



# PLANNING ANALYSIS TO DEVELOPING A TOURISM POTENTIAL: A CASE STUDY OF AYODHYA

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## Abstract:

This study focuses on the planning and analysis required to develop Ayodhya's tourism potential, a city rich in historical, cultural, and religious significance. The research aims to identify and evaluate the existing tourism infrastructure, heritage assets, and the socio-economic impact of tourism on the local community. A mixed-method approach is employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data gathered through field surveys, interviews with stakeholders, and analysis of secondary data sources. The findings reveal key strengths, such as Ayodhya's profound spiritual heritage and numerous historical sites, alongside challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of promotional activities, and limited community engagement in tourism development. Recommendations are proposed to enhance tourism in Ayodhya, emphasizing the need for strategic planning, improved infrastructure, effective marketing strategies, and sustainable practices to preserve the city's cultural heritage. The study concludes that with a comprehensive and integrated approach, Ayodhya has the potential to become a premier tourism destination, contributing significantly to the local economy and preserving its rich cultural legacy for future generations.

## Keywords:

Ayodhya, tourism potential, infrastructure development, religious significance , Socio-Economic Impact, Strategic Planning, Sustainable Tourism, Community Engagement, Job Creation.

## 1.1. Background of the Study

The study's fundamental component is Potential Tourism Development, which denotes the latent opportunities and potential for development and improvement within a destination's tourism sector. It entails the strategic unlocking and optimisation of dormant resources, infrastructure, and attractions to attract visitors, promote economic benefits, and improve the overall tourism experience. Heritage Cultural Tourism, Religious Tourism, Eco-tourism, Wildlife Tourism, Spiritual Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Leisure Tourism, and Culinary Tourism are among the numerous types of tourism, with a particular emphasis on religious tourism. Religious tourism is significant in that it promotes spiritual development, preserves cultural heritage, fosters community bonds, boosts local economies, and facilitates cross-cultural understanding. In addition to fostering tolerance, peace, and resilience during challenging times, it also contributes to economic development, infrastructure enhancement, and global connectivity.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.2.Need of the study : Present potential of Tourism in Ayodhya

Tourism is a prominent global economy and a cornerstone of the Make in India Programme. India has been a focal point of attraction since the Indus Valley Civilization due to its diverse regions, which have varying geography, topography, reach, and attractions. Ayodhya, a significant sacred destination in Uttar Pradesh, India, is renowned for its connection to Lord Ram, a central figure in Hindu mythology. Alongside Mathura, Maya, Kashi (Varanasi), Kanchi (Kanchipuram), Avantika (Ujjain), and Dwaravati (Dwaraka), Ayodhya is one of the seven most sacrosanct Hindu pilgrimage sites (Saptapuri). It is located on the banks of the holy river Saryu. The Saryu, a tributary of the Ghaghra river, is represented as the forehead of Lord Vishnu and bears significant significance in Hindu mythology.

Ayodhya is a city with a rich history that spans thousands of years. It is home to a plethora of ancient temples, cultural festivals, bathing ghats, and historical monuments, which draw millions of pilgrims and visitors each year. It is imperative to enhance and modernise infrastructure, particularly transport and solid waste management, in light of Ayodhya's status as an ancient city with a high volume of inbound tourism. Infrastructure that is affected by tourism necessitates capacity building, which will also improve the quality of life for urban and peri-urban residents. The objective of this research is to propose an implementation model and offer recommendations for policy formulation to bolster the tourism potential of Ayodhya, with a particular emphasis on the infrastructure issues in areas with religious and historical tourist destinations. The various types tourism infrastructure are as follows, (Figure 1.1.)



Figure 1.1 Tourism infrastructure facilities required for different types of tourism, Source Author

The highlights of Ayodhya which justifies the need of the study are as follows,

- **Ram Mandir Construction:** The construction of the Ram Mandir, dedicated to Lord Ram, is progressing rapidly at the site of the former Babri Masjid.
- **Tourism Infrastructure Development:** Significant efforts are underway to enhance tourism infrastructure in Ayodhya, including improved roads, accommodations, and beautification projects around key sites.

- **Connectivity Improvements:** Investments in road and rail infrastructure are being made to improve connectivity to Ayodhya, facilitating easier access for pilgrims and tourists.
- **Cultural Events and Festivals:** Ayodhya continues to host various cultural events and festivals, attracting visitors and promoting the city's rich cultural heritage.
- **Heritage Preservation Initiatives:** Preservation efforts are ongoing to conserve and showcase Ayodhya's historical sites, temples, and monuments, ensuring their significance is maintained for future generations.

### 1.3.Aim and Objectives of the Study

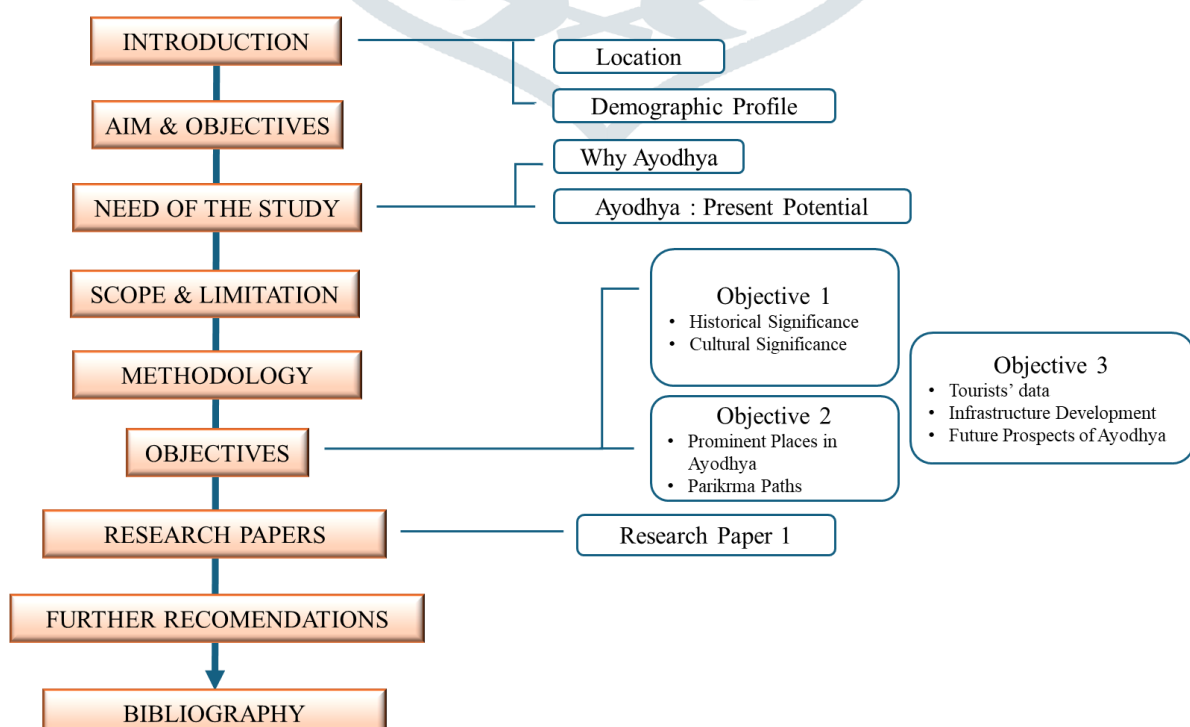
Planning analysis to developing a tourism potential:- A case study Ayodhya

The objectives with respective to the aim are as,

- To explore and identify prominent places having the potential in Ayodhya City.
- To analyze the existing infrastructure facilities in and around the central tourist node.
- To develop a strategic plan outlining actionable recommendations and initiatives to optimize infrastructure facilities for tourism, ensuring alignment with local cultural, historical, and environmental contexts.

