



# A Conceptual Study on Sustainability and Preservation of Indian culture and Heritage with Reference to Heritage City Ahmedabad

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## Abstract:

*Culture is a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of the society or a social group. It encompasses art, literature, lifestyles, values systems, traditions, beliefs and ways of living together.*

*Being an Indian, Strong cultural heritage is a matter of pride. The paper comprises of the contribution of India to the 7 wonders of the World. It describes the cultural factors respected and inherited by Indians describing The Heritage City – Ahmedabad ranging from the description of architecture, pols, derasar. It is possible to have sustainability by adopting 3R criteria i.e., Reduce, Recycle, Reuse. The paper discusses about various patterns to follow sustainable practices especially in rural communities which consists of Food, shelter, clothing, biodiversity, waste management, use of natural herbs as medicine that ayurveda. Here, various strategies and approaches to conserve and preserve the culture and heritage are addressed and it should be noted that steps towards sustainable development of the country as the movement of sustainability has come to light affecting all aspects of human activity and it drifts cultural tourism industry as well.*

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**Keywords:** Culture, Sustainability, Heritage, Ahmedabad

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## 1. Introduction

Heritage is to be understood and conceptualized as something created in social processes. There is a well-established academic distinction between on the one hand a heritage record and on the other hand what is done with it (Holtorf, 2005) but the precise processes by which the heritage record is negotiated and transformed into something useful and used have only begun to be explored (Watson, 2009).

The various strategies are going from unconscious ignorance or a conscious effort to forget, to full attention and an active awareness of what has happened (Smith, 2006).

Culture on the other hand is a set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of the society or a social group. It encompasses art, literature, lifestyles, values systems, traditions, beliefs and ways of living together.

Being an Indian, Strong cultural heritage is a matter of pride. India is home to many of the finest cultural symbols of the world which includes temples, churches, mosques, forts, performing arts, classical dances, sculptures, paintings, architecture, literature etc., Some of the prestigious and spectacular World Heritage Sites in India are the Hampi, Khajuraho, caves of Ajanta and Ellora, Konark Sun Temple, Taj Mahal, and Brihadeswara Temple in Tanjore. The culture of India is one of the oldest in the world which is rich and diverse.

The question of discussing the past at historic sites benefit our society has recurrently been discussed over the years within heritage studies and heritage practices, and suggested answers are many (Smith, 2006). In economic scholarly literature, the interface between culture heritage and economy is argued (Bowitz&Ibenholt, 2009).

Thus, heritage politics are more and more addressing social aspects of contemporary life (Heogberg, 2013). From various perspectives, heritage is related to issues on regional development (Skoglund&Jonsson, 2012). Heritage is recognized as a central part of a region's identity, thereby attracting people to places as well as increasing economic flows relevant for the survival of local economies (Ram rez-Pasillas, 2007). At the same time, knowledge of issues related to heritage is often inadequate within regional policy, resulting in that decisions are commonly instrumental rather than creative and development orientated (Blank &Weijmer, 2009). This of course, affects when it comes to regional development.

Any worthwhile cultural pattern attaches great importance to the dynamism and vitality of social, political and economic growth (V.K.Gokak, 1994). Sri Aurobinda has brought out beautifully in the Foundations of Indian culture, "The representative Indian attitude, as expressed in the Vedas, was not one of an anaemic spirituality."

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Heritage and tourism**

#### **2.1.1 Heritage**

"Heritage", according to UNESCO the term 'heritage' has been used in relation to the natural world referring to mountains and rivers to building and monuments the arts and to social customs and traditions.

#### **2.1.2 Heritage and Tourism**

According to UNESCO, "heritage tourism occupies a significant proportion of the "cultural' spectrum therefore heritage tourism will often overlap with other tourism products where historic or human influences are significant".

#### **2.1.3 Culture**

"Culture", the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also, the features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time. It helps us understand upbringing of people, acts like a mirror that reflects person's inner thoughts, ethics and morals. It helps us understand how people have been through their entire life. Culture is everything in a particular society and Indian culture is no easy composite of varying styles and influences.

