominantly in the tourism sector, with a significant number of them saying they have an annual income below 3 lakhs (46 respondents).

CONCLUSION:

The preservation of cultural heritage and the promotion of tourism

are not mutually exclusive goals. When managed correctly, tourism can be a powerful tool for heritage preservation, providing both the financial resources and public awareness needed for conservation. However, it is crucial that tourism development is approached with care, ensuring that cultural sites are not overexploited or damaged. By promoting sustainable tourism practices and engaging local communities, it is possible to preserve cultural heritage for future generations while continuing to reap the economic benefits of tourism in Hampi.

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The Authors have no conflict of interest to declare that they are relevant to the content of this article.

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