### 1.4.Methodology

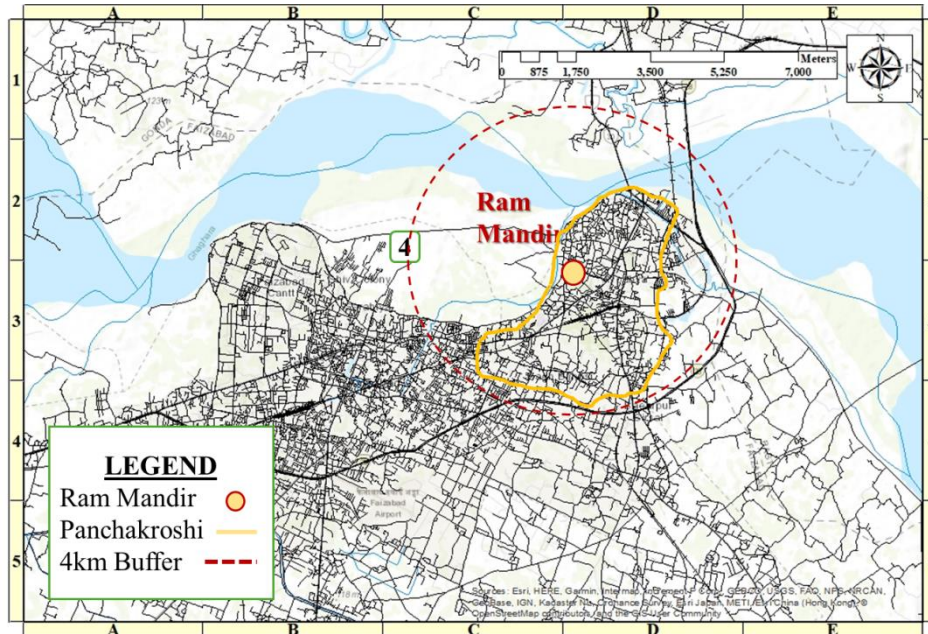
The methodology of the study is as follows,





## 1.5.Scope and Limitations of the study

The study explores infrastructure around prominent redeveloped and old spots. Focuses within an 4 km buffer from Ram Mandir which contains Panchakroshi (Map 1.1). Key spots include: Ramjanma Bhoomi (Temple Complex), Hanuman Garhi, Nageshwarnath Temple, Kanak Bhavan Temple, Sumantanath, Sita ki Rasoi, Gupta Ghat. Focuses solely on tourist infrastructure.



Map 1.1 Four Km buffer around Ram Mandir in Ayodhya City Source :

Generated by Author on ArcGIS

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.6. Regional Setting and Connectivity of Ayodhya