“Indian culture has a long and continuous history. It is this characteristic of Indian culture that enabled it to withstand many vicissitudes, and to continue to mould the life of Indians” (Murthi P. Kamath, 1976).

## ***2.2 Importance of Heritage and Culture and its Sustainability***

It is the spirit of accommodation that accounts for the continuity of Indian culture. As Pratt aptly remarks, “Hinduism tends to absorb its children and the urge felt by its rebelling children to fall back into the family fold has been illustrated many times in Indian history. The process is going on today.” This has been the rock-bottom basis of Indian culture. “Humayun Kabir is correct in remarking that “today whatever is Indian, whether it be an idea, a word, a form of art, a political institution or social custom, is a blend of many different strains and elements” (Suniti Chatterji, 1966).

“A peculiar type of culture and civilization, utterly different from any other type in the world, has been evolved among the diverse peoples of India” (B.N. Luniya, 1980).

The much debated definition of heritage and its many associated terms have led to academics becoming frustrated with the lack of an accepted theoretical framework from which to advance (Hewison, 1987; Lowenthal, 1991; Brett, 1996; Edson, 2004; Jamal & Kim, 2005; Papayannis & Howard, 2007).

Whether they are tangible or intangible (Ahmed, 2006), cultural or natural (Lowenthal, 2005), authentic or inauthentic (Hall, 2007), the many distinctions explored, highlight the complex and contested nature of heritage.

It is suggested here, that in order to develop understandings of heritage, and to gain insights into its value and relevance for society, the focus ought, to be on how individuals perceive heritage in their own terms.

Looking specifically, at the importance people place on heritage and the benefits they gain from engaging with heritage as they view it.

To this end, it is vital to be sensitive to the perspective that heritage is interpreted and/or consumed through the unique values, attitudes and experiences of the individuals involved (Goulding, 1999; Dicks, 2000a, 2000b; Jewell & Crofts, 2001; Breathnach, 2003).

Moreover, a focus on values within heritage research, rather than attitudes, is supported by the view that values are “...the determinants of attitudes as well as behaviour... [values being] more stable over time... and more central to an individual's cognitive systems than attitudes...” (Crick-Furman & Prentice, 2000: 71).

Furthermore, with the recognition that different people relate to the past in different ways (Dicks, 2007) comes the understanding that heritage and heritage research cannot be divorced from its highly multivalent nature. Recognizing this, Howard (2003) suggests that the values people hold shape the ‘heritage’ they engage with; whilst Timothy & Boyd (2003) propose that groups across society ‘filter’ heritage through often different value systems. As such, research exploring these values and the ways in which heritage is understood and related to would contribute to the ongoing theorization of heritage.

An emerging view of the nature of heritage, and in particular the distinctions between tangible and intangible heritage, is articulated by Smith & Waterton (2009) who stipulate that heritage cannot, and should not, be defined by its materiality or non-materiality alone.

These authors suggest that regardless of the specific context of heritage, be it tangible or not, the essence is the same, i.e. “...what heritage is - is the performance and negotiation of identity, values and a sense

of place...” (Smith & Waterton, 2009: 292). This supports an earlier call for heritage to be understood as a process (Howard, 2003) and as a ‘set of values and meanings’ (Smith, 2006:11).

What these perspectives share, is their emphasis on values, which have emerged over time, as an important theme within the relevant literature. In order to achieve an understanding of what these values are and the complex processes involved, the focus here is on lay understandings of heritage and therefore avoids using prescriptive definitions that may lead towards specific types of heritage.

For example, rather than looking at the understandings of heritage held by those visitors a ‘heritage’ site or place at any given moment, this research promotes discussion about heritage outside of a predefined ‘heritage’ context in order to explore whether different values, meanings and forms of engagement become apparent when a flexible, responsive approach to ‘heritage’ is adopted.

Heritage culture and tourism when brought together gains such strong gravitation of sense of belongingness that holds one firm enough to know more about it and explore it so much so that we can enhance the skills, the purity and the immensely honored Heritage and to carry it further with pride.

Belonging to one of the most ethical and philosophical moreover spiritual countries in the world, India has somehow been lagging behind in preserving their own precious heritage value. The culture inherited from ancestors evidently seems to be fading away.

One needs to consider how precious and indispensable can heritage be to a nation and how efficiently it can add pride to nation’s ambience.

If we try and connect Heritage with tourism, we realize the actual importance of tourism when it gives positive economic and social impact and assists in establishment and dissemination of our identity worldwide and also encourages its adoption across seas.

It aids to keep people of the region strongly bound to the ethics and culture and hence it is catalyst for local and regional development.

It has a role similar to that of a family tree where fruits even when far away from its roots still are somehow connected so strong that if the roots fail to survive the fruits also find it difficult to sustain.

India has been blessed with such a beautiful culture that it has plenty of monuments that reflect the actual intensity of the cultural heritage practiced back in time. If we ever try to focus on and put light on how much efforts it took to build each and every monument we would try to preserve it as much efficiently for next generations to see.

Above all India is blessed with what we call as “HEAVEN ON EARTH” Jammu and Kashmir, the bliss of the ambience is so divine that the positive energy is radiated across the globe, people from all over the world portray execution of will to witness its prosperity and cherish godlike beauty of the nature.

### ***2.3 India and Its Heritage value according to UNESCO***

UNESCO (The United Nations Education, and Scientific and Cultural Organization), having a purpose to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, scientific and cultural reform in order to increase universal respect for culture heritage and ethical values has given heritage value to many places in India. 27 cultural heritage 7 natural heritage and 1 mixed world heritage are assigned by UNESCO to India.

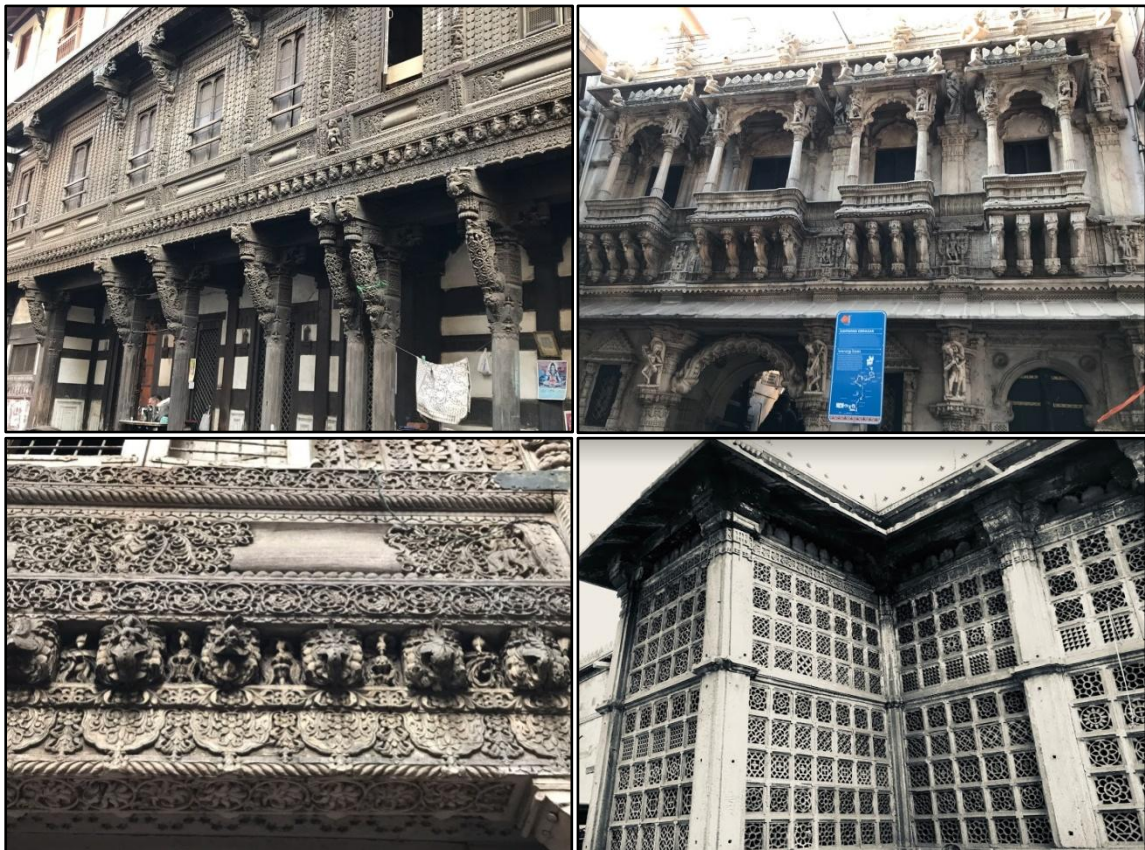
### 2.4 The Heritage city – Ahmedabad (India's First World Heritage City)