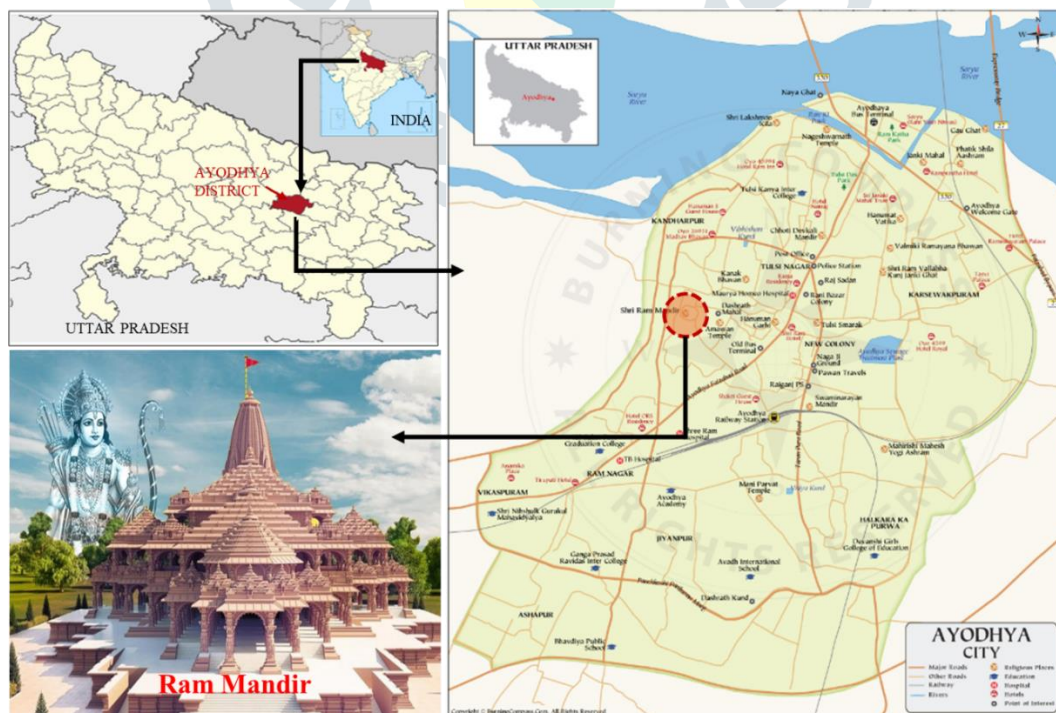


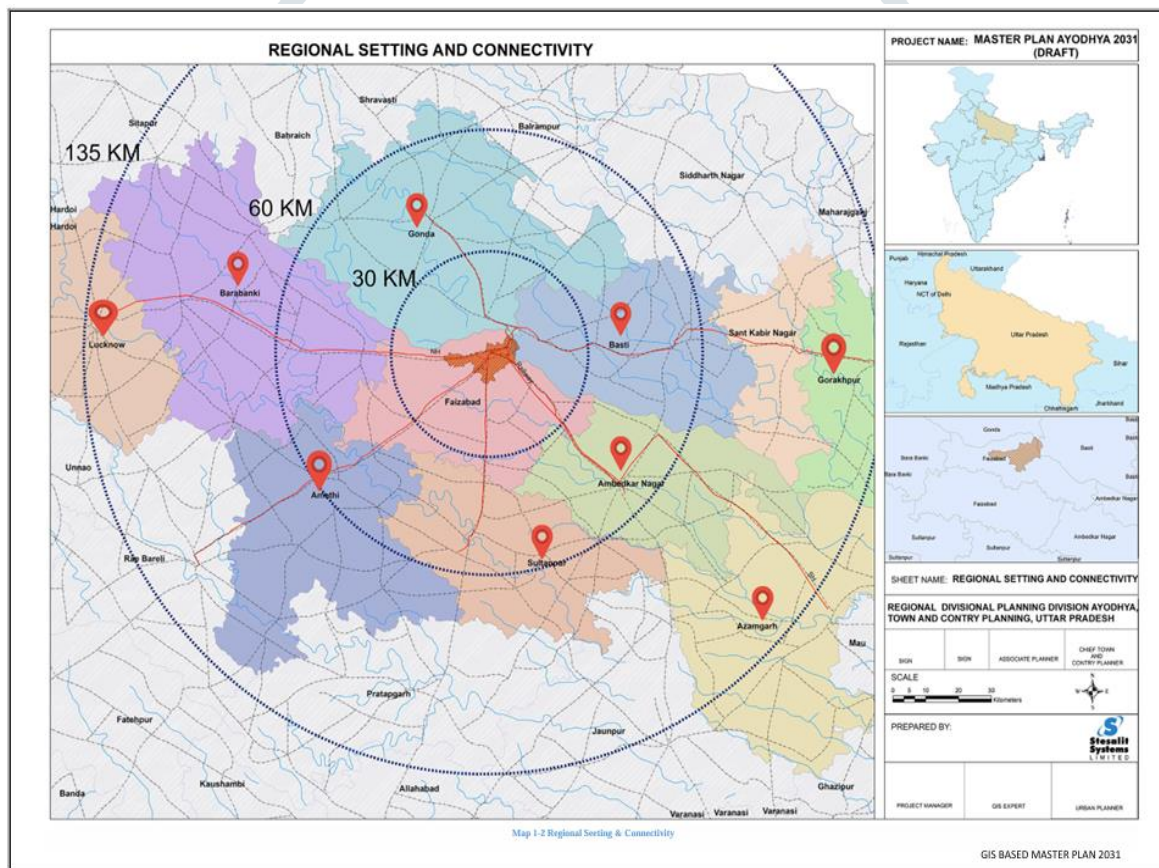
Figure 2.1. Location of Ayodhya

Source : Maps of India

Ayodhya, covering 120.8 square kilometers, is located on the southern bank of the Saryu River in Eastern Uttar Pradesh's Faizabad district (renamed Ayodhya in 2018). Its coordinates are 24.941553° latitude and 82.127167° longitude. Ayodhya lies approximately 136 km east of Lucknow, 134 km west of Gorakhpur, 198 km north of Varanasi, and 243 km north of Prayagraj. It is within 10 km of Faizabad, sharing a railway connection with it.

The Ayodhya district is bordered by Gonda and Basti to the north, Sultanpur to the south, Barabanki to the west, and Ambedkar Nagar to the east. Ayodhya serves as the commercial hub and is a major pilgrimage site, especially for Hindus, as it is the birthplace of Lord Shri Ram. It is also significant for Muslims, Buddhists, and Jains.

Educational institutions include Acharya Narendra Dev Agriculture University and Saket Post Graduate College. The Ayodhya development authority governs a regulated area of 133.67 sq km. The city is well-connected by rail to major cities and is developing an international airport on 600 acres of land. The Ayodhya division, covering 2522 sq km, had a population of 2,470,996 as per the 2011 census, with an urban population of 689,354, a literacy rate of 69.57%, and a sex ratio of 961. The population density is 980/sq km. The division includes Ambednagar, Amethi, Barabanki, Ayodhya, and Sultanpur, with a total population of 11,926,700.



Map 2.1. Regional Setting of Ayodhya

Source :Author

## BY ROAD

Ayodhya is connected by road to several major cities and towns, including Lucknow (130 km [81 mi]), Gorakhpur (140 km [87 mi]), Prayagraj (160 km [99 mi]), Varanasi (200 km [120 mi]) and Delhi (636 km [395 mi]).

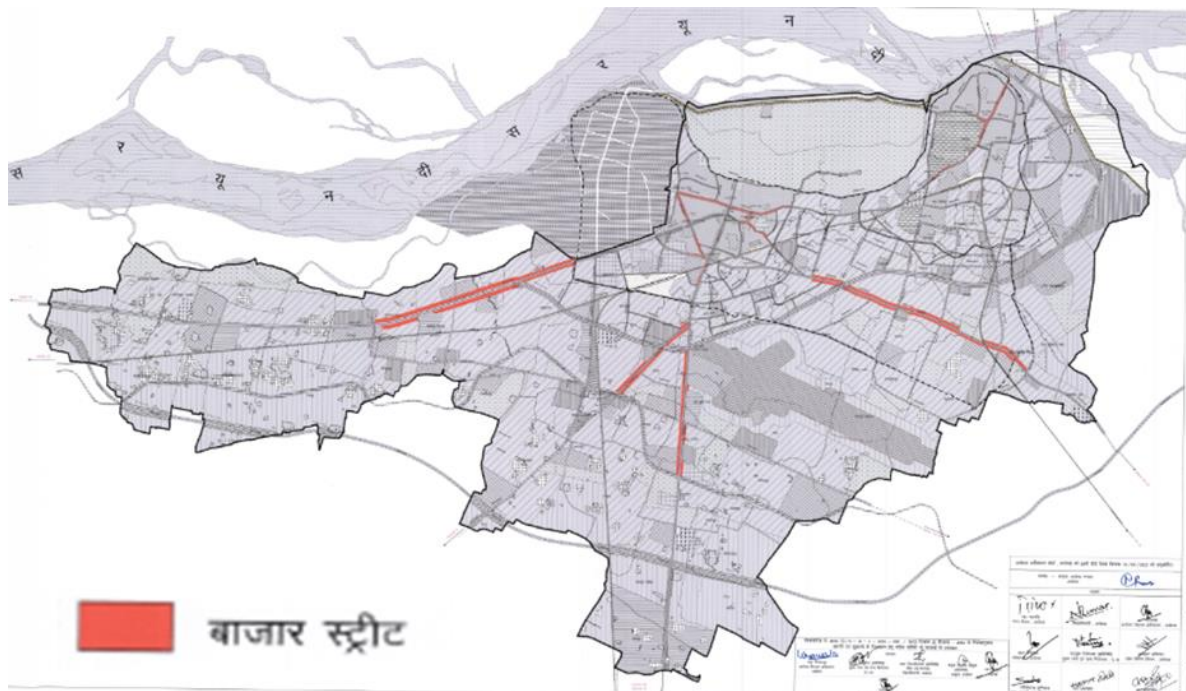


**BY RAIL**

The city is on the broad gauge Northern Railway line on Pandit Din Dayal Upadhyay Junction and Lucknow main route with Ayodhya Junction and Ayodhya Cantt railway stations. Ramayana Circuit Train : Special Train that runs from Delhi to main sites of the Ramayana Circuit.

**BY FLIGHT**

The nearest airports are Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham is 5 km (3.1 mi) away, Chaudhary Charan Singh International Airport in Lucknow, 134 km (83 mi) away, Prayagraj Airport, 166 km (103 mi) away.



Map 2.2. Bazaar street of Ayodhya

Source : Ayodhya Development Authority

**1.7. Demographic profile of Ayodhya**

Uttar Pradesh the state in northern India roughly has 200 million inhabitants, it is the most populous state in India. Total population of Uttar Pradesh as per 2011 census is

Table 2.1 Decadal Population under the area of Ayodhya Municipal Corporation

	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Ayodhya	83177	102835	132373	165079	194122	221118
		23.63%	28.72%	24.70%	17.59%	13.90%

Source : Census of India

Therefore from the above Table 2.1., it can be seen that the population growth rate of the city is declining since 1991 and in 2011 it was 14%. The reason behind declining population was poor investments and

facilities for citizen developed. The Master Plan was not revised and residential and commercial development was discouraged due to non-availability of land.

Existing Male vs Female Population

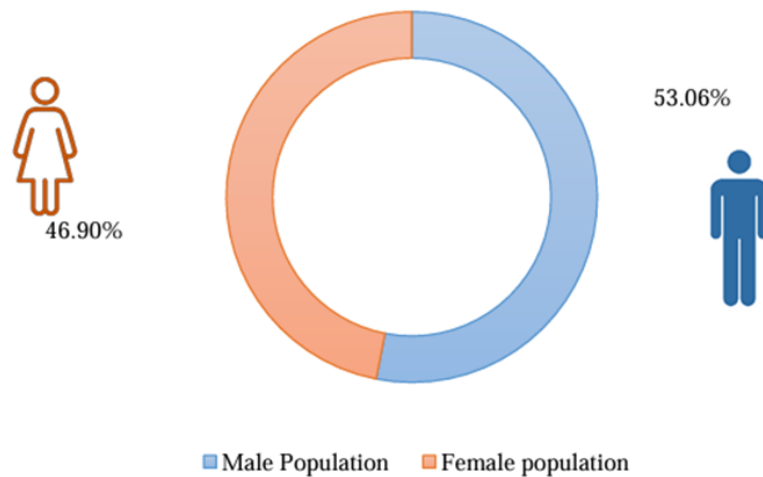


Figure 2.3 Male-Female Population distribution of 2011 in Ayodhya

Source : Census of India

According to census 2011 the existing population of 65 villages that are within the boundary of Ayodhya development authority is 167216. The table below shows the decadal population of villages.