In July 2017, in recognition of its 'universal value', Ahmedabad became the first Indian city to be designated as a UNESCO World Heritage City. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani and citizens alike wasted no time in expressing their pride and joy.

Ahmedabad is endowed with numerous heritage cultural values. It possesses places like Jami Masjid, pols, mints, derasar and hawelis, all constructed with, Ahmed dynasty, vernacular architecture and Indo-Islamic architectural style which believed in following the notion, by the people, for the people and of the people.

We did heritage walk to study the heritage city, Ahmedabad. The residents were also found to be cooperative in the route and made efforts to keep the route clean and restored. Heritage Walk - as the name suggests, behaves as an effective tool whereby the inner areas of the city shall be explored in terms of the architectural heritage, cultural heritage and the craft heritage. A heritage cell has been established by the AMC to look after heritage activities and policies. A separate budget of Rs. 50 lakhs was allocated, as a start up fund. The areas that were visited by us are explained in brief as follows.

#### 2.4.1 Architecture



Everything that was constructed back in time was constructed and designed with morals ethics and scientific value kept in consideration. The idea of entering the masjid or temple were composed of lintels that were lower in heights which did tend people to bend in order to enter the area, this was a way of bending people in front of the lord in order to appear humble in front of the lord that people worshiped. It includes of Masjid, Pols, Haweli, Derasar, and other areas which have been designed and constructed beautifully and in a very attractive manner.

### 2.4.2 Pol



With regard to pols, it can be considered as an area where people lived under different shelters yet as one whole huge family, like a chawl. The moral values that people held while living in pol was incredible, not only did they live like a family but also kept in mind the well-being of animals living around.

Pols used to possess and even do possess areas like chabutra and parrot holes and squirrel holes where all the families had a practice of feeding the birds and animals regularly, they like ancient saints kept aside a part of their meals to be served to the birds and dogs and cows. Chabutra was made in such a way that birds could be able to resemble its appearance to that of a tree having a tall structure and having shelter within it where food grains and water was kept, every family had a separate fresh water feeding vessels out of their home gates to let birds and animals drink water when thirsty.

The intelligence and intensity of applied knowledge used in the building of pols was high tech since that time itself. The stair cases were made of teakwood and oak in order to preside over the security needs of that time. Any intruder if happened to arrive, the loud sound of walking through the staircase was loud enough to make the entire family alert of the situation which was further facilitated with secret doors and pathways within the houses in order to escape in case of emergencies.

### 2.4.3 Derasar (Water Harvesting System)



The method of water harvesting system which is certainly very efficient method of preservation of water is out of practice at present, however we do have certain efficient techniques for preserving water but rain water harvesting system could be considered as most efficient and judicious method of preserving rain water.

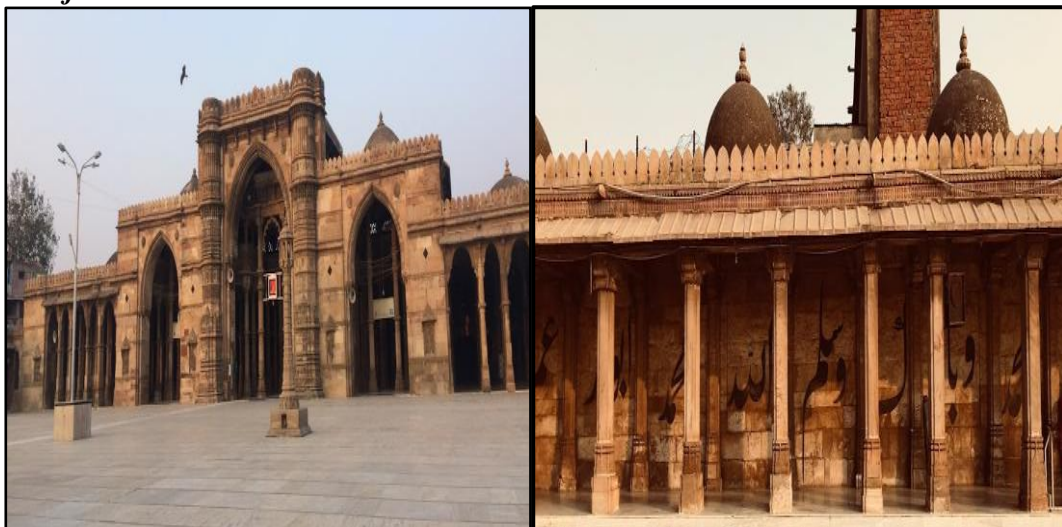
The rain water harvesting system was so well-defined and well managed that one cannot manage so easily at present. The rain water pipe led to the tank through inlet pipe, water tank consisted of copper dome shaped cover, man hole, steps, walls of tank were lined with limestone, guggal, jaggery, moong paste, cement, which is considered as so good for ionization of water, and even when water was preserved for 100 years WHO and ISI had proved water to be bacteria free, clear water, ph neutral fluorides okay, chlorides okay, TDS (total dissolved salts) okay, nitrates okay, hardness checked, dirt, bad shell, algae, microbes (harmful).



No measure of technology would be able to match up to the magnitude of preservation of water through water harvesting system.

The intensity of such scientific and logical pattern of architecture and cultural norms need to be preserved in order to harness and patronage royalty and loyalty towards our heritage.

#### 2.4.4 Jama Masjid



The city of Ahmedabad is adorned with the beautiful mosque, famous as the name Jama Masjid or also sometimes referred to as Friday Mosque. Lying in the old walled city, the mosque is situated outside Bhadra Fort area, along the south side of the road extending from Teen Darwaza to Manek Chowk. It was developed in the context of “By the people, for the people and of the people”. It was probably the

largest mosque in the Indian subcontinent built in this period. Designed as part of a major plan desired by the Emperor Sultan Ahmed Shah, the mosque is located south of the processional axis that runs from the Maidan-i Shah at the door with three arches, Teen Darwaza. To the west of the mosque are the tombs of Ahmed Shah I, his son and his grandson, Ahmed Shah`s Tomb.

Nearby are the graves of the queens and the other wives of the king, “Rani no Hajiro”. The visit to the mosque is indubitably must when one visits the city of Ahmedabad. The mosque has the arcade in three different directions while the fourth remaining side of the mosque has a hall where the prayers are offered. The prayer room is also rectangular and covered by four domes. In its Indo-Saracenic architecture, the mosque also contains many syncretic elements not necessarily obvious to the viewer: some of the central domes are carved like lotus flowers, closely related to the typical domes of Jain temples; and some of the pillars are carved with the form of a bell hanging on a chain, in reference to the bells that often hang in Hindu temples.

The wide open courtyard, floored with white marble, is ringed by a colonnade painted with giant Arabic calligraphy, and has a tank for ritual ablutions in the center. The mosque and arcades are built of beautiful yellow sandstone and carved with the intricate detail that mosques of this period are known for.

There are two very religious and importance things to consider in any mosque that is Minbar and Mihrab. Minbaris a raised platform in the front area of a mosque, from which sermons or speeches are given. The minbar is located to the right of the mihrab, which marks the direction for prayer. The minbar is usually made of carved wood, stone, or brick. The minbar includes a short staircase leading to the top platform, which is sometimes covered by a small dome. At the bottom of the staircase there may be a gate or doorway. The speaker walks up the steps and either sits or stands on the minbar while addressing the congregation.