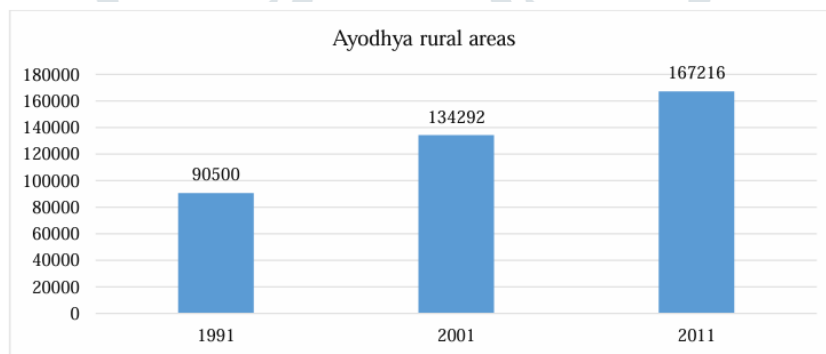


Figure 2.4 Rural Population of Ayodhya

Source : Census of India

Due to the fact that the Ram Mandir temple complex has recently been constructed, the city of Ayodhya has been receiving a significant amount of investments, which has resulted in an increase in the number of people moving there. Because of this, it is important to make projections on the population for the years 2021 and 2031, respectively. A projection of the population is presented in the following manner in Tables 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4:

Table 2.2 Population Projection of Ayodhya Development Authority urban area

Sr. No	Methods	Population Projection Ayodhya urban area (Average Population)					
		1981	1991	2001	2011	2021	2031
1	Arithmetic Increase Method	132373	165,079	194,122	331062	397292	463521
2	Geometrical Increase Method						
	Average	132373	165,079	194,122	331062	455590	626959
	Max	132373	165,079	194,122	331062	564604	962894
	Min	132373	165,079	194,122	331062	389307	457799
3	Incremental Increase Method	132373	165,079	194,122	331062	426381	521700
	Graphical Method	132373	165,079	194,122	331062	442938	554815
	Population Projection					443288	6,00,665
	Urbanizable villages 24 Nos						93,541
	Floating Population						3,50,000
	In-Migrants						1,50,000
	<b>Total Population in 2031</b>						<b>11,94,206</b>

Source : Author





Table 2.3 Population Projection of Villages

Sr. No.	Methods	Population Projection Rural area				
		1991	2001	2011	2021	2031
1	Arithmetic Increase Method	35421	49224	57272	76363	95453
2	Geometrical Increase Method					
	Average	35421	49224	57272	67833	80341
	Max	35421	49224	57272	79590	110605
	Min	35421	49224	57272	66636	77531
3	Incremental Increase Method	35421	49224	57272	79045	100819
	Graphical Method	35421	49224	57272	74000	96500
	Population Projection average				73911	93541

Source : Author

Table 2.4 Population Projection of Ayodhya Development Area

Population/Average Population	Year		
	2011	2021	2031
	3,88,334	517119	1194206

Source : Author

Total number of In-Migrants in Ayodhya city as per census 2011 is 64727 out which 40% (26149) are male and 60% (38578) are female (Table 2.5.).

Table 2.5 In-migration in Ayodhya 2011, Source : Census of India 2011

Name of City	Reason for In-migration						
	Worker/Employment	Business	Education	Marriage	Moved after Birth	Moved with household	Other
Ayodhya	5090	568	742	20873	3640	12226	21588

Saryu Aarti at Saryu Ghat is a beautiful ceremony where priests light brass lamps on riverside steps. Visitors gather to witness hymns, clapping, conch blowing, gong beating, lamp swirling, and chanting. The annual tourist footfall of Ayodhya is as follows,

Table 2.6 Annual Tourist of Ayodhya Dham

Year	Domestic	International Tourist	Total
2015	15432558	19077	15451635
2016	15482456	20979	15503435
2017	17549633	23926	17573559
2018	19217570	27043	19244613
2019	20122436	26956	20149392

Source Tourism Department, Ayodhya

With 201.49 lakh annual visitors, Ayodhya's tourism potential can drive local employment and revenue for the government through effective planning. Therefore, projection of floating population is as follows,

Table 2.7 Projection of Floating Population of Ayodhya

YEAR	DOMESTIC	INTERNATIONAL
2015	15432558	19077
2016	15482456	20979
2017	17549633	23926
2018	19217570	27043
<b>2019</b>	<b>20122436</b>	<b>26956</b>
2020	21622436	27234
2021	23122436	27515
2022	24622436	27799
2023	26122436	28084
2024	27622436	28372
2025	29122436	28663
2025	30622436	28956
2026	32122436	29252
2027	33622436	29551
2028	35122436	29852
2029	36622436	30156
2030	38122436	30462
<b>2031</b>	<b>39622436</b>	<b>31084</b>

Source Tourism Department Ayodhya 2020 , Primary Survey & Projection 2020

## 1.8.Overview of Tourism Planning and Development

Recognizing the potential of religious tourism, the Indian government has launched several initiatives to develop infrastructure and promote this sector. Programs like the Swadesh Darshan Scheme focus on the integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits, including religious circuits. The PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive) scheme aims to enhance the infrastructure and facilities at pilgrimage sites to provide a better experience for visitors. These initiatives include improving transportation links, upgrading amenities, and preserving the cultural and historical integrity of the sites. By investing in these programs, the government seeks to boost religious tourism, making it more accessible and enjoyable for both domestic and international tourists.

Religious tourism significantly contributes to India's GDP, creating job opportunities and supporting local economies. The influx of tourists to religious sites stimulates various sectors such as hospitality, transportation, retail, and services. Local artisans and craftsmen benefit from the increased demand for traditional handicrafts and souvenirs. Additionally, religious festivals and events generate substantial revenue for the local communities, promoting regional development. By fostering an environment where religious tourism thrives, India not only preserves its cultural heritage but also harnesses its economic potential, ensuring sustainable growth for the country.

India is increasingly recognized globally as a premier destination for spiritual and wellness tourism. Visitors from around the world are drawn to India seeking cultural and spiritual enrichment, yoga retreats, meditation centres, and wellness programs. The country's ancient spiritual practices, such as yoga and Ayurveda, have gained international acclaim, attracting wellness seekers to places like Rishikesh, Kerala, and Varanasi. Spiritual festivals, like the Kumbh Mela, attract millions of pilgrims and tourists, providing a glimpse into India's profound spiritual traditions. By positioning itself as a global spiritual destination, India offers a unique blend of ancient wisdom and modern amenities, appealing to those seeking a transformative and enriching travel experience.

In last decade, a numerous number of religious potential tourist attractions have been redeveloped. Some of the prominent examples are as follows, where Ayodhya now also becomes the part of this list.