Mihrab is another essential element of a mosque’s architecture that is a niche in the wall that indicates the direction of Mecca, towards which all Muslims pray. Mecca is the city in which the Prophet Muhammad was born, and the home of the most important Islamic site, the Kaaba. The direction of Mecca is called the qibla, and so the wall in which the mihrab is set is called the qibla wall.





The entrance of Jami Masjid is made of staircase ending up at a gate then tends to bend the us in order to enter the mosque, this signifies the belief that we humans tend to bow down and show respect to our religious god as we enter the mosque. Furthermore it has an area where people have to was their faces and hands and legs, not with the belief of cleaning the dust on body but to cleanse thoughts of our soul before praying to god.

#### **2.4.5 Haveli**

Haveli are found to be the traditional big mansions which are of historic value and architectural significance and are used as tourist visiting and residing hotels for many people and as a medium of earnings as well. There haveli that was visited as a part of Heritage Walk was Mangaldas Ni Haveli and following are various photographs and features of the Haveli.

Haveli can however be considered as that part of heritage value that has been evidently well preserved and practices for the favor of economy and used as commercial point of view.

##### **2.4.5.1 Mangaldas Ni Haveli**

Mangaldasni Haveli is found to be located in Khadia, the heart of the historic walled city of Ahmedabad.

It belongs to a Nagar Brahmin family which is one of the finest example of carved wooden architecture typical of that time. This Haveli was bought by the Mangaldas family in 2006 is restored with the help of the Heritage Cell of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation to maintain the lavish culture of the Haveli of ancient times. It is an excellent example of Ahmedabad's historic domestic architecture with intricate wood carvings.

There are various areas such as kitchen , living area, various rooms terrace area and other very important area that is underground water area and an area where all the bronze or copper or many other essential metal material(for e.g. panchdhaatu).The underground water area is considered as the area that regulates the temperature of the haveli and every area.

### **3. Research Gap**

The major area of concern to put into light is that the pride that India and Indians holds in possession of the heritage value have been mentioned and discussed across the world but there has been no research papers of findings that suggest the sustainability of the heritage and culture and the heritage value as it is

of enormous importance that this heritage value must be conserved and sustained so as to maintain the pride of the nation and also for conserving the experience for the generations to come. That is an approach to sustain the heritage and culture of the country in order for the next generations to be able to be a part of it and as an act of social welfare.

### **3.1 Research Objectives**

An approach towards conservation and sustainability of the heritage and cultural value of India with reference to The Heritage City – Ahmedabad.

## **4. Sustainability and Preservation Strategies**

1. Tourism acts like a synergy to the enhance heritage value of the country, better the heritage preserved better is the tourism value of the country. Tourism has powerful impact towards development of the country economy. Tourism itself can act as major pillar to stimulate and foster the zeal to preserve our heritage. It provides opportunities of income creation and generation of jobs.
2. Preservation of culture and heritage can further be encouraged by spreading awareness about the real worth of preserving the heritage, holding campaigns and consulting government for conduction of proper norms to avoid harming the monuments and depletion of cultural values furthermore the education forums can be conducted and used as a medium to educate people and disseminate importance of sustainability of heritage and culture.
3. A strict ban on scribbling alphabets and letters or spitting on walls on monuments and strict actions to be imposed in case of encounter.
4. Raising funds and increasing job opportunities.
5. Implementation of Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan, and encouraging cleanliness of monuments and heritage place.
6. Appreciation of the creativity and architectural ideas used by architectural experts of that time.
7. Developing sense of belongingness amongst citizens regarding the preciousness of heritage and culture.
8. Water harvesting system promotion.
9. CAD Training for ancient architectural design.
10. Adoption of interior and exterior designs and architecture with regards to logistic and scientific reasoning for construction of residential premises with reference to Haweli.