- **Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh):** The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project aims to revitalize the area surrounding the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. It includes the construction of a corridor connecting the temple to the Ganga ghats, along with the development of pedestrian-friendly pathways, amenities, and facilities for pilgrims.
- **Mahakaleshwar Temple Redevelopment:** The Mahakaleshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India and a major pilgrimage site in Ujjain. Redevelopment efforts focus on enhancing the temple complex, improving facilities for devotees, and preserving its architectural heritage. Renovation and restoration work is often carried out to maintain the temple's sanctity and grandeur.
- **Ayodhya :** Frequent reconnaissance surveys in Ayodhya have been pivotal in guiding redevelopment efforts across various fronts. These surveys have been instrumental in the construction of the Ram Mandir, providing essential data on topography and infrastructure needs. Additionally, reconnaissance visits along the Ayodhya Parikrama Marg have facilitated the identification of areas for improvement, enhancing the pilgrimage experience. Furthermore, surveys along the Saryu Riverfront have guided the beautification project, ensuring that developments align with ecological considerations. Moreover, these surveys have played a crucial role in assessing infrastructure needs, informing the planning and implementation of improvements to accommodate the growing influx of visitors.

### **Potential Tourist Attractions in Ayodhya**

The reconnaissance surveys included multiple site visits conducted between May 6<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> 2024 by the author. These visits employed various tools, such as Google Images, maps, and road trips, and involved consultations with the District Magistrate's office, Ayodhya Development Authority, and the Tourist Development Authority.

- **Ramjanma Bhoomi**

This is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, making it one of the most sacred sites in Hinduism. The site has seen significant historical and political events, particularly around the Babri Masjid, demolished in 1992. Key festivals like Ram Navami, Dussehra, and Diwali are the best times to visit for a vibrant experience.

- **Hanuman Garhi**

A centrally located temple dedicated to Hanuman, known for its religious significance and architectural beauty. It is believed that visiting this temple can absolve sins and fulfil wishes. Major festivals bring the temple to life, with colourful celebrations and large gatherings.

- **Nageshwarnath Temple**

Built by Kush, Lord Ram's son, in honor of a devotee of Lord Shiva. The temple's architecture and the celebration of Shivaratri make it a must-visit site.

- **Sumantanath**

Important to Jain pilgrims, this site honors the birthplace of several Jain Tirthankaras. The temples feature intricate carvings and inscriptions, narrating Jain traditions and teachings.

- **Sita ki Rasoi**

A unique site symbolizing the kitchen of Goddess Sita, emphasizing her role as Goddess Annapurna. The temple continues the tradition of providing free meals to the needy, reflecting the spirit of sharing and community.

## Pilgrimage Routes

**Pilgrimage Routes:** The Chaudahakroshi Parikrama includes over 36 sacred sites from Ramakot to Guptar Ghat, while the Panchakroshi route covers 30 places exclusively linked to Lord Rama's birthplace, complete able in six hours. All converge into five circular loops, starting with a bath in the Sarayu River and the ritual of moral commitment, concluding with its release.

### Chaudahakroshi Parikrama Route

The Chaudahakroshi Parikrama route is a deeply revered pilgrimage path that spans over thirty-six sacred sites associated with significant events in the life of Lord Rama. This extensive route stretches from Ramakot, the birthplace of Lord Rama, to Guptar Ghat, where it is believed Lord Rama departed from the earthly realm. This pilgrimage offers devotees a comprehensive journey through the major landmarks and spiritual locations tied to Lord Rama's life, allowing them to connect with his divine narrative.

**Key Sites:** Pilgrims visit sacred sites such as Nageshwarnath Temple, Kanak Bhawan, Hanuman Garhi, and many others. Each site holds historical and spiritual significance, providing insights into the various stages of Lord Rama's life and his journey.

**Spiritual Journey:** The route not only commemorates Lord Rama's life but also offers a profound spiritual experience, where devotees can reflect on his virtues and seek blessings. The journey is often marked by chants, prayers, and rituals at each site.

### Panchakroshi Route

The Panchakroshi route focuses on the core area surrounding Lord Rama's birthplace, featuring thirty of the most sacred places exclusively linked to Ramakot. This shorter pilgrimage can be completed within six hours, making it accessible for those who seek a concentrated spiritual experience.

### Total Distance of Panchkroshi Yatra

For a total of 8 Km, travel to the Kardameshwar Mahadev Temple through Kardameshwarto Bhim Chandi (5 Km). Travel from Bhim Chandi to Rameshwar after visiting the Chandikeshwar Mahadev Temple. Total: 15 Km plus 7 Km = 22 Km.

**Core Sacred Sites:** This route includes significant temples and shrines such as the Ram Janmabhoomi, where Lord Rama was born, and other nearby locations that are integral to his early life and divine story.

**Devotional Focus:** The Panchakroshi route is designed for devotees who wish to immerse themselves deeply in the sanctity of Lord Rama's birthplace. It provides an intense spiritual experience within a shorter time frame.

### Pilgrimage Routes Convergence:

All five pilgrimage routes, including the Chaudahakroshi and Panchakroshi, converge into five circular loops, each offering a unique spiritual journey. These loops range from the innermost Antargrihi to the outermost Chaurasikrosi pilgrimage routes.

**Circular Loops:** Each loop represents a different aspect of the pilgrimage, with the innermost loop focusing on the most sacred and central sites, and the outer loops covering a broader range of significant



locations. This structure allows pilgrims to choose their route based on their spiritual goals and physical capability. Unified Experience: Despite their different

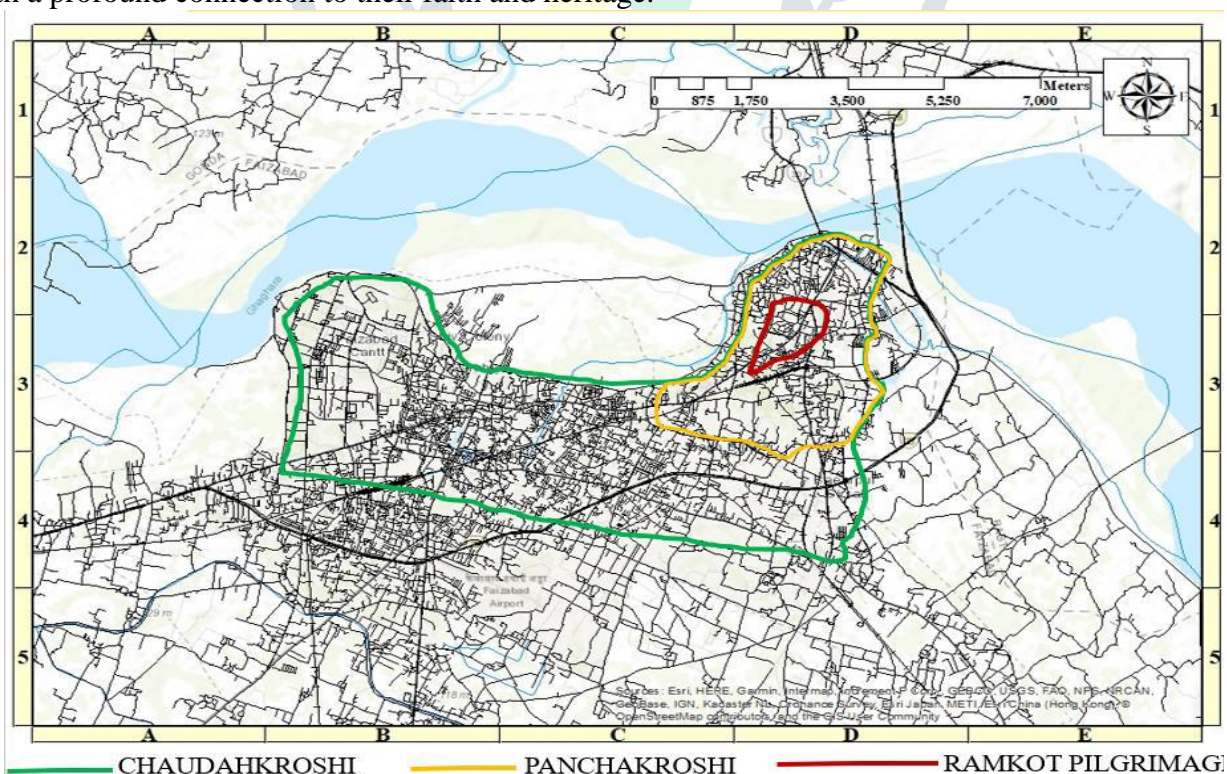
lengths and focuses, these routes collectively provide a unified spiritual experience. Pilgrims often start from the inner loops and gradually move outward, deepening their connection with Lord Rama's life story as they progress. Ritual Practices Each pilgrimage begins with a sacred bath in the Sarayu River, a ritual that symbolizes purification and readiness for the spiritual journey ahead. This is followed by the performance of the ritual of moral commitment (sankalpa), where pilgrims vow to undertake the journey with devotion and discipline.