## **5. Findings**

1. Heritage and Culture is defined differently by various authors but majority of authors emphasize its importance on development and preservation of heritage as it adds value to nation's pride comprising of art and architectural conservation.
2. India is home to many of the finest cultural symbols of the world. Some of the prestigious and spectacular World Heritage Sites in India are the Hampi, Khajuraho, caves of Ajanta and Ellora, Konark Sun Temple, Taj Mahal, and Brihadeswara Temple in Tanjore. The culture of India is one of the oldest in the world which is rich and diverse.
3. There are 27 cultural heritage 7 natural heritage and 1 mixed world heritage are assigned by UNESCO to India.
4. Art, is a very precious heritage in the culture of India. Art has been a very distinctive feature of Indian heritage since more than five thousand years and thus such art must be used in order to assist in sustainability activities in architectural and infrastructural aspects in the city.
5. The tradition of folk art was supplemented in the Mauryan period with around wide variety of its 89 creations – there are pillars, railings, parasols, capitals, animal and human sculptures and several other motifs thus such beauty of art must be preserved in the city through innovation as well adoption of such prestigious ancient designs of the past.
6. India ranks 6th in the running in the world level in the conservation of heritage, culture and tourism.

7. In July 2017, in recognition of its 'universal value', Ahmedabad became the first Indian city to be designated a UNESCO World Heritage City.
8. Ahmedabad is endowed with numerous heritage cultural values. It possesses places like Jami Masjid, pols, mints, derasar and havelis, all constructed with, Ahmed dynasty, vernacular architecture and Indo-islamic architectural style which believed in following the notion, by the people, for the people and of the people.
9. Rain Water Harvesting system by Derasar was so well managed that water was preserved for 100 years WHO and ISI had proved water to be bacteria free, clear water, ph neutral fluorides okay, chlorides okay, TDS (total dissolved salts) okay, nitrates okay, hardness checked, dirt, bad shell, algae, microbes (harmful).
10. During the heritage walk it was evident enough to bring to the realization that though living in such pols in streets of Ahmedabad the residents were very proud and satisfied with their culture and took their heritage as a notion of pride.
11. The area of pols are well managed and in terms of cleanliness as well as commercialization, an allotted area nearby pols practices the street food commercialization during night hours till late timings and people of Ahmedabad encourage and feel the delight to visit the place for enjoying the street food.
12. The entire architecture and décor of Jami Masjid is so religious that every corner of the masjid has its own relevance and also portrays importance of minbar and mihrab.

## 6. Managerial Implications and Discussion

This research paper can be helpful to society as large including of various diversified occupational areas and can add up to the benefits of the Indian economy.

1. This research paper can be used by Tourism businesses in order to attract more tourists in the country and establishing a benchmark across the globe about its culture and heritage.
2. It can be useful to architectural experts and construction industry of the nation so they can bring back the intensive sculptures and designs and can bring the antique designs back in the market.
3. Marketing Management and Advertisement companies can also be benefitted by this research as it can help them develop strong informative basis of advertising and add in attractive elements of the Heritage City and help tourism industry to attract more tourist to India.
4. The above mentioned area of increasing the tourism can also help in increasing the contribution to the service sector of the country and hence increase the contribution to GDP.
5. It can further be helpful to students and other academic area so as to refer to the research paper to get better insights of the Indian Heritage and Culture.
6. This can further be helpful to the group of agencies that guide tourists and also conduct programs and sessions to explain and communicate and help others discover about essentials of Indian Heritage and culture.
7. The education firms are also benefitted and as government have made this as a part of academics.
8. Media plays a vital role in the dissemination of importance of heritage conservation to the society as large.
9. This is essential for various engineering companies that can use the information in or to amend infrastructures and architectural aspects of the heritage areas of the city.

## 7. CONCLUSION

According to the research conducted above it can be evidently concluded that heritage is very essential and indispensable part of any Nation and thus it always must be considered as an asset of the nation and steps must be taken in order to preserve and conserve the heritage and culture of the nation in order to maintain its pride.

Furthermore India being the country gifted with city like Ahmedabad that is announced as "universal value" as India's world's 1<sup>st</sup> Heritage City, it gives immense responsibility to preserve its recognition

across the globe and it should be noted that steps towards sustainable development of the country as the movement of sustainability has come to light affecting all aspects of human activity and it drifts cultural tourism industry as well.

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