**Sarayu River Bath:** The ritual bath in the Sarayu River is an essential part of the pilgrimage, believed to cleanse the body and soul, preparing the pilgrim for the sacred journey. Sankalpa (Moral Commitment): Pilgrims make a solemn vow (sankalpa) to complete the pilgrimage with sincerity and dedication. This act of commitment sets the spiritual tone for the journey. Sankalpa Chodana (Releasing the Commitment): Upon completing the pilgrimage, pilgrims perform the ritual of sankalpachodana, releasing their vow. This ritual signifies the fulfilment of their spiritual journey and the attainment of blessings. In conclusion, the Chaudahakroshi Parikrama and Panchakroshi routes, along with the converging pilgrimage loops, offer a deeply enriching spiritual journey through the life and legacy of Lord Rama. The combination of sacred sites, ritual practices, and the structured pilgrimage routes provides devotees with a profound connection to their faith and heritage.

**Sankalpa (Moral Commitment):** Pilgrims make a solemn vow (sankalpa) to complete the pilgrimage with sincerity and dedication. This act of commitment sets the spiritual tone for the journey.

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Map 2.3 Map showing Parikrama Paths in Ayodhya City, Source : By Author

### 1.9. Inferences : Challenges and Opportunities for Tourism Development in Ayodhya

Ayodhya, a city in Uttar Pradesh, India, holds immense historical and cultural significance, primarily associated with its status as the birthplace of Lord Rama. Tourism development in Ayodhya presents both challenges and opportunities:

#### Challenges:

**Infrastructure Development:** Ayodhya currently lacks adequate infrastructure to support a large influx of tourists. This includes transportation, accommodation, and sanitation facilities.

**Environmental Concerns:** Increased tourism can strain local resources and affect the environment negatively if not managed sustainably. Preservation of heritage sites and managing waste are critical issues.

**Political and Social Sensitivities:** Ayodhya has been a focal point for religious and political tensions in the past. Balancing development with sensitivity to local sentiments and cultural heritage is crucial.

**Skill Development:** There may be a need for training local residents in hospitality and tourism-related services to ensure they can benefit from the tourism industry.

**Seasonal Fluctuations:** Tourism in Ayodhya may be seasonal, with peaks during religious festivals and specific times of the year, which can create challenges in terms of managing visitor flows and ensuring year-round economic sustainability.

#### Opportunities:

**Cultural and Religious Tourism:** Ayodhya's rich cultural and religious heritage can attract tourists from across India and around the world. Sites such as Ram Janmabhoomi, Hanuman Garhi, and Kanak Bhavan are significant attractions.

**Pilgrimage Tourism:** As a prominent pilgrimage site for Hindus, Ayodhya has the potential to develop infrastructure and services catering to religious tourists.

**Heritage Tourism:** The city has a wealth of historical monuments and archaeological sites that can be developed to attract heritage tourists interested in ancient Indian history.

**Economic Development:** Tourism can provide employment opportunities for local residents, ranging from hospitality to handicrafts and cultural performances.

**Infrastructure Investment:** With government support and private investment, there is potential to improve roads, transportation links, and accommodation facilities to enhance the overall tourism experience.

**Cultural Exchanges:** Tourism can facilitate cultural exchanges, promoting understanding and tolerance among visitors from diverse backgrounds.

#### Strategies for Sustainable Development:

**Infrastructure Improvement:** Invest in roads, transportation, sanitation, and accommodation facilities to support a growing number of tourists.

**Community Involvement:** Engage local communities in tourism planning and development to ensure their participation and benefit.

**Environmental Conservation:** Implement sustainable tourism practices to preserve Ayodhya's natural and cultural heritage.

**Promotion and Marketing:** Develop effective marketing strategies to promote Ayodhya as a tourism destination, emphasizing its cultural and historical significance.

**Regulatory Framework:** Establish regulations and guidelines to manage tourism activities effectively while respecting local sensitivities and preserving heritage sites.

In conclusion, while Ayodhya faces challenges in infrastructure, environmental impact, and socio-political sensitivities, it also possesses significant opportunities for economic growth through cultural and religious tourism. Strategic planning, community involvement, and sustainable practices will be crucial in realizing Ayodhya's potential as a leading tourism destination in India.


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**Abstract:** This study focuses on the planning and analysis required to develop Ayodhya's tourism potential, a city rich in historical, cultural, and religious significance. The research aims to identify and evaluate the existing tourism infrastructure, heritage assets, and the socio-economic impact of tourism on the local community. A mixed-method approach is employed, combining qualitative and quantitative data gathered through field surveys, interviews with stakeholders, and analysis of secondary data sources. The findings reveal key strengths, such as Ayodhya's profound spiritual heritage and numerous historical sites, alongside challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of promotional activities, and limited community engagement in tourism development. Recommendations are proposed to enhance tourism in Ayodhya, emphasizing the need for strategic planning, improved infrastructure, effective marketing strategies, and sustainable practices to preserve the city's cultural heritage. The study concludes that with a comprehensive and integrated approach, Ayodhya has the potential to become a premier tourism destination, contributing significantly to the local economy and preserving its rich cultural legacy for future generations. **Keywords:** Ayodhya, tourism potential, infrastructure development, religious significance, Socio-Economic Impact, Strategic Planning, Sustainable Tourism, Community Engagement, Job Creation.

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

The study's fundamental component is Potential Tourism Development, which denotes the latent opportunities and potential for development and improvement within a destination's tourism sector. It entails the strategic unlocking and optimisation of dormant resources, infrastructure, and attractions to attract visitors, promote economic benefits, and improve the overall tourism experience. Heritage Cultural Tourism, Religious Tourism, Eco-tourism, Wildlife Tourism, Spiritual Tourism, Adventure Tourism, Leisure Tourism, and Culinary Tourism are among the numerous types of tourism, with a particular emphasis on religious tourism. Religious tourism is significant in that it promotes spiritual development, preserves cultural heritage, fosters community bonds, boosts local economies, and facilitates cross-cultural understanding. In addition to fostering tolerance, peace, and resilience during challenging times, it also contributes to economic development, infrastructure enhancement, and global connectivity.

#### 1.2. Need of the study

Present potential of Tourism in Ayodhya Tourism is a prominent global economy and a cornerstone of the Make in India Programme. India has been a focal point of attraction since the Indus Valley Civilization due to its diverse regions, which have varying geography, topography, reach, and attractions. Ayodhya, a significant sacred destination in Uttar Pradesh, India, is renowned for its connection to Lord Ram, a central figure in Hindu mythology. Alongside Mathura, Maya, Kashi (Varanasi), Kanchi



(Kanchipuram), Avantika (Ujjain), and Dwaravati (Dwaraka), Ayodhya is one of the seven most sacrosanct Hindu pilgrimage sites (Saptapuri). It is located on the banks of the holy river Saryu. The Saryu, a tributary of the Ghaghra river, is represented as the forehead of Lord Vishnu and bears significant significance in Hindu mythology. Ayodhya is a city with a rich history that spans thousands of years. It is home to a plethora of ancient temples, cultural festivals, bathing ghats, and historical monuments, which draw millions of pilgrims and visitors each year. It is imperative to enhance and modernise infrastructure, particularly transport and solid waste management, in light of Ayodhya's status as an ancient city with a high volume of inbound tourism. Infrastructure that is affected by tourism necessitates capacity building, which will also improve the quality of life for urban and peri-urban residents. The objective of this research is to propose an implementation model and offer recommendations for policy formulation to bolster the tourism potential of Ayodhya, with a particular emphasis on the infrastructure issues in areas with religious and historical tourist destinations. The various types tourism infrastructure are as follows, (Figure 1.1.)

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The highlights of Ayodhya which justifies the need of the study are as follows, • Ram Mandir Construction: The construction of the Ram Mandir, dedicated to Lord Ram, is progressing rapidly at the site of the former Babri Masjid. • Tourism Infrastructure Development: Significant efforts are underway to enhance tourism infrastructure in Ayodhya, including improved roads, accommodations, and beautification projects around key sites. • Connectivity Improvements: Investments in road and rail infrastructure are being made to improve connectivity to Ayodhya, facilitating easier access for pilgrims and tourists. • Cultural Events and Festivals: Ayodhya continues to host various cultural events and festivals, attracting visitors and promoting the city's rich cultural heritage. • Heritage Preservation Initiatives: Preservation efforts are ongoing to conserve and showcase Ayodhya's historical sites, temples, and monuments, ensuring their significance is maintained for future generations.

1.3. Aim and Objectives of the Study Planning analysis to developing a tourism potential:- A case study Ayodhya The objectives with respective to the aim are as, • To explore and identify prominent places having the potential in Ayodhya City. • To analyze the existing infrastructure facilities in and around the central tourist node. • To develop a strategic plan outlining actionable recommendations and initiatives to optimize infrastructure facilities for tourism, ensuring alignment with local cultural, historical, and environmental contexts.

1.5. Scope and Limitations of the study The study explores infrastructure around prominent redeveloped and old spots. Focuses within an 4 km buffer from Ram Mandir which contains Panchakroshi (Map 1.1). Key spots include: Ramjanma Bhoomi (Temple Complex), Hanuman Garhi, Nageshwarnath Temple, Kanak Bhavan Temple, Sumantanath, Sita ki Rasoi, Gupta Ghat. Focuses solely on tourist infrastructure. Ayodhya, covering 120.8 square kilometers, is located on the southern bank of the Saryu River in Eastern Uttar Pradesh's Faizabad district (renamed Ayodhya in 2018). Its coordinates are 24.941553° latitude and 82.127167° longitude. Ayodhya lies approximately 136 km east of Lucknow, 134 km west of Gorakhpur, 198 km north of Varanasi, and 243 km north of Prayagraj. It is within 10 km of Faizabad, sharing a railway connection with it. The Ayodhya district is bordered by Gonda and Basti to the north, Sultanpur to the south, Barabanki to the west, and Ambedkar Nagar to the east. Ayodhya serves as the commercial hub and is a major pilgrimage site, especially for Hindus, as it is the birthplace of Lord Shri Ram. It is also significant for Muslims, Buddhists, and Jains. Educational institutions include Acharya Narendra Dev Agriculture University and Saket Post Graduate College. The Ayodhya development authority governs a regulated area of 133.67 sq km. The city is well-connected by rail to major cities and is developing an international airport on 600 acres of land. The

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Ayodhya division, covering 2522 sq km, had a population of 2,470,996 as per the 2011 census, with an urban population of 689,354, a literacy rate of 69.57%, and a sex ratio of 961. The population density is 980/sq km. The division includes Ambednagar, Amethi, Barabanki, Ayodhya, and Sultanpur, with a total population of 11,926,700. 1.7. Demographic profile of Ayodhya Uttar Pradesh the state in northern India roughly has 200 million inhabitants, it is the most populous state in India Total population of Uttar Pradesh as per 2011 census is Table 2.1 Decadal Population under the area of Ayodhya Municipal Corporation Source : Census of India Therefore from the above Table 2.1., it can be seen that the population growth rate of the city is declining since 1991 and in 2011 it was 14%. The reason behind declining population was poor investments and facilities for citizen developed. The Master Plan was not revised and residential and commercial development was discouraged due to non-availability of land. Figure 2.3 Male-Female Population distribution of 2011 in Ayodhya Source : Census of India According to census 2011 the existing population of 65 villages that are within the boundary of Ayodhya development authority is 167216. The table below shows the decadal population of villages. Figure 2.4 Rural Population of Ayodhya Source : Census of India Due to the fact that the Ram Mandir temple complex has recently been constructed, the city of Ayodhya has been receiving a significant amount of investments, which has resulted in **an increase in the number of people moving there**. Because of this, it is important to make projections on the population for the years 2021 and 2031, respectively. A projection of the population is presented in the following manner in Tables 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4: Table 2.2 Population Projection of Ayodhya Development Authority urban area Source : Author

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1.8. Overview of Tourism Planning and Development Recognizing the potential of religious tourism, the Indian government has launched several initiatives to develop infrastructure and promote this sector. Programs like the Swadesh Darshan Scheme focus on the integrated development of theme-based tourist circuits, including religious circuits. The PRASAD (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive) scheme aims to enhance the infrastructure and facilities at pilgrimage sites to provide a better experience for visitors. These initiatives include improving transportation links, upgrading amenities, and preserving the cultural and historical integrity of the sites. By investing in these programs, the government seeks to boost religious tourism, making it more accessible and enjoyable for both domestic and international tourists. Religious tourism significantly contributes to India's GDP, creating job opportunities and supporting local economies. The influx of tourists to religious sites stimulates various sectors such as hospitality, transportation, retail, and services. Local artisans and craftsmen benefit from the increased demand for traditional handicrafts and souvenirs. Additionally, religious festivals and events generate substantial revenue for the local communities, promoting regional development. By fostering an environment where religious tourism thrives, India not only preserves its cultural heritage but also harnesses its economic potential, ensuring sustainable growth for the country. India is increasingly recognized globally as a premier destination for spiritual and wellness tourism. Visitors from around the world are drawn to India seeking cultural and spiritual enrichment, yoga retreats, meditation centres, and wellness programs. The country's ancient spiritual practices, such as yoga and Ayurveda, have gained international acclaim, attracting wellness seekers to places like Rishikesh, Kerala, and Varanasi. Spiritual festivals, like the Kumbh Mela, attract millions of pilgrims and tourists, providing a glimpse into India's profound spiritual traditions. By positioning itself as a global spiritual destination, India offers a unique blend of ancient wisdom and modern amenities, appealing to those seeking a transformative and enriching travel experience. In last decade, a numerous number of religious potential tourist attractions have been redeveloped. Some of the prominent examples are as follows, where Ayodhya now also becomes the part of this list.

- Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh): The Kashi Vishwanath Corridor project aims to revitalize the area surrounding the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. It includes the construction of a corridor connecting the temple to the Ganga ghats, along with the development of pedestrian-friendly pathways, amenities, and facilities for pilgrims.
- Mahakaleshwar Temple Redevelopment: The Mahakaleshwar Temple, dedicated to Lord Shiva, is one of the 12 Jyotirlingas in India and a major pilgrimage site in Ujjain. Redevelopment efforts focus on enhancing the

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temple complex, improving facilities for devotees, and preserving its architectural heritage. Renovation and restoration work is often carried out to maintain the temple's sanctity and grandeur.

- **Ayodhya** : Frequent reconnaissance surveys in Ayodhya have been pivotal in guiding redevelopment efforts across various fronts. These surveys have been instrumental in the construction of the Ram Mandir, providing essential data on topography and infrastructure needs. Additionally, reconnaissance visits along the Ayodhya Parikrama Marg have facilitated the identification of areas for improvement, enhancing the pilgrimage experience. Furthermore, surveys along the Saryu Riverfront have guided the beautification project, ensuring that developments align with ecological considerations. Moreover, these surveys have played a crucial role in assessing infrastructure needs, informing the planning and implementation of improvements to accommodate the growing influx of visitors.

**Potential Tourist Attractions in Ayodhya**

The reconnaissance surveys included multiple site visits conducted between May 6th and 12th 2024 by the author. These visits employed various tools, such as Google Images, maps, and road trips, and involved consultations with the District Magistrate's office, Ayodhya Development Authority, and the Tourist Development Authority.

- **Ramjanma Bhoomi** This is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, making it one of the most sacred sites in Hinduism. The site has seen significant historical and political events, particularly around the Babri Masjid, demolished in 1992. Key festivals like Ram Navami, Dussehra, and Diwali are the best times to visit for a vibrant experience.
- **Hanuman Garhi** A centrally located temple dedicated to Hanuman, known for its religious significance and architectural beauty. It is believed that visiting this temple can absolve sins and fulfil wishes. Major festivals bring the temple to life, with colourful celebrations and large gatherings.
- **Nageshwarnath Temple** Built by Kush, Lord Ram's son, in honor of a devotee of Lord Shiva. The temple's architecture and the celebration of Shivaratri make it a must-visit site.
- **Sumantanath** Important to Jain pilgrims, this site honors the birthplace of several Jain Tirthankaras. The temples feature intricate carvings and inscriptions, narrating Jain traditions and teachings.
- **Sita ki Rasoi** A unique site symbolizing the kitchen of Goddess Sita, emphasizing her role as Goddess Annapurna. The temple continues the tradition of providing free meals to the needy, reflecting the spirit of sharing and community.

**Pilgrimage Routes**

**Pilgrimage Routes:**

The Chaudahakroshi Parikrama includes over 36 sacred sites from Ramakot to Guptar Ghat, while the Panchakroshi route covers 30 places exclusively linked to Lord Rama's birthplace, completeable in six hours. All converge into five circular loops, starting with a bath in the Sarayu River and the ritual of moral commitment, concluding with its release.

**Chaudahakroshi Parikrama Route**

The Chaudahakroshi Parikrama route is a deeply revered pilgrimage path that spans over thirty-six sacred sites associated with significant events in the life of Lord Rama. This extensive route stretches from Ramakot, the birthplace of Lord Rama, to Guptar Ghat, where it is believed Lord Rama departed from the earthly realm. This pilgrimage offers devotees a comprehensive journey through the major landmarks and spiritual locations tied to Lord Rama's life, allowing them to connect with his divine narrative.

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Pilgrimage Routes Pilgrimage Routes: The Chaudahakrosi Parikrama includes over 36 sacred sites from Ramakot to Guptar Ghat, while the Panchakrosi route covers 30 places exclusively linked to Lord Rama's birthplace, complete able in six hours. All converge into five circular loops, starting with a bath in the Sarayu River and the ritual of moral commitment, concluding with its release. Chaudahakrosi Parikrama Route The Chaudahakrosi Parikrama route is a deeply revered pilgrimage path that spans over thirty-six sacred sites associated with significant events in the life of Lord Rama. This extensive route stretches from Ramakot, the birthplace of Lord Rama, to Guptar Ghat, where it is believed Lord Rama departed from the earthly realm. This pilgrimage offers devotees a comprehensive journey through the major landmarks and spiritual locations tied to Lord Rama's life, allowing them to connect with his divine narrative. Key Sites: Pilgrims visit sacred sites such as Nageshwarnath Temple, Kanak Bhawan, Hanuman Garhi, and many others. Each site holds historical and spiritual significance, providing insights into the various stages of Lord Rama's life and his journey. Spiritual Journey: The route not only commemorates Lord Rama's life but also offers a profound spiritual experience, where devotees can reflect on his virtues and seek blessings. The journey is often marked by chants, prayers, and rituals at each site. Panchakrosi Route The Panchakrosi route focuses on the core area surrounding Lord Rama's birthplace, featuring thirty of the most sacred places exclusively linked to Ramakot. This shorter pilgrimage can be completed within six hours, making it accessible for those who seek a concentrated spiritual experience. Total Distance of Panchkrosi Yatra For a total of 8 Km, travel to the Kardameshwar Mahadev Temple through Kardameshwarto Bhim Chandi (5 Km). Travel from Bhim Chandi to Rameshwar after visiting the Chandikeshwar Mahadev Temple. Total: 15 Km plus 7 Km = 22 Km. Core Sacred Sites: This route includes significant temples and shrines such as the Ram Janmabhoomi, where Lord Rama was born, and other nearby locations that are integral to his early life and divine story. Devotional Focus: The Panchakrosi route is designed for devotees who wish to immerse themselves deeply in the sanctity of Lord Rama's birthplace. It provides an intense spiritual experience within a shorter time frame. Pilgrimage Routes Convergence: All five pilgrimage routes, including the Chaudahakrosi and Panchakrosi, converge into five circular loops, each offering a unique spiritual journey. These loops range from the innermost Antargrihi to the outermost Chaurasikrosi pilgrimage routes. Circular Loops: Each loop represents a different aspect of the pilgrimage, with the innermost loop focusing on the most sacred and central sites, and the outer loops covering a broader range of significant locations. This structure allows pilgrims to choose their route based on their spiritual goals and physical capability.

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Unified Experience: Despite their different lengths and focuses, these routes collectively provide a unified spiritual experience. Pilgrims often start from the inner loops and gradually move outward, deepening their connection with Lord Rama's life story as they progress.

Ritual Practices Each pilgrimage begins with a sacred bath in the Sarayu River, a ritual that symbolizes purification and readiness for the spiritual journey ahead. This is followed by the performance of the ritual of moral commitment (sankalpa), where pilgrims vow to undertake the journey with devotion and discipline.

Sarayu River Bath: The ritual bath in the Sarayu River is an essential part of the pilgrimage, believed to cleanse the body and soul, preparing the pilgrim for the sacred journey.

Sankalpa (Moral Commitment): Pilgrims make a solemn vow (sankalpa) to complete the pilgrimage with sincerity and dedication. This act of commitment sets the spiritual tone for the journey.

Sankalpa Chodana (Releasing the Commitment): Upon completing the pilgrimage, pilgrims perform the ritual of sankalpachodana, releasing their vow. This ritual signifies the fulfilment of their spiritual journey and the attainment of blessings.

In conclusion, the Chaudahakroshi Parikrama and Panchakroshi routes, along with the converging pilgrimage loops, offer a deeply enriching spiritual journey through the life and legacy of Lord Rama. The combination of sacred sites, ritual practices, and the structured pilgrimage routes provides devotees with a profound connection to their faith and heritage.